

## **Aboriginal Residential Schools Before Confederation: The Early Experience<sup>1</sup>**

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We met many savages when we went ashore, and this was a great joy to us. These poor people had never seen anyone dressed up as we were, so that they were filled with wonder, and when they were told that we had left our country, our relatives, and all comforts out of love for them, they were utterly amazed. And they were even more amazed when told that we had come to teach their children .... (Marie de l'Incarnation, superior of the first group of Ursuline sisters to come to New France, shortly before reaching Quebec in 1639).<sup>2</sup>

This paper examines the nature of aboriginal schooling in pre-Confederation Canada with particular reference to boarding-type schools from the establishment by the Récollets of the first such institution in Quebec in 1620, to the founding of an orphanage by the Sisters of Charity (Grey Nuns) at Fort Providence in 1867. Although the paper will emphasize the Indian and Métis schooling activities of the Roman Catholic church, the discussion will include references to the aboriginal schooling activities of the Anglican and Methodist churches, who along with various governing authorities played a significant, if not paramount, role in determining the nature and course of native schooling during this period. Attention will also be given to Indian requests for schools at this time, and to comments made by aboriginal people about the quality and worth of the instruction provided.

As contended elsewhere by the author, much of the historical, autobiographical and social science literature on aboriginal schools published since the 1960s gives a largely uniform interpretation of the origin and character of these institutions, whatever their location, sponsorship or time of

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<sup>2</sup> Marie of the Incarnation, *The Autobiography of Venerable Marie of the Incarnation, O.S.U., Mystic and Missionary*, trans. by John J. Sullivan (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1964), p. 124.

operation. Much of this literature suggests that a majority of school-age First Nations children who attended school from the early seventeenth century onwards, went to boarding schools, that they went to these institutions unwillingly, usually without the consent of their parents and were forcibly kept there for years on end. According to these accounts, the conditions of Indian residential schools, which in certain areas also enrolled Métis and some Inuit and white children, were not only foreign to the pupils' religious and cultural beliefs, but also involved care and teaching arrangements which had little to do with their after school lives.<sup>3</sup>

Criticisms of aboriginal residential schools also abound in recent media reports,<sup>4</sup> representations before the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples,<sup>5</sup> studies by the Assembly of First Nations (AFN),<sup>6</sup> and personal

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<sup>3</sup> R. Carney, "The Grey Nuns and the Children of Holy Angels: Fort Chipewyan and Fort Resolution 1874-1924," in *The Uncovered Past: Roots of Northern Alberta Societies*. R. McCormack and R. Ironside ed., Circumpolar Research series No. 3 (Edmonton: Canadian Circumpolar Institute, University of Alberta, 1993), pp. 105-125.

<sup>4</sup> The following productions, broadcast recently on television and much used in other instructional contexts, typify the negative assessments made about residential schools by the print and visual media: Northern Native Broadcasting "Mission School Syndrome," 1988 (release date 1993); The Fifth Estate, CBC, "Violation of Trust," January 9 1991; and Anglican Church of Canada, "Search for Healing: Anglican Residential Schools Revisited," 1992.

<sup>5</sup> In 1993, George Erasmus, co-chairman of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, summed up the submissions made before the Commission concerning residential schools as follows: "Everywhere we have gone, we have been told about the impact of residential schools ... Most of the stories we are hearing are negative; 99% of them...." Quoted in Assembly of First Nations, "Breaking The Silence: An Interpretative Study of Residential School Impact and Healing as Illustrated by the Stories of First Nations Individuals" (Ottawa: AFN, 1994), p. 3. Cited hereafter as "Breaking The Silence."

<sup>6</sup> "Breaking The Silence" is the most recent major study on this topic sponsored by the AFN. Other unpublished material produced by the Assembly on this topic includes a "Literature Review of Residential Schooling" (Ottawa: AFN, First Nations Health Commission, n.d.), pp. 1-17; and "Residential Schools Survey on Survivors of Child Abuse and Deprivation of Language and Culture Through Assimilation" (Ottawa: AFN, National Lobbying Committee on Residential Schools, 1994), pp. 1-40.

narratives<sup>7</sup> and meetings of former students.<sup>8</sup> Instances of sexual, physical and emotional abuse of boarding pupils are given prominence in these sources, and are often cited as the primary reason for the present distress of former students. Much of the research and subsequent selection of data for what is said, which invariably reflects negatively on those who operated such schools, has been based on secondary sources, on interpretations of government and missionary documents and, to an increasing extent, on the oral and written testimony of former students.

Most of the above sources give cursory or, at best, partial attention to aboriginal schooling prior to Confederation. Moreover in so doing, they invariably select only that material which supports current criticisms of post-Confederation boarding schools. As a result many of these sources are lacking in at least one of three respects. In the first instance, they do not have the scope, sequence and depth needed to understand the nature of aboriginal schooling before 1867. Secondly these sources assume aboriginal schooling continuities between the pre- and post-Confederation periods where none existed, and thirdly they fail to recognize continuities which, in fact, were there. In identifying and interpreting those largely ignored aspects of the pre-1867 aboriginal schooling continuum, this paper intends to give an overall account of what occurred, and why it did.

A recent example of the reluctance to give a comprehensive picture of pre-1867 aboriginal schooling, or to call for further research on this period – at least as an informed prelude to what happened following Confederation – can be found in an unpublished 1994 Assembly of First Nations (AFN) study entitled “Literature Review on Residential Schooling.”<sup>9</sup> The AFN document finds fault with most of the thirty odd Canadian-focused studies chosen for review not because of their overall conclusions, which are invariably critical of aboriginal schooling regardless of when or where it occurred, but rather because their conclusions lack the intensity and validity which oral

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<sup>7</sup> The extensive list of published personal narratives in which the authors are critical of their time in residential schools begins with Harold Cardinal's "The Unjust Society" (Edmonton: M.G. Hurtig, 1969) and continues to the present with such works as I. Knockwood's "Out of the Depths: The Experiences of Mi'Kaw Children at the Indian Residential School at Shubenacadie, Nova Scotia" (Lockport, Nova Scotia, 1992). These publications contrast markedly with earlier and more favourable accounts of these schools such as J. Gladstone's "Indian School Days," *Alberta Historical Review*, 15(1), pp. 18-24.

<sup>8</sup> Meetings of former students held to discuss their experiences in school residences are recent occurrences. For examples of two such events, see press reports of reunions held at Fort Albany (St. Anne's) in 1992 *Globe and Mail* November 11, 1992 p. A-7, and at Chesterfield Inlet (Turquetil Hall) in 1993 *The Edmonton Journal*, October 11, 1994 pp. A1 and 9.

<sup>9</sup> "Literature Review of Residential Schooling" (Ottawa: First Nations Health Commission, n.d.).

and written “native testimony”<sup>10</sup> would give them. One cannot quarrel with the latter assertion, nor dispute the document’s concluding reference to the need for “co-operative research efforts between non-native and native people [which] would provide an opportunity for a blending of voices in harmonious collaboration.”<sup>11</sup> Such collaboration, however, should not result in a uniform assessment of pre-1867 aboriginal schooling, nor should it require that the outcomes of examining the continuities and discontinuities of such schooling be predetermined by the prevailing view of this phenomenon. What follows therefore should be seen as part of the collaborative exercise called for in the AFN’s “Literature Review.” In addition to examining aboriginal schooling continuities and discontinuities prior to Confederation, the narrative will provide a basis for locating and evaluating aboriginal schooling after Confederation.

An example of the continuing influence that is not generally recognized in contemporary references to aboriginal schooling in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries concerns the important role that colonial educational agencies had on all aspects of aboriginal day and residential schooling. Egerton Ryerson, who served as Ontario’s chief superintendent of schools from the 1840s to the 1870s, outlined an Indian educational policy in 1847 which affirmed that Indians should be schooled in separate, denominational, boarding, English-only and agriculturally-oriented (industrial) institutions. Although Indian schooling was separated constitutionally and administratively after Confederation from the rapidly developing system of public (common) schooling in Ontario, and from its counterparts in Manitoba and the Northwest Territories, the influence of public schooling practices and policies on aboriginal schooling continued unabated throughout the period of mission-operated Indian schools. This was particularly so in matters relating to staff, curriculum and institutional arrangements which public schoolmen believed should characterize the schooling provided native children, even though they were not held responsible for what ensued.<sup>12</sup>

An example of a discontinuity is the often held assumption that Jesuit and Ursuline Indian residential schools of the seventeenth century continued to exist into the nineteenth century.<sup>13</sup> The fact is that both congregations had decided to abandon such institutions by 1700. One reason for their doing so

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid, p. 1.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, p. 13.

