

THE LITERARY PEN: DECONSTRUCTING THE NORMALIZED VIEW OF THE INDIAN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL EXPERIENCE

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ABSTRACT

Canadian Indian Residential Schools (IRS) were federal institutions operating between the 1880s and 1996. With IRS closure, survivors and their families began to speak publically to their experiences in IRS. The ensuing federal settlement agreement bore the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)—the most public forum for exposing and bringing to record the wrongs of that era. A main TRC goal has been to create a permanent and public archive of the legacy of residential schools from Survivor statements and archival documents. Indigenous peoples have contributed to the archive primarily in the form of oral testaments, presented within a process that has been shaped to center on the abuses (physical, sexual, and mental) suffered by students (Niezen 2013; Regan 2010). I argue that to discipline, in the words of Foucault, survivor narratives as such perpetuates their victimization. A range of Indigenous literatures and art that speak to the IRS experience represent other forms for bringing forth knowledge about the residential school experience; the narratives of which inform of strength and agency and can help others understand how the students survived their colonial environment. Among other things, these alternative chronicles are important to transcend the singular narrative of victimhood that bounds the existing residential school archive. This paper will present a sample of these alternative narratives using works by Basil Johnston, Thomas Highway, and Nicola Campbell.

THE NORMALIZATION OF VICTIMIZATION

Despite the closure of the last residential school in 1996, the Canadian Indian Residential School (IRS) legacy is still being exposed and made sense of in academic, political and public spheres. It is also a relatively new and emerging subfield within Canadian

Anthropology. Experiential residential school evidence is largely based on survivor testimony, especially within Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). Current discussions focused on the legacy of the residential school era and its remediation typically emphasize the concept of transitional justice. Within Canada, a transitional justice model has been adopted to respond to the massive injustices experienced by Indigenous peoples (Jung 2011:217).

Transitional justice is a legal framework that seeks to respond to mass human rights violations, recognize victims, and prevent the recurrence of past abuse in the future (Arthur 2011:1). For the purposes of this paper, I will argue that through the legal discourse surrounding the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement (IRSSA) the dialogue regarding the residential school experience has become disciplined³ to focus on the physical and sexual abuse of children. Rather than focusing on concepts such as cultural loss or emotional abuse, the TRC has become focused on concepts more easily handled under tort law such as physical and sexual abuse. With the IRS dialogue being so narrowly focused and unwavering, the victimization⁴ of IRS subjects has become normalized and has arguably caused more harm than reparation.

There are more layers of truths to the IRS experience than sexual and physical abuse. These experiences that have emerged from the IAP and TRC are not universal. Regardless, they have been extracted as the principle focus, and the most traumatic experiences have come to represent the experiences of IRS survivors everywhere. Indigenous literatures such as children's books, autobiographical accounts, and historical fiction about the residential school experience should be incorporated into academia as they represent other insights and alternative truths. These literary pieces offer experiences that move beyond the narrow realm of victimization and introduce

³ Testimony concerning physical and sexual abuse was favoured and emphasized by the legal system over other types of testimony. Thus, the narratives that survivors provide are often disciplined. Disciplining references the act of prioritizing and rewarding certain type of testimony over others, and as a result the act of testifying becomes 'trained' or 'controlled' to only speak towards specific kinds of abuse.

⁴ Victimization is used to describe the unjust treatment (emotional, physical and sexual) of children at residential school. The act of constantly having to relive those harms continues to victimize survivors and their families.

narratives of agency. This is not to say that the narratives of physical and sexual abuse that come out of IAP and TRC testimonies are not important. IRS literature represents an additional path for unveiling the IRS past that can be used to educate both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. Exploring the agency of children in the schools is important to survivors⁵ because it allows Indigenous peoples to explore new avenues of self-determination thus far not expressed to the public. Further, IRS literatures present a medium in which authors can distance themselves from a narrative of victimization, shaped by legislation, to one of agency. Overall, the incorporation of Indigenous IRS literature represents another avenue for survivors to speak to the residential school legacy and enact agency.