<sup>12</sup> For a discussion of this influence in the Northwest Territories, see R. Carney, “Residential Schooling at Fort Chipewyan and Fort Resolution 1874-1974,” in *Études Oblates de l’Ouest! Western Oblate Studies*, 2ed. R. Huel, (Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Press, 1992), pp. 115-138.

<sup>13</sup> See, for example, Linda R. Bull, “Indian Residential Schooling: The Native Perspective,” *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, vol. 18 (1991 supplement), pp. 1-64.

was the overwhelming Amerindian resistance to such schools. The Anglican and Methodist churches and new state agencies were chiefly instrumental for restoring the aboriginal residential school concept in early nineteenth-century Canada, and for implementing custodial and instructional arrangements in such institutions which persisted well into the next century.

Although the continuities and discontinuities, such as those mentioned above, are central to this examination of pre-1867 aboriginal schooling, they represent only part of the history of native schooling prior to Confederation. As references to specific aboriginal schooling initiatives, they will not normally entail direct comparisons with the state-aided grammar and common (public) schools of the time. Some comment will now be made about them however, not only because of their inferiority in terms of twentieth century schooling standards, but also because they influenced the nature of aboriginal day and residential schooling during the period of study.

The favoured type of schooling for non-aboriginal children was that provided by the grammar schools, which were funded in 1807 when the government of Upper Canada passed its first educational act authorizing \$400 apiece to eight grammar schools. Located in district centres, operated under the auspices of the Church of England and governed by appointees chosen from the colony's elite, they charged high fees and followed an academic, classical curriculum for small numbers of elementary and secondary pupils. With the exception of Upper Canada College, they never became the upper class schools envisaged by John Graves Simcoe, the colony's first governor, who wanted them to be like the great public boarding schools of England. Needless to say, the facilities and programs provided in the grammar schools were less than those at Eton or Harrow. The boarders, who brought their own "beds, beddings, towels, and silver spoons," were often crowded into the masters' houses, and sometimes attended class in rented spaces in jails, taverns, courthouses and temperance halls. Of the fourteen such institutions in operation in the mid-1850s, ten had a single teacher and four but two.<sup>14</sup> Early accounts of these male only schools describe little more than their spartan atmosphere and rigorous discipline. But as Paul Bennett indicates, bullying and homo-eroticism among students and public canings and sexual abuse of students by staff were "hushed up" by headmasters who "blotted [such instances] from the official records."<sup>15</sup> It would appear that Indian children did not enroll in grammar schools until the 1860s. Since boarding arrangements in many of these institutions were

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<sup>14</sup> John Calam, "An Historical Survey of Boarding Schools and Public School Dormitories in Canada" (M.A. thesis, University of British Columbia, 1962), pp. 22-25.

<sup>15</sup> Paul W. Bennett, "Little Worlds: The Forging of Social Identities in Ontario's Protestant School Communities and Institutions, 1850-1930" (Ph.D. diss., University of Toronto, 1990), pp. 24-25.

no longer favoured by this time, the few Indian children who went to them did so as day scholars.

Many Euro-Canadian children never went to school throughout the period, and most of those who did went to common day schools. And a significant number of these attended infrequently and for a few years only. Many teachers in the common schools, which grew apace during Ryerson's superintendency, had little more than an elementary education, and most had no prior preparation for teaching. Teachers' complaints of overwork, poor salaries and unruly pupils were largely ignored. As a result many left their assignments for more remunerative or highly valued careers. Learning resources were scarce and the curriculum seldom took into account the linguistic and cultural backgrounds of non Anglo-Saxon children.<sup>16</sup> As was the case with the grammar schools, few Indian children enrolled in the common schools. This does not mean that aboriginal day and residential schools were not influenced by the practices and conditions of their public counterparts.

While comparisons of native and non-native schools contribute to a greater awareness of the differences and commonalities existing between them, they tell only part of the story of these schools. Until the 1960s when the work of social historians like Bernard Bailyn gained prominence,<sup>17</sup> historians of education in Canada and the United States devoted themselves almost entirely to chronicling the rise of free, centralized, state-supported, non-denominational systems of public schooling in their respective countries. Other institutional arrangements, such as voluntary or religious schools, were either ignored or denigrated in their accounts; and they gave little more than passing attention to more encompassing forms of enculturation, notably those which took place in the household and workplace. Although Bailyn and others played a significant role in changing the narrow, self-laudatory approach found in traditional school histories, they have had very little influence upon the perspective of those who write about native schools. As a result most accounts of aboriginal day and residential schools have given inordinate attention to aspects of these institutions which reveal little or nothing about the social, economic and cultural background of the parents,

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<sup>16</sup> For a further analysis of the evolution of public schooling in Upper Canada, Rupert's Land and the Northwest Territories, see the following articles by the author: "Going to School in Upper Canada," in ed. E. Brian Titley *Canadian Education: Historical Themes and Contemporary Issues* (Calgary: Detselig Enterprises Ltd., 1990), pp. 9-44, pp. 189-195; and "Hostility Unmasked: Catholic Schooling in Territorial Alberta," in eds. N. Kach and K. Mazurek *Exploring Our Educational Past: Schooling in the Northwest Territories and Alberta* (Calgary: Detselig Enterprises Ltd., 1992), pp. 17-36.

<sup>17</sup> Bernard Bailyn, *Education in the Forming of American Society* (New York: Random House, 1960), p. 1.

or of the children who went to school.

It is not possible here to give a comprehensive picture of the effects that changing socio-economic conditions had on the lives of native people over the first 250 years of Aboriginal-European contact. Suffice it to say that until Confederation most native communities had not been subjected to what E.P. Patterson terms the reserve or third phase of Aboriginal-European contact. This phase did not begin in earnest until the signing of the Western Treaties in the 1870s. Patterson describes the first period of contact as one in which both parties gained some benefit, particularly with respect to the exchange of technologies, and the second as one in which Indians were drawn deeper into the economies of newcomers, with a gradual loss of Indian autonomy in economic, spiritual and political matters.<sup>18</sup> While the designation of reserve lands for Indians was initially not too disruptive, it was not long until a number of exclusionary measures made the aboriginal presence irrelevant to mainstream society.

Although aboriginal schooling was part of this process in some instances prior to 1867, schooling histories seldom recognized its minor role in the overall process of Indian transformation. As the third or reserve phase of Aboriginal-European contact happened after Confederation, its relevance to this discussion is to remind the reader that schooling, whenever or wherever it occurs, invariably reflects the socio-economic preferences of dominant groups. Since schooling is also largely an idiosyncratic phenomenon, it is difficult to determine its immediate or long term effects on the lives of children. This and other considerations mentioned earlier need to be kept in mind in the following discussion on aboriginal schooling in New France, New Brunswick, Upper Canada (Canada West), Rupert's Land and the Northwestern Territory until the late 1860s. The discussion examines the various roles imperial and colonial administrations, and Anglican, Methodist and Roman Catholic churches took with respect to aboriginal schooling prior to the passage of the British North America Act in 1867, which assigned responsibility for Indians and Indian lands to the federal government.

### **New France**

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<sup>18</sup> E. Palmer Patterson II, *The Canadian Indian: A History Since 1500* (Don Mills, Ontario: Collier-MacMillan Canada, Ltd., 1972). For a more thorough and up-to-date study of aboriginal people in Canada, see Olive Patricia Dickinson's *Canada's First Nations: A History of Founding Peoples From Earliest Times* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1992).

The Jesuit Relations<sup>19</sup> and the letters of Marie de l'Incarnation,<sup>20</sup> foundress of the Ursuline convent at Quebec, provide telling accounts of Amerindian indifference and resistance to what the missionaries, as boarding school teachers and child care givers, had to offer. Other religious communities, such as the Congregation of the Sisters of Notre Dame, who opened an orphanage at Ville Marie in 1657, also took in Indian as well as French children, but only for a while. The Notre Dame Sisters and the Sulpician Fathers opened day schools for Amerindian children at the Mission de la Montagne in 1677. The program of studies included Christian doctrine, French, plainsong and music, training in stonework, tailoring and shoemaking for the boys and domestic skills for the girls. Both ventures ended in 1694, when the houses and church in the Indian village burned to the ground. From then on, the Sulpicians and the Sisters of the Congregation were not directly involved in Amerindian schooling.<sup>21</sup> New religious sisterhoods, such as the Sisters of Charity of Montreal (the Grey Nuns) founded in 1737 by Madame d'Youville, assumed a wide-ranging mandate for everything from "helping the poor, the old, the invalid, the sick and mad [to caring for] women prisoners, prostitutes and orphans."<sup>22</sup> But unlike the Ursulines or the Sisters of the Congregation, the Grey Nuns did not serve as teachers before coming to Rupert's Land in 1844.

The Grey Nuns' work with orphans and foundlings is of special interest to this study. It was one of their primary activities in Montreal where, as Peter Moogk points out, illegitimate births among the colonial population became an increasing problem in the eighteenth century, as did the practice of giving these children to the Amerindians.<sup>23</sup> Despite an intendant's ordinance in 1722 which forbade assignments of this nature, it was common as late as the 1750s to find illegitimate children of French colonists in Christian Indian villages, where, according to Moogk, "they fully accepted the Aborigines' way of life."<sup>24</sup> The Grey Nuns provided an alternative care

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<sup>19</sup> *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents Travels and Explorations of the Jesuit Missionaries in New France 1610-1791*, ed. R.G. Thwaites (Cleveland: The Burrows Brothers Company, 1901), 73 vols.

<sup>20</sup> *Marie of the Incarnation, The Autobiography of Venerable Marie of the Incarnation, O.S.U., Mystic and Missionary*, trans. John J. Sullivan (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1964).

<sup>21</sup> M. l'Abbé Roland L'Italien, *Le Grand Séminaire de Montréal de 1840 à 1990* (Montréal: Éditions du Grand Séminaire de Montréal, 1990), pp. 18-22.

<sup>22</sup> Micheline Dumont et al, *Quebec Women: A History* (Toronto: The Women's Press, 1987), p. 40.

<sup>23</sup> Peter N. Moogk, "Les Petites Sauvages: The Children of Eighteenth-Century New France" in *Childhood and Family in Canadian History*, ed. J. Parr (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1982), p. 27.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

arrangement, but the number of illegitimate children born to *Canadiennes* was such that the sisters had neither the resources nor, it would seem, the desire to care for Amerindian children as well. James Axtell's "The White Indians of Colonial America" refers to the relationships between English colonists and Indians, and his observations concerning the latter's proficiency in educating their own children "without resorting to physical compulsion or emotional undercutting"<sup>25</sup> can also be applied to the Amerindians of New France. That the French did not take Amerindian children into their homes or educational institutions undoubtedly had a positive side. The Amerindians followed their own forms of education, and the French theirs. This also meant, however, that religious sisterhoods like the Grey Nuns and the Oblates of Mary Immaculate had little or no understanding of Indian cultures, nor experience with Indian children, before assuming responsibility for their care and formal education in the 1860s. They appear to have ignored former Amerindian responses to boarding schools when they opened their own such schools in the 1860s.

Some of the lessons learned by seventeenth century French missionaries concerning the efficacy of aboriginal residential schools were apparently remembered by the Jesuits when they took up aboriginal schooling again in the 1840s. They followed certain pedagogical principles in what could be described as bush or wilderness schools. These principles included "tact, infinite patience and gentleness," – in effect a rejection of the European idea of childhood, "which always saw the man in the child" and which regarded childhood "as a period of preparation, obedience, as discipline, often of a harsh character."<sup>26</sup> Jesuit instruction took place in or near some 125 missions in Acadia and New France from 1611 to the death in 1800 of the last member of the Society of Jesus who stayed in New France after the conquest.<sup>27</sup> Children attending wilderness classrooms were taught in small groups and in their own languages. A variety of pedagogical techniques were used to support such instruction, including simulated games, rewards and prizes, songs and pictures. Little thought was given to imparting secular knowledge, though some of this must have happened given the instructional context. The curriculum included prayers, hymn singing, devotions and doctrine, which sometimes involved the teaching of written scripts. As was the case with the Micmac language in New Brunswick, some Amerindian languages were eventually written in Roman characters, but any hope of

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<sup>25</sup> James Axtell, *The European and the Indian: Essays in the Ethnohistory of Colonial North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 168.

<sup>26</sup> Roger Magnuson, "Jesuit Pedagogy and the Wilderness Classroom in 17th-Century Canada," *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, 17 (1), p. 72.

<sup>27</sup> A. Melançon, S.J., "Missions des Jésuites Nouvelle France 1611-1800," Jesuit Archives, Quebec City, 1925. Original copy of map in the author's possession.

making this orthography part of schooling there was thwarted with the coming of British rule.

### **New Brunswick**

Protestant entry into the mission fields of Acadia began in earnest in 1796 when the New England Company, a London-based philanthropic society, established a number of Anglican Indian day schools around Saint John. There is no evidence that the Indians asked for these institutions. They had hitherto shown no interest in European schooling and were of the same mind about this venture. The Company responded by consolidating its day school operations into a facility at Sussex Vale which was to be operated by a local board of commissioners. The plan was to settle Indian families on Company land. Their children would be required to attend school on a day basis, and once the children were old enough, they were to be apprenticed to local white settlers. As attendance at Sussex Vale was very irregular, steps were taken in 1807 to provide twenty boarding places in the school, and to maintain an equal number of day spaces for children who were to be indentured locally. The school's residential program involved taking in infant children, restricting contact with their families, and keeping them away from Roman priests.<sup>28</sup> Those who finished their apprenticeship were to be settled on a Company estate where according to one of the local commissioners, they would "form a distinct community of civilized Indians."<sup>29</sup>

Of the fifty-five children who enrolled during the school's first fifteen years, none completed an apprenticeship or achieved a basic level of literacy. Such dismal results prompted the company to initiate inquiries into Sussex Vale's problems in the 1820s. The reports of these investigations were highly critical. Many children were apprenticed before reaching the age of seven. Masters often kept their charges from attending school and were remiss in providing practical training. There were also reports that some sexually exploited their female apprentices. The chief beneficiaries of the Company's endeavour were the masters themselves, who in addition to securing the children's labour, also received £20 a year for sheltering each child.<sup>30</sup> Attempts by the London commissioners to turn the situation around were to no avail. As a result they abandoned the Sussex Vale project in 1826, having

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<sup>28</sup> J.W. Chalmers, *Education Behind the Buckskin Curtain* (Edmonton: University of Alberta, 1972), pp. 38-41.

<sup>29</sup> Judith Fingard, "The New England Company and the New Brunswick Indians, A Comment on the Colonial Perversion of British Benevolence," *Acadiensis* 1, no. 2 (Spring 1972), p. 32.

<sup>30</sup> Chalmers, *Education Behind the Buckskin Curtain*, (1972) p. 40.

decided to start anew with a band of Mohawks who had settled along the Grand River in Upper Canada.

### **Upper Canada (Canada West)**

In the late eighteenth century some 2,000 Iroquois led by Joseph Brant, Chief of an Anglican-influenced Mohawk band, came to Upper Canada as part of the United Empire Loyalist migration. In 1761 when Brant was nineteen, he had attended Moor's Indian Charity School in Connecticut where as a boarding pupil he studied the Bible, English, Latin, Greek and Mathematics. He later recalled this experience as follows, "Though I was an unprofitable pupil in some respects, yet my worldly affairs have been much benefited in the instruction there received ...."<sup>31</sup> The British military supported the resettlement of Brant's group on the Grand River in Upper Canada by providing land and promising an allowance of £20 per annum for a teacher whom the Mohawks were to choose themselves.<sup>32</sup> The Grand River Mohawks opened several day schools, the first in 1786, which was conducted by their own schoolmasters who used Mohawk prayer books and primers.<sup>33</sup> Many of these ventures were short-lived however, partly because the promised allowances were not forthcoming.

A day school had opened in the Tuscarora village in 1819, but it closed soon after when its Indian schoolmaster was "dismissed on serious moral charges."<sup>34</sup> Situations such as this led to Mohawk representations to the New England Company, which included an 1822 visit by Brant's youngest son to London, where he obtained a promise of support for a school and a permanent Anglican mission in Grand River. No mention was made during the London meeting about a residential school. What Brant had in mind and promised to put into effect was a day school program consisting of "plain reading and writing and accounts."<sup>35</sup> When the Company sent Robert Luggier to the area as the resident Anglican missionary in 1827, he immediately set about establishing schools, the most important being the Mohawk Institute at Brantford, which began regular operation around 1829. Later the school

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<sup>31</sup> John Jakes, *Mohawk: The Life of Joseph Brant* (Toronto: The Macmillan Company, 1969), p. 130.