Indian Residential Schools

To do away with the tribal system and assimilate the Indian people in all respects with the inhabitants of the Dominion, as speedily as they are fit to change.

(John A. MacDonald as quoted by Milloy 1999:6)

Indian Residential Schools were first established by the Federal Government in the 1880s. By the mid-1900s the schools had spread across Canada. Under the auspices of religious organizations, their foundational purpose was the teaching of Christianity and the attempt to make the ‘Natives’ more ‘civilized.’ In this vein, the residential school system sought to separate Aboriginal children from their families and to “[reclaim] them from a state of barbarism and [to introduce] amongst them the industrious and peaceful habitat of civilized life” (Milloy 1999:11). To do this work, attendance was made mandatory in 1920 and many children were forcibly removed from their homes by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. In many cases, they were taken to schools hundreds of miles away in order to prevent them from returning (King 2012:111). While there, children were taught religion, trades, ‘manners’ and other cultural behaviors associated with Euro-Western culture. As Niezen claims, the overall

⁵ Survivors are those who attended and experienced residential school. However, it can be extended to include loved ones despite having not attended the schools.

objective of these schools was to “correct the essence of their being” (2013:15).

All children forced into residential schools were subjected to a power structure aimed at assimilating them into ‘Euro-Western’ life. Many, as brought to light by the TRC, suffered physical, sexual, and mental abuse. It is important to acknowledge that although not all children had such extreme experiences in residential school, all children, nonetheless, suffered from loneliness and cultural isolation. Consequently, it be said that the vast majority of students were harmed in some way.

With the closing of the last school in 1996, the once silent voices of former students began to speak out against the abuses they experienced in residential schools across Canada. The result was the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement (IRSSA). The IRSSA resulted in: a public apology issued by the government to former students, a common experience payment for survivors with an adjoining Independent Assessment Process (IAP) for those seeking additional payment for abuses, the establishment of a healing foundation, and a budget of \$60,000,000 to fund a TRC in order to solicit survivors’ testimony and achieve a form of transitional justice (Niezen 2013:43-49). It is the IAP and the TRC that I will focus on in the remainder of this paper.

Transitional Justice

Transitional justice is a formally sanctioned framework that is often applied to countries that are shifting from a former authoritarian form of government to one that is democratic (Jung 2011:217). This concept applies to states (such as Chile and South Africa) that are liberalizing both politically and in terms of their legal regimes (Teitel 2000). States that are undergoing these changes in government and adopt a transitional justice forum are attempting to redress past human rights abuses that were inflicted by the preceding state power (Teitel 2000:18), including: “genocide, torture, disappearance, massacre, sexual violence and other war crimes” (Nagy 2007:284).

The goal of transitional justice is to reestablish the relationship between the oppressed and the state. Transitional justice entails creating steps to developing that relationship with the ultimate purpose of achieving a ‘united’ nation. Those operating under a

transitional justice project want to make past abuses public knowledge, rehabilitate offending individuals into the renewed society (Teitel 2000:218), and provide healing for victims. According to Teitel “transitional justice offers a way to reconstitute the collective – across potentially diverse racial, ethnic, and religious lines—that is grounded in a political identity that arises from the society’s particular legacies of fear and injustice” (Teitel 2000:225). The purpose of transitional justice is to emphasize the individual as a civil being and reconstruct “the rules and conditions of political membership, representation, and participation that are basic to the individual’s place in the community” (Teitel 2000:227).

Jung puts forth that this transitional justice model is also being adopted “to respond to certain types of human rights violations against indigenous peoples” (Jung 2011:217). Thus, within Canada, this framework is being used (in the guise of the TRC) to confront the legacy of the Indian Residential School (IRS) system. But, this model is arguably limited in its ability to confront the issue of cultural abuse carried out during the residential school era. Laudable as the TRC is, I would argue that the transitional justice format that Canada has adopted with reference to the IRS system is too narrow in its focus on children’s physical and sexual abuse. In the next section, I will discuss how in Canada, by restricting the transitional justice framework, victimization has become disciplined into the IAP and TRC processes.