<sup>32</sup> Halimand to De Peyster (November 1784) quoted in Charles M. Johnston, *The Valley of the Six Nations: A Collection of Documents in the Indian Lands of the Grand River* (Toronto: The Champlain Society for the Government of Ontario, University of Toronto Press, 1964), p. 52.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, Plate 1.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, lxxxv.

<sup>35</sup> New England Company Archives, Guildhall Library, London, England (hereafter NECA, Guildhall), General Court and Committee Meeting Minutes, New England Company, M.S. 7920, vol 2, May 2, 1522, p.82,

took on a different shape from what Brant had envisaged when in London.

In 1831 the Company agreed with a recommendation from Luggier that it provide funds to turn the Mohawk Institute into a “Mechanic’s Institution.”<sup>36</sup> The words “Mechanic’s Institution” suggest that Luggier’s proposal involved setting up an adult education centre, where reading and other forms of personal improvement would be taught.<sup>37</sup> Had this happened, it would have signalled an entirely new form of educational work by those engaged in Indian missions in British North America. But this was not to be. Successive Indian administrations held that little could be done with Indian parents and that the focus of change should be on their children.<sup>38</sup> Having achieved limited success in converting and civilizing Indian adults, Protestant missionaries were therefore encouraged to shift their emphasis to the young to accomplish their objectives. It is therefore not surprising to find that the Mohawk Institute’s clients were young children. The school introduced vocational programs in 1833, and added a residential component a year later when “ten boys and four girls from the Six Nations” were taken in and provided with board and lodging.<sup>39</sup> It was the first Indian residential school in Upper Canada and became a model, in terms of programs and physical layout, for Indian schools in Canada well into the next century. The children, including some day scholars, were also given a plain English education as well as some instruction in farming and gardening.

A central part of the Institute’s program was that all instruction and communication was to be conducted in English. Representations from Mohawk communities, such as one from a group of petitioners at Tyendinaga to Bishop John Strachan in 1843, that Anglican schools teach reading and writing in Mohawk as well as English met with no success.<sup>40</sup> Since the English-only policy at the Mohawk Institute was generally deemed to be successful, any thought of including school instruction in aboriginal languages or cultures was seldom countenanced by church or colonial

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., M.S. 7920, vol. 3, June 30, 1831, pp. 51-52.

<sup>37</sup> For a discussion on the origin and work of the Mechanics’ Institutes in England, see T.L. Jarman’s, *Landmarks in the History of Education: English Education as Part of the European Tradition* (London: John Murray, 1951), pp. 248-253.

<sup>38</sup> For an analysis of the child-based orientation of Indian adult education programs, see Robert J. Carney, “The Evolution of Indian Adult Education Programs in Alberta,” *The Alberta Journal of Educational Research* 34 no. 3 (September 1988), pp. 294-309.

<sup>39</sup> “History of the New England Company on the Grand River.” Extract from an agreement between the Company and the Rev. Robert Ashton (October 16, 1872), quoted in Johnston, *Valley of the Six Nations*, p. 257.

<sup>40</sup> From Strachan Letterbooks, Public Archives of Ontario (PAO), quoted in L. Tschanz, “Native Languages and Government Policy Native Language Series, no. 2” (London: University of Western Ontario, 1980), p. 5.

administrations. The long-term influence of the Mohawk Institute in this regard as well as its residential character has not received the acknowledgment it deserves in contemporary accounts of the evolution of Indian schooling.

When it came to aboriginal schooling, the Methodists followed the same path as the Anglicans. William Case, a member of the Methodist Episcopal Church of America, became involved in the church's Mohawk and Ojibwa missions in Upper Canada in the 1820s. Schooling became a key strategy in converting Indians to Christianity. Not surprisingly, the Methodists dismissed Indian requests, such as that from Chief Shawahnahness of St. Clair in 1833,<sup>41</sup> for schools that would respect their children's aboriginal beliefs. But they quickly responded to requests by Ojibwa converts like Peter Jones who adopted Methodism during a camp meeting at Ancaster in 1823. By the late 1830s after a decade's work as an Indian missionary, Jones was dedicating most of his time to education. Although he wanted Indian schools to be eventually run by Christian Indians, he had adopted Case's view that residential schooling conducted in English and along strict Christian lines was the best way to educate Indian children. Jones' preference for residential schools was made plain as early as February 1835, when he recommended that "all the [Indian] children be placed entirely under the charge of the teachers and missionaries; so that their parents shall have no control over them."<sup>42</sup> Hence when Case established residential schools at Alderville in 1839 and Mount Elgin a decade later, he made sure that Christian indoctrination permeated everything that went on in these places. Although similar in nature to the Mohawk Institute, the Methodist boarding schools were based on a manual training model which American Protestant missionaries had adopted in the early 1800s as the most appropriate form of Indian schooling.

In *Salvation and the Savage* Robert Berkhofer describes the regimen of what became known as manual labour schools. Institutions bearing this designation were for white and Indian children, but were segregated with respect to these two groups, and were usually operated under the auspices of one of the Protestant churches. They were either of the day or residential variety, although the controlled environment of the latter was preferred for Indian children. In discussing the characteristics of Indian manual labour boarding schools, Berkhofer provides an extensive list which can be

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<sup>41</sup> E. Graham, *Medicine Man to Missionary: Missionaries as Agents of Change Among the Indians of Southern Ontario, 1784-1867* (Toronto: Peter Martin Associates, 1975), pp. 72-73.

<sup>42</sup> Donald B. Smith, *Sacred Feathers: The Reverend Peter Jones (Kahkewaquonaby) and the Mississauga Indians* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), p. 160.

summarized as follows: moral and religious training took precedence over academic studies; the work ethic was emphasized in all activities as were the virtues of frugality, punctuality, regularity and discipline; the children were given English names, sometimes of persons who subsidized their keep; traditional clothing was replaced by uniforms of other forms of common apparel; cleanliness was stressed; and strenuous measures were taken to prevent the intermingling of the sexes in classrooms and elsewhere. The children's labour in various domestic and other tasks helped defray the costs of their lodging. The products of such activities as knitting by the girls and saddlemaking by the boys were sold, and the proceeds were used to help with the school's accounts.<sup>43</sup>

Descriptions of the regimens at Alderville in 1841 and Mount Elgin in 1849 show that both institutions closely followed the manual labour model outlined by Berkhofer. A general consensus was reached in the 1840s among government officials and Protestant missionaries in Canada West that boarding institutions were the most effective means of schooling Indian children. In a "Report on the Affairs of the Indians in Canada," prepared for the Legislative Assembly of Canada in 1847, the government's Indian policy was spelled out. The course of action was to "raise Indians to the level of whites" by confirming Christianity among them, by establishing them in settlements, by providing efficient schools for Indian children, preferably institutions where they would be under the "entire control and management of Teachers" away from parents who allowed their children "to do as they please."<sup>44</sup> Such experiences were deemed to be necessary before Indians could be integrated into white society, and therefore paradoxically initial segregation from white society was prescribed.<sup>45</sup>

There was continuing debate, however, as to what form Indian residential schooling should take. Ryerson's views on this issue, as quoted in the 1847 Report of the Legislature, stood in contrast to what was happening at the Mohawk Institute and the school at Alderville. After a short stay at Credit River Indian mission as a Methodist minister, Ryerson turned his attention to other, non-Indian matters, yet this did not stop him from making statements about Indians and Indian schooling. This was so throughout his tenure as superintendent of schools for Upper Canada (1842-1876), when in keeping with the prevailing view he made it plain that Indian children, wher-

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<sup>43</sup> Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., *Salvation and the Savage: An Analysis of Protestant Missions and American Indian Response, 1787-1862* (Lexington, Kentucky: University of Kentucky Press, 1965), pp. 34-43.

<sup>44</sup> "Report on the Affairs of the Indians in Canada," *Journal of the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Canada*, 1847, Appendix T.

<sup>45</sup> "A Strategy for the Socio-Economic Development of Indian People" (Ottawa: National Indian Brotherhood, and Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, 1978).

ever possible, should be trained in boarding schools, apart from their parents and away from whites. He further argued that such institutions should not give instruction in “white man's trades,” but should concentrate instead on “common school learnings and the acquisition of agricultural skills and knowledge.”<sup>46</sup>

Of immediate as well as long-lasting significance was the regimen which Ryerson and others proposed for Indian residential schools. Although Ryerson firmly held that the burgeoning number of common schools (which were under his direct supervision) should be operated on a day basis and managed under non-sectarian auspices, he believed the opposite should apply when it came to Indian schooling. That Ryerson held these views throughout his superintendency was evident during the Confederation debates. According to C.B. Sissons, Ryerson maintained that Indian schooling should be a cooperative arrangement between the churches and the federal government, believing that provincial and local school authorities “would skirt their responsibilities” if given the task of schooling Indian children.<sup>47</sup>

The educational programs of the Jesuits, who returned to Canada West in 1843 to assume responsibility for Roman Catholic Indian missions, challenged the prevailing view of Indian schooling. In areas of white settlement, they encouraged the admission of Indian children into the common public or separate day schools, where they would be instructed alongside white children. The Jesuit preference for day schools in their Indian missions became apparent in the 1840s at Wikwemikong, Walpole Island and Fort William, where they opened day schools and conducted them differently from the approach taken in Protestant Indian day and residential schools.

When Jean-Pierre Choné arrived at Wikwemikong in 1844, the fruits of the Jesuit missions during the French regime and the Indians’ inclination “to favour French-Canadian voyageurs and their religion” were apparent.<sup>48</sup> During the next few years, the missionaries opened a day school, and by 1856 the Jesuits were operating two day schools at Wikwemikong, which according to a government report of the time “were crowded with clean, healthy, intelligent children of both sexes.”<sup>49</sup> There was a schoolmaster, an Indian school mistress and two ushers, who taught the children from nine to four daily. Except for a few senior boys who boarded at the parish rectory, all

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<sup>46</sup> Chalmers, *Education Behind the Buckskin Curtain*, p. 52.

<sup>47</sup> C.B. Sissons, *Egerton Ryerson: His Life and Letters*, vol. 1 (Toronto: Clark, Irwin and Company Press, 1937), p. 284.

<sup>48</sup> John Webster Grant, *Moon of Wintertime: Missionaries and the Indians of Canada in Encounter Since 1534* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), p. 81.

<sup>49</sup> “Report of the Special Commissioners Appointed on the 8th of September 1856 to Investigate Indian Affairs in Canada.” 21 Victoria Appendix (No. 21) A. 1856 (Toronto: Queen’s Printer 1858), [p. 33]. As the document has no pagination, page numbers have been provided in parentheses.

the pupils were day scholars. Ojibwa was the principal language of instruction in the early grades, although few textbooks in that language were available.

Until the late-1860s at least, Jesuit Indian school programs differed from their Protestant counterparts in places like Brantford, Alderville and Mount Elgin. The latter institutions were boarding schools, were conducted solely in English and their teaching staffs were largely, if not entirely, non-Indian. The Jesuit schools, on the other hand, operated on a day basis and used the pupils' maternal tongue as the principal language of instruction. In line with the latter mode of teaching, the Jesuits decided that fluency and literacy in an Indian language followed by reasonable levels of competency in English and French were essential components in training Indian candidates for teaching positions. This Indian language and instruction orientation was not well-received by the colony's Indian administration or by school inspectors.<sup>50</sup> There is evidence that the Jesuits' preference for Indian-oriented, day school programs had repercussions in terms of the financial support given them by the Indian administration.

Most of the Protestant Indian boarding schools had access to four sources of support: government grants, band funds, contributions from the sponsoring churches and donations from philanthropic organizations, such as the New England Company.<sup>51</sup> By 1857, the Jesuits at Wikwemikong received a government grant of £50 per annum for one teacher, a sum that had to be divided among four teachers, some £12 each. None of the teachers received fuel or lodging allowances from the Indian Department.<sup>52</sup> When these subsidies are compared with those provided the Anglican mission in the nearby settlement of Manitowaning, the government's lack of evenhandedness with respect to the two denominations is readily apparent. Manitowaning's schoolmaster received an annual salary of £60 from the Indian Department, plus other allowances, for an enrollment of twenty white pupils. The combined enrollment of the Catholic schools at Wikwemikong of 120

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<sup>50</sup> PAO, "Indian Schools – Algoma," RG2, F-3-C, Box 6, Reports on Indian Schools, 1882, 1884, 1885.

<sup>51</sup> A 1984 study "School Days: An Exhibition on the History of Indian Education," by Marlene Brant Castellano and John S. Milloy for the Woodland Indian Cultural Educational Centre, a Six Nations-controlled establishment at Brantford, indicates the significance that Band annuities had in funding Protestant Indian boarding schools in the 1840s and 1850s.

<sup>52</sup> T. Hannipeaux (sic) and M. Féraud (Roman Catholic missionaries residing on Manitoulin Island), "Report upon the Present State of the Great Manitoulin Island and upon that of the Nomadic Bands or Tribes of the Northern Shore of Lake Huron," Report of the Special Commissioners (1858), August 1857, [pp. 113-114].

pupils, on the other hand, was entirely composed of Indian children.<sup>53</sup> This situation was partially turned around in 1868, when the federal government contributed to the cost of building two Catholic boarding schools at Wikwemikong.

Notwithstanding such vicissitudes as a lack of funds and government support, Catholic missionaries continued to expand their Indian apostolate in anglophone areas. In the decade following Confederation, there were indications that the federal government had decided to establish an overall Indian policy in which residential schools were to play a significant role. The need to do this became all the more apparent when the Canadian government purchased Rupert's Land from the Hudson's Bay Company in 1869.

### **Rupert's Land and the Northwestern Territory**

In acquiring exclusive trading rights to Rupert's Land from the British Crown in 1670, the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) held sway over a vast region of North America for the next 200 years. Unlike the Company of One Hundred Associates in New France, whose stated purpose was the conversion of aborigines, the HBC had but one interest, the exchange of European trade goods for fur and country produce. It wanted no other contact with the Indians and forbade its employees from having domestic relations, or from engaging in missionary work. From the mid-1700s on, however, increasing references in post records to the presence of children of traders and Indian women finally led the Company's directors to acknowledge "that their early efforts to prevent traders from taking country wives and forming families in the Bay had failed."<sup>54</sup> As a result it initiated new hiring and educational policies with a view to preparing native-born children in the factories for Company employment. Factory managers were told to provide instruction locally. Ad hoc schooling arrangements like these were regularized when schoolmasters were appointed to places like Albany and York Factory. A few Indian children were recruited for these schools, but they seldom stayed for long.

The arrival of settlers in the Red River area in 1812, and clashes between the Bay and its arch-rival, the North West Company, finally forced the company to allow 'civilizing' agents, including Christian missionaries, into the country. The HBC decided to invite the Catholic bishop of Quebec to send missionaries to Red River in 1818, and took steps to merge with its

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid. "At the time of our [Commissioners'] visit [to Manitowaning], there were no Indian scholars in attendance ... The Rev. Dr. O'Meara [the resident Anglican missionary], confesses that this school has been entirely useless to the Indians..." Report of the Special Commissioners (1858), [p. 33]; and Ibid., [p. 114].

<sup>54</sup> Jennifer Brown, "A Colony of Very Useful Hands," *The Beaver* 307, no. 4 (Spring 1977), p. 39.

competitor the North West Company in 1821. The restoration of the HBC's monopoly prompted the London Committee to close the factory schools. And while the company subsequently left the provision of formal education in the hands of the Catholic and Protestant churches, it attempted to restrict their schooling activities to white and country-born children around Red River and in several posts along the Bay. Three Roman Catholic secular priests, led by Joseph Provencher, left Quebec for Red River in the summer of 1818. Within six months they had established Métis day schools at Red River and Pembina and were describing their pupils as "apt"<sup>55</sup> and "extremely intelligent."<sup>56</sup> The semi-nomadic nature and the largely nonagricultural interests of the Métis, however, led to the irregular attendance of their children, and only a few stayed for long. Subsequent attempts to send missionaries among the buffalo hunters with a view to schooling their children proved equally unrewarding. Insofar as the Hudson's Bay Company was concerned, the Catholic missionaries' failure to establish schools outside of Red River was very much in keeping with the Company's Indian trading interests.