The Disciplining of the IAP and TRC

This section will focus on the Independent Assessment Process and the TRC, each an outcome of the IRSSA. Both are blanketed under a transitional justice legal discourse aimed at recognizing past abuses and working towards reconciliation (Arthur 2011:272). Nagy argues that transitional justice is typically constructed to focus on specific sets of actors for specific sets of crimes (Nagy 2008:275). In Canada’s case, the focus has narrowed exclusively to the residential school experience and more specifically on the abuses that were incurred (Niezen 2013), not on the larger issue of Aboriginal peoples’ relationship with the state and settler society. I argue in this section that from the outset, through restricted legal framing, the emphasis has come to rest on the ‘victimization of abuse.’ Michel Foucault’s concept of disciplining illuminates an invisible

structure that governs a dialogue of victimization influenced by the IAP, TRC, and the Canadian public.

Blackwater v. Plint (2001, 2003, 2005), while occurring prior to the IRSSA, demonstrates the influence of legal discourse over residential school claims. In this case the plaintiffs argued that loss of language and culture was an injury that both Government and Church should be accountable for (Blackburn 2012:289). However, as the case proceeded through the courts, it was abuse that was emphasized because, unlike emotional and cultural abuse, physical and sexual abuse are domains that can be easily dealt with under tort law (Blackburn 2012:294). Assault was deemed authentic in contrast to cultural loss (Blackburn 2012:297). This case demonstrates the power of legal discourse to prioritize certain forms of harm, here being physical and sexual abuse, over others. Further, court cases that produced a higher monetary outcome were often prioritized by lawyers when being brought to trial (Niezen 2013). This methodology, as described below, is also apparent in the Independent Assessment Process.

The IAP would compensate three forms of claims: physical and sexual abuse at the hands of a school employee, at the hands of another student, or by an adult on the school premises (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada n.d.). The degree of victimization was validated and compensated through monetary means (Niezen 2013:45). Through the IAP, a survivor's testimony "is [measured via] a point system in which numerical scores are awarded under three basic headings: 'Acts Proven,' 'Consequential Harm,' and 'Consequential Loss of Opportunity' (Niezen 2013:46). These then become further subdivided based on their severity as determined by lawyers. Points were primarily allocated and based on the calculated severity of abuse, whether sexual or physical.

This procedure demonstrates the hierarchy of abuse and victimization. The worse the abuse, the more points a claimant earned and the more money they were given to 'remedy' their experiences. Niezen points out that this process, although uncomfortable, demonstrates the correlation between financial compensation and traumatic experience (2013:47). Compensation was viewed as a method for remediating past injustices. This form of reparation is severely limited in the healing of survivors as money does not adequately account or 'resolve' the weight of the harm (Niezen

2013:44-46). The legal framework was influential in prioritizing claims that spoke to physical and sexual abuse. This influenced the structure in which experiences would be recognized in the context of the TRC (Niezen 2013:49).

Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission is designed as a forum where survivors and their families can voice their experiences (Jung 2011:217). It is intended to build a historical record from these testimonies through their documentation while overcoming a legacy of harm (Corntassel 142; Jung 2011:229). The TRC marks a step towards a more just and equitable relationship between Canada and Indigenous peoples (Corntassel 2009; Niezen 2013:4). However, according to Nagy (2008:278), truth commissions tend to structure conceptions of violence and justice under a more universal legalistic model. This is apparent in the Canadian TRC as it has become primarily focused on the victimization of children (Niezen 2013:5; Corntassel 2005:142), and thus an overarching survivor identity has been forged. Truth-telling and personal narratives, key features of the TRC, are influential in the construction of this survivor identity (Arthur 2011:5). While the abuse children experienced is undeniable, their role as victims of this harm has become the single and central narrative (Niezen 2013). Survivors express the pains of culture loss, as demonstrated in the Blackwater case, but what becomes focused on is physical and sexual abuse. This is not to argue that bringing these harms to light and demonstrating Indigenous resistance is not important; however, this weighting towards abuse has prevented the sharing of other narratives. Emphasizing the survivor narrative of overcoming abuse (physical and sexual) has limited a larger and fuller historical narrative from being expressed (Niezen 2013:84).