In 1820 John West, an Anglican minister, was assigned to Fort Douglas in the Red River settlement as the HBC chaplain. West established a day school south of the Fort and proceeded with plans to build a central school in Red River for Indian, Métis and white children. West began by boarding ten Indian children but it was not long before he found himself at odds with Governor George Simpson over such matters as the Company's sale of liquor to the Indians. The minister's attempt to school Indian children added to the Governor's misgivings about the missionary. As Simpson put it, Indian missions would do:

little other good than fill the pockets and bellies of some hungry missionaries and schoolmasters and rearing the Indians in habits of indolence. They are already too much enlightened by the later opposition [North West Company] and more of it would do harm instead of good to the fur trade. I have always remarked that an enlightened Indian is good for nothing.<sup>57</sup>

Although the Company's London Committee chastised Simpson for opposing West's Indian schooling work, the missionary's continuing attacks

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<sup>55</sup> Father Severe Dumoulin to Plessis (Bishop of Quebec), January 5, 1819, quoted in C.J. Jaenen, "Foundations of Dual Education at *Red River 1811-34*" in *Transactions of the Historical and Scientific Society of Manitoba*, Series III No. 21, 1964-65, ed. C.J. Jaenen (Winnipeg, 1965), p. 44.

<sup>56</sup> Provencher to Dionne, August 15, 1819, quoted in *Ibid*, p. 43.

<sup>57</sup> Simpson to Colville, May 20, 1822, quoted in Winona Stevenson, "The Red River Indian Mission School and John West's 'Little Charges,' 1820-1833," *Native Studies* 4 Nos. 1 and 2 (1988), p. 150.

against Bayside officials resulted in his dismissal as Red River's HBC Chaplain and (Church Missionary Society) missionary. David Jones, who succeeded West at Red River, was much more tractable when he agreed with the governor's order not to admit any new Indian pupils in 1825. Those who remained in residence found themselves isolated from other children, and ended up being assigned to St. Peter's Indian Industrial School in 1833. In that year CMS missionaries in Red River yielded to pressure on the part of the company and settlers to establish segregated Indian residential schooling, whose instruction in farming would take place as the accepted form of Indian education. Simpson disapproved of this arrangement, fearing it would lead to large numbers of Indians abandoning the fur trade in favour of a sedentary lifestyle.

Governor Simpson's dissatisfaction with CMS missionaries extended to the Catholic church. In 1841 he wrote the Company's headquarters in London about "the need to check the Roman Catholic influence ... which, if allowed to remain unchecked would become extremely injurious to the Company's interest."<sup>58</sup> In 1839, he asked the Wesleyan Methodists to come to the country on the understanding they would not engage "in dangerous social experiments."<sup>59</sup> As a result of this invitation six Wesleyan missionaries, headed by James Evans, established missions beyond Red River in the early 1840s. Evans, along with Peter Jacobs and Henry Bird Steinhauer, two Methodist-trained Ojibwa assistants, went to Norway House. The Wesleyans subsequent attempt to found a Christian Indian village at Rossville, near Norway House started out well. Evans conducted a day school at Rossville, and used a form of writing known as Cree syllabics. Within two years of Rossville's founding, Simpson began receiving reports that Evans was meddling in Company affairs. Attempts to curb the missionary's independence were to no avail, and by 1845, amidst allegations that Evans had sexually fondled children in his care, Simpson was demanding that the British Wesleyan Society remove Evans. The missionary returned to England in 1846.

Simpson's opposition to Indian schooling was closely related to his views on Indian settlement. Although he had sanctioned the founding of an Indian village at Rossville, and accepted the possibility of this occurring at Red River, he was against there being similar settlements elsewhere. It is surprising, therefore, to learn that Simpson decided to allow Steinhauer to open a Rossville-like mission at Oxford House in 1850. Support for this endeavour, however, did not represent a change of heart. The decision was

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<sup>58</sup> See Glyndwr Williams (ed.), "London Correspondence Inward From Sir George Simpson" (1841-42) (London: The Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1973), p. 25.

<sup>59</sup> Grant, *Moon of Wintertime*, p. 101.

forced on him by charges which circulated in England in the early 1840s, that the HBC was “deliberately keeping the natives of the country in a state of ignorance so that the company could exploit them for the purpose of reaping huge profits in the fur trade.”<sup>60</sup> As a means of countering such criticisms, Simpson ordered that facilities be built at Oxford House for Steinhauer’s mission.

Despite the Wesleyan’s heroic efforts as schoolteacher and minister, the Oxford House mission failed. Steinhauer opened a day school at the mission, which at its peak enrolled twenty-eight children, but as they were away with their families hunting and trapping for much of the year, the school was often without pupils.<sup>61</sup> It operated intermittently until the summer of 1854 when Steinhauer abandoned the mission altogether and went back to Rossville. Insofar as the British Wesleyans were concerned, the Oxford House mission marked an end to their missionary activities, and it would be a while before their successors would resume the church’s educational work among the Indians.

As the Methodist missions were fading Bishop Provencher appeared ready to break out of his enclave at Red River. There were some 2,500 faithful on the settlement’s parish registers. But if the bishop’s mission was to fulfill its purpose, it had to reach the aboriginal people to the West. He found it difficult, however, to recruit missionaries or to have them stay in missions beyond Red River. The Métis played a pivotal role in Catholic missionizing in the Hudson’s Bay Company territories. Their adherence to forms of Catholic belief and practice, along with their ties with Indian communities provided a welcoming climate for Catholic missionaries. When groups of Cree and Métis hunters from what later became known as central Alberta visited St. Boniface in 1840, they returned home with favourable impressions of the Blackrobes. Their visits prompted Provencher to send Father Thibault to the Métis of Fort Carlton and Fort Edmonton and the Cree around Lac Ste. Anne in 1844.<sup>62</sup>

Catholic missionary fortunes took a further turn for the better when Bishop Provencher obtained the services of two religious congregations, the Sisters of Charity of Montreal, in 1844, and the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, a French missionary order of men, a year later. From then on these communities were key players in Catholic missionary and educational work among aboriginal people in western and northern Canada. Within a fortnight

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<sup>60</sup> I. Mabindisa, “The Praying Man: The Life and Times of Henry Bird Steinhauer” (Ph.D. diss., University of Alberta, 1984), pp. 332-334.

<sup>61</sup> John Trylon (schoolmaster at the Oxford House mission) to (James Ross), 1 September 1852. Provincial Archives of Manitoba (PAM), Alexander Ross Collection, quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 373.

<sup>62</sup> Chalmers, *Education Behind the Buckskin Curtain* (1972), pp. 104-106.

ofreaching St. Boniface, Marie-Louis Valade, the community's superior, was conducting a school for girls in a hastily put-together convent, and another sister was instructing a class of boys in the Bishop's residence. In 1848 the nuns moved into a two-story convent, which with its accommodation for up to fifty boarders and orphans was described as being much like "the Mother House in Montreal."<sup>63</sup> Additions to the convent were made to accommodate more children. By the early 1860s there were fifty Métis orphans – boys and girls – being cared for in this facility.<sup>64</sup> Few, if any, Indian children were under the care of the Grey Nuns until they established convents in missions to the Northwest. The first of these was at Lac Ste. Anne in 1859; others followed at Ile à La Crosse in 1860, Lac la Biche in 1862 and Fort Providence in 1867.

Provencher and his successor, Alexandre Taché, often expressed concern about the need for teachers who could give instruction in English. This requirement became acute in the late 1860s when Taché decided to establish a school on the largely English-speaking side of the Red River at Upper Fort Garry. The Grey Nuns, who had worked well with French-speaking Métis, were being called upon to do more. Having provided day and residential schooling in St. Boniface and nearby parishes, they were now expected to provide care and instruction for anglophone and native-speaking children. These new tasks were mainly instigated by the energetic missionizing activities of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate who arrived in Red River a year after the Grey Nuns. Between 1845 and 1861, twenty-eight Oblate priests and brothers journeyed from their base at St. Boniface to set up a line of permanent missions as far west as the Rockies and north to the Mackenzie River country.<sup>65</sup> From then on the Oblates and the Grey Nuns worked closely together on a host of religious and charitable endeavours, in which residential schooling and the care of orphans played a significant role.

Most Oblates had neither teacher training nor classroom experience, and those who came to Red River expected to serve as itinerant missionaries, in keeping with the purpose of their community since its founding in France in 1815. The teaching sisters were given some relief, however, when Taché recruited three members of the Brothers of Christian Schools in 1854. Known for their skills as teachers of working class children, the brothers enrolled boys as day or boarding pupils in a new facility which became known as St. Boniface College. The fact that they taught in English as well

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<sup>63</sup> Quoted in Dennis King, *The Grey Nuns and the Red River Settlement* (Agincourt, Ontario: The Book Society of Canada Limited, 1980), p. 36.

<sup>64</sup> Rita McGuire, "The Grey Sisters in the Red River Settlement, 1844-1870," CCHA, *Historical Studies*, 53 (1986), p. 27.

<sup>65</sup> R. Carney, "Praying Chiefs," *Horizon Canada*, 8(94) (February 1987), pp. 2244-2245.

as French was much appreciated by local church officials, and the success of students like Louis Riel and Louis Schmidt was equally well-received.<sup>66</sup> Much to the community's dismay, the Christian Brothers withdrew from Red River in 1860, leaving the schooling of boys to the sisters and to a succession of Oblates who were not disposed to take up teaching. A few such as Constantine Scollen at Fort Edmonton in 1860, taught school subjects and catechism on a temporary basis. Otherwise the Oblates spent little time in the classrooms.

With the opening of Indian boarding schools in the West, the Oblates became administrators and supervisors of these institutions. From then on they directed much of the schooling and child care activities of the Grey Nuns, who found it difficult to obtain enough teachers from their ranks. There is no evidence, however, of the Congregation making any substantial changes to its recruitment or formation procedures to address the new role of the sisters as generalist teachers. In this regard they had some guidance in their Rule and in publications like the *Manuel de Piété*.<sup>67</sup> Yet even in these the emphasis was on Christian formation, religion and morality, not on teaching skills. That the sisters willingly made do with very little, including poor food and housing at times, reveals a commitment to their vows of poverty and obedience. Given their accommodating ways, however, the danger was that they could be exploited or overburdened by groups within the church or by other agencies. Despite these circumstances, it is clear that the network of Catholic Indian residential schools which eventually came about would not have been possible without the persistent efforts of women like the Grey Nuns.

### **Summary and Conclusion**

The establishment of jointly-operated Grey Nun and Oblate residential schools beyond Red River in the 1860s demonstrated a commitment to the care and instruction of aboriginal children, which the missionaries maintained until leaving this work in the 1970s. Because these schools were in isolated areas, they were called upon, despite the lack of supplies and personnel, to provide a wide range of non-schooling services, everything from welfare to medical care, and hospitality for passers-by. The schools operated under the most difficult circumstances for much of their existence, and except for the occasional commendation by government officials, no one gave these institutions much attention other than the local missionaries and

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<sup>66</sup> L. Dauphinais, *Histoire de Saint Boniface*, Tome I (Saint-Boniface: Les Éditions du Blé, 1991), pp. 202-204 and 214-219.

<sup>67</sup> Soeurs Grises, *Manuel de Piété à l'usage de Soeurs de la Charité* (Montréal: John Lovell, 1872).

Indians and Métis who were familiar with them.

School teaching was not part of the mandate of either congregation before they came to Red River. The Grey Nuns were nurses and care givers to the poor and troubled of Montreal. The Oblates were dedicated to serving the destitute, and to teaching the Christian faith, and were known for using vernacular languages and for ministering in non-traditional religious settings. Once these missionaries came to St. Boniface, however, they were expected to play a key role in schooling aboriginal children. The sisters appear to have readily taken on this assignment and to have acquitted themselves well. The Oblates' ministry continued to be largely the same as it had been in France, yet they too eventually became involved, occasionally as teachers, and more often as school promoters and builders. The local hierarchy tried to recruit Jesuits, Ursulines and Christian Brothers because they were known for their teaching expertise, but except for a short-lived commitment by the brothers, nothing came of this. Instead the bishops settled for the Oblates and Grey Nuns who were seen to be more reliable, better educated and less expensive than lay teachers. This decision reflected future developments since with few exceptions, such as the Jesuit-run Wikwemikong residential school, Catholic aboriginal schooling would rest in the hands of the Oblates and Grey Nuns. This arrangement was a factor in the separation of Catholic schooling into two categories, day schooling for non-aboriginal children (by lay persons and teaching congregations) and residential schooling for aboriginal children (mostly by the Oblates and Grey Nuns) with the possibility of some staff and pupil crossover.

When the Jesuits returned to the Canadian aboriginal mission field in the 1840s their decision to favour day schooling led to some very promising attendance and academic indicators. The Jesuits' day school strategy was not in accord with Anglican and Methodist views on the worth of residential schools which was clearly evident in such institutions as the Mohawk Institute. Nor was the Jesuit preference countenanced by Egerton Ryerson and other authorities who believed that Indian children would not attend day schools regularly, or if they did, they were not ready to be educated alongside white children. It is not surprising, therefore, that when the federal government assumed responsibility for Indian schooling, it made funds available for boarding schools. The federal government's position on this matter undoubtedly influenced the Jesuits' decision to obtain funds to build boarding school facilities at Wikwemikong in 1868, and this development likely influenced the Oblates to seek federal grants for similar ventures.

Reference should also be made to the continuities and discontinuities inherent in part-time bush and wilderness schools. The Jesuits and Oblates were particularly inclined to give instruction in these contexts, and were known for their work in compiling aboriginal grammars and dictionaries. With the assistance and approbation of native informants, Catholic mission-

aries also developed a variety of native language orthographies, and along with the Anglicans, they constructed versions of the syllabic form of writing which the Methodists had put together at Rossville. Native language hymnals, prayer books and other texts were circulated widely and led to significant levels of literacy in not a few native communities. Other instructional devices including oral games, mnemonic exercises and physical contests, and illustrative material such as the Oblate pictorial catechism were used in bush and wilderness schools, where their worth was soon determined by the presence or absence of the children.

Some of the above resources were used in Catholic day and residential school religious education programs. And while religion permeated all aspects of the curriculum of these schools, their daily schedules were mainly devoted to teaching the basic skills of reading, writing and arithmetic in more than one language. Other than in places like St. Boniface College, such instruction did not normally go beyond Standard Three (Grade Four). Textbooks and teaching manuals from France were obtained. Sister Valade, Superior of the Grey Nuns at St Boniface, made frequent requests to various sources for textbooks and teaching manuals. Among the manuals obtained by her were *Nouveau Manuel des Salles D'Asile à l'usage Des Filles de la Charité de Saint Vincent-de-Paul*, par une soeur directrice de salle d'asile (Paris: Dezobry, E. Magdeleine et Cie, 1854); and Marie Pape-Carpantier, *Enseignement Pratique Dans Les Salles D'Asile*, (Paris: Librairie De L. Hachette et Cie, 1854).<sup>68</sup> The Jesuit schools at Wikwemikong used such popular texts in English as Mayor's Spelling, Sullivan's Geography and the 1st and 2nd Reading Lessons by the Christian Brothers.<sup>69</sup> As the number of Catholic-sponsored aboriginal day and residential schools increased, instruction in vernacular languages was reduced to short periods of catechism by missionary priests, whenever they could absent themselves from other duties. Native requests for full-time or bilingual instruction were seldom taken up in regular schools, the Jesuit establishments being an exception; sponsoring agencies, such as the HBC and the New England Company and Indian Affairs officials never supported requests of this nature. Although the use of French as a language of instruction was similarly discouraged, Jesuits and Oblates outside of Quebec continued to provide instruction in this language in Métis communities and in other schools which prepared children for higher education in places like Montreal. There is no evidence that native language use was prohibited in the classrooms or elsewhere in the Catholic residential schools of the time, and as a result many aboriginal pupils not only acquired a basic knowledge of French and

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<sup>68</sup> Archives of the Grey Nuns of Manitoba, St. Boniface, Manitoba. The manuals are signed "Révérende Sr. Valade, Rivière Rouge."

<sup>69</sup> "Report of the Special Commissioners" (1885), [p. 33].

English, but also became familiar with an aboriginal language other than their own.

It is understandably difficult to discover who went to early aboriginal schools, why they went, how long they stayed and what happened to them when they left. There are indications, however, that those who went to school did so with the consent of their parents or guardians, and that they could be removed from school whenever their parents wished. Moreover, the latter decision was frequently prompted by the pupils themselves. The reasons for allowing children to attend differed as to time and place and, as will be noted below, usually involved more than one circumstance.

There were situations however, where a parent's decision on this matter appears to have been based on a single factor. Joseph Brant had good memories of his time at Moor's Indian Charity School, and arranged to have two of his sons attend.<sup>70</sup> Peter Jones refused to send any of his sons to Mount Elgin, even though he had worked hard to establish the school. His decision had nothing to do with the school's program, but rather because the institution was not controlled by Christian Indians.<sup>71</sup> Although George Johnson attended the Mohawk Institute, he sent his daughter, the poet Pauline, who was born on the Mohawk Reserve near Brantford in 1861, to a local Indian day school. Then she attended the Grammar School in Brantford where she boarded with a white family, an unusual arrangement for the time.

As most native parents were not aware of such schools and as many of the remainder were not disposed to use them, only a small percentage of "school-age" children attended. In 1877 for example, it is estimated that not more than ten percent of Indian children of school age (seven-twelve) in Ontario – the highest percentage of the five provinces responding – were enrolled in Indian residential schools.<sup>72</sup> Although it would appear that the Mohawk Institute had the highest attendance of any aboriginal school, as late as 1899, the average period of unbroken pupil residence in this institution for boys and girls was only three years.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Jakes, *Mohawk*, p. 130.

<sup>71</sup> Smith, *Sacred Feathers*, p. 214.

<sup>72</sup> "Annual Report of the Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs" (ARDIA), December 31, 1876, pp. 14-21, 59-60; and ARDIA, June 30, 1877, pp. 5-8, 162-165. The first specific reference to compulsory attendance for Indian children occurred in 1884, when the Indian Act was amended to permit Band Councils to make rules "concerning the attendance at reserve schools of [Indian] children between the ages of six and fifteen." E.R. Daniels, "The Legal Context of Indian Education in Canada" (Ph.D. diss., University of Alberta, 1973), p. 96. There is no indication, however, that this or subsequent school attendance amendments to the Indian Act were enforced until well into the twentieth century.

<sup>73</sup> R. Ashton, hon. Secretary of the Mohawk Institute, to the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, September 1889, p. 53, Victoria Sessional Papers, no. 12, A1890, 27, quoted in Jennifer Pettit, "From Longhouse to Schoolhouse: The Mohawk

In most instances, aboriginal parents enrolled their children in boarding schools for one or more of the following reasons: to affirm trading, military and religious relationships; to secure European language, technological and vocational skills; and to obtain treatment and care for sick, orphaned and physically impaired children. Although elements from all the above categories are evident throughout the period, the reasons why parents sent children to these schools changed over time. The initial emphasis on relationships, found in seventeenth century Jesuit and Ursuline schools, was superseded by an emphasis on skill acquisition which came about following the establishment of the Mohawk Institute and other early aboriginal boarding schools in Upper Canada. However, it was not long before these institutions and their counterparts at Red River were called upon to cope with increasing numbers of children who were bereft of one or both parents, or who needed medical treatment or special attention of one kind or another. Contrary to what is claimed in some accounts of native schooling, aboriginal boarding schools were not modeled on another nineteenth century educational phenomenon, the industrial or reformatory school. While the environments of aboriginal boarding schools were spartan and highly structured, they were not designed for, nor did they take in, delinquent youth or children who had committed criminal offences. Misconceptions about the term “industrial school” may be because of the several meanings given it in the nineteenth century.

It would appear that residential pupils who accomplished most with respect to the skills mentioned above did so either because they had some previous instruction in day or bush schools or because they attended residential schools, at least initially, as day pupils. Some significant examples would be Henry Bird Steinhauer and Louis Riel, who continued their schooling as boarders or *interns* in residential schools and then went on to enroll in the same capacity at institutions of higher learning. The presence of this pattern is especially evident in terms of the vocational success of those who were among the first wave of pupils to enroll at such boarding institutions as St. Boniface College and the Mohawk Institute. Once this first wave had passed through, however, the schools were frequently obliged to register children who had no previous schooling at all. This turn of events also meant that more boarding places became available for children who were sick or orphaned. And while the schools’ readiness to help these children was appreciated, reports of the death of pupils and of their staying beyond the normal period of residence raised doubts in native communities about the worth of these institutions. Instances and allegations of various forms of child abuse only heightened these concerns. Yet one should keep in mind that the school and other services provided by the churches were the only ones that native communities had access to, and that they were similar

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Institute, 1834-1870” (M.A Thesis, University of Western Ontario, 1993), p. 145.

to the services provided most people in non-native communities at the time.

There is very little evidence available about what pre-Confederation boarding pupils thought of their time in residential schools, or what their occupations were after leaving these institutions. Although valuable in many respects, Pettit's study of the Mohawk Institute<sup>74</sup> and MacLean's on the Methodist residential schools at Alnwick (Alderville)<sup>75</sup> and Munceytown (Mount Elgin), do not record any impressions of pre-1867 students concerning their stay at these institutions. The only parental comment on what happened to their children, cited in either source, is John Southwind's, a native convert who complained to James Evans in 1837 about his daughter being "a [kitchen] servant for her schoolmates."<sup>76</sup> A Methodist account celebrating the seventieth anniversary of the Mount Elgin Institute, published in 1920, briefly describes the merits of ten former students, but does not quote a single recollection which this "first generation of Christians" might have had about being at Mount Elgin.<sup>77</sup> One therefore has to infer what the conditions at these schools were almost entirely from nonaboriginal informants.

Information concerning the careers of former students in missionary and government documents for the period, stresses the accomplishments of those who entered the ministry, became teachers, or served in the military. A report on the first hundred years of the Mohawk Institute, published by the Department of Indian Affairs in 1930, indicated that "at least 1,300 Indian boys and girls [had been] maintained and educated in this Christian Institution." The report stated that four graduates of the school had entered the ministry, fifty-five had become teachers and eighty-six had enlisted for overseas service in the Great War.<sup>78</sup> The 1920 Methodist retrospective also emphasized the services of those who took up teaching, ministerial and military callings. And like the Department's account of the Mohawk Institute, the commemorative piece on Mount Elgin largely ignored discussing the extent to which it and other aboriginal boarding schools met their original mandate of producing, as the latter document put it, "good farmers, good parents and good Christians...."<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Pettit, "From Longhouse to Schoolhouse."

<sup>75</sup> Hope MacLean, "The Hidden Agenda: Methodist Attitudes to the Ojibwa and the Development of Indian Schooling in Upper Canada, 1821-1860" (M.A. Thesis: University of Toronto, 1978).

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 164.

<sup>77</sup> "Mount Elgin Indian Residential School," *The Missionary Bulletin* vol. XVI no. 2 (April-June 1920), published quarterly by the Missionary Society of the Methodist Church, Toronto, pp. 191-193.

<sup>78</sup> ARDIA, March 31, 1930 (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1931), p. 21.

<sup>79</sup> "Mount Elgin Indian Residential School," p. 193.

Aboriginal day and residential schools were supported financially and in kind by individuals and groups within native communities. Examples of this can be found in the Grand River Mohawk's use of annuity funds to operate their schools, and in the cash, material and labour which the Ojibwa contributed to make schooling possible at Wikwemikong. Such involvement gave these communities a sense of responsibility for and a degree of control over what went on in these institutions. It also provided a much-needed signal to children about the value of schooling and the need to develop coping skills in order to meet the instructional and other demands associated with this process. It is important to note that the practice of aboriginal communities making direct contributions to schooling did not last much beyond Confederation, and that the alliances mentioned below also declined from this time onwards. Non-material forms of support for schools by aboriginal communities which had been in contact with Christian missionaries for some time were also important. This is particularly evident in the sympathies which existed between the Métis and the Catholic church and between the Mohawks and the Anglican church. These alliances had developed in such a way that each party expected much of the other.

This paper has provided an overview of aboriginal schooling in Canada prior to Confederation with emphasis on the role played by the Roman Catholic church. In examining a number of schooling initiatives, especially those related to residential care and instruction, the paper used a frame of reference based on the continuities and discontinuities inherent in the formal educational programs provided aboriginal children in New France, New Brunswick, Upper Canada (Canada West), Rupert's Land and the North-western Territory. The success or failure of aboriginal schooling ventures prior to Confederation depended mainly on the support or lack of it which aboriginal people gave them. Those who "came to teach" European values and skills to aboriginal people during the period, such as Marie de l'Incarnation, often failed to achieve their objectives, but their efforts in this regard cannot be viewed as being wholly destructive or ill-intended. Given the social and economic philosophy which prevailed throughout the pre-Confederation period, it must be said that much of what the missionaries did with respect to aboriginal schooling was intended to help native people to adjust to a changing environment, and that the missionaries and their sponsoring churches were foremost among newcomers to the country in attempting to do this.