Foucault's perspective of the disciplining of society is important for understanding the central focus of victimization in the IAP and the TRC. When power takes the form of discipline, it becomes ingrained through the use of three tools: hierarchical observation, the normalizing of judgment, and through experimentation (Foucault 1979). These methods have been successfully implemented through the IAP and in the current TRC.

Hierarchical observation⁶ is a structure that coerces through observation (1977:170). It is a process that makes those inside it visible (Foucault 1979:172). Hierarchical observation places the individual under a microscope making them entirely visible. This tool is meant to subject the individual and silently pressure them to adhere to the demands of the observer. This process is especially apparent in the IAP. The legal framework gives precedence to trauma acts as an overbearing observer. Claimants were not forced to express claims of abuse over those of cultural loss so much as they were silently coerced. Through this hierarchy of observation, lawyers influenced survivors to speak to particular kinds of traumatic experiences.

Normalizing judgment is a second element of Foucault's conceptualization of disciplining power. It is a process in which behaviors become measured (Foucault 1979:181). Behaviors are gauged as being correct (normal) or deviant, resulting in the allocation of grades to levels of positivity or negativity (Foucault 1979). Gauging is demonstrated in the IAP by awarding larger compensatory monetary allotments to survivors claiming high levels of abuse. Those who did not experience high levels of physical and sexual abuse would have been discouraged from taking part in the IAP as absence of abuse would be deemed 'deviant' in terms of normalizing judgment. Additionally, those who could not accurately reflect on past experience due to its traumatizing effects and mental distress were also dissuaded from filing claims (Niezen 2013:48).

Last, according to Foucault examination, is a combined technique of observing hierarchy and normalizing judgments (1979:184). The TRC forum acts as an examination. In it survivors' testimonies are judged and different experiences take precedent over others. In constantly being examined, individuals who choose to speak in the TRC or those who chose to take part in the IAP are subjected and their experience of victimization is further established. According to Foucault, at the heart of examination subjection manifests itself onto to those "who are perceived as objects and the objectification of those who are subjected" (Foucault 1979:184-185). Thus, a hierarchy of experience was established, and examination compels those who

⁶ The hierarchical observer is not necessarily an individual but can also be a legal framework or a system of rules that pressures individuals to make particular decisions.

testify to emphasize physical and sexual harms done to them in the past over cultural harms (Foucault 1979:187).

Documentation also represents a means of examination (Foucault 1979:189). The power of writing as reflected in the documentation of testimonials, archiving, and academic treatments, further disciplines the narratives expressed (Foucault 1979:189). It is through the exercise of the techniques of disciplining that the individual becomes a 'case,' and, in being a 'case,' the individual may be judged, measured or compared with others in their very individuality (Foucault 1979:191), thus contributing to the established hierarchy. Throughout these processes, the message that is stressed is one of victimization. Narratives become measured in comparison to others arguably allocating higher status to more extreme cases of trauma than to others which are deemed 'lesser.' Those who feel that their experiences do not meet specific criteria have chosen to opt out of testifying in the TRC, perpetuating the emphasis on physical and sexual abuse. As one residential school survivor stated:

I almost feel guilty because, I mean, I had it rough in residential school.... Sister N wasn't the nicest person in the world. I didn't starve though. I had clothes. I had a warm bed. I wasn't abused physically, you know, or sexually abused. Um, she was pretty rough on us, though. But my story compared to our elders... it almost seems insignificant, if I could say that. (Niezen 2013:95)

The above comment demonstrates the disciplining of testimonies in the TRC, which I argue began through the initial IAP process. The statement expresses the speaker's awareness of a hierarchy of experiences to the point that they believe their narrative unworthy of being told. It is also a demonstration of the normalization of victimhood as a dominant narrative and the silencing of other, i.e. 'deviant', survivors.

Public Disciplining

Disciplining not only resides within the boundaries of the TRC, but also extends to the general public. More specifically, public understanding and perceptions of the residential school legacy are

centered on the physical and sexual abuse of the children who attended the schools. Emphasizing survivors' residential school experiences of physical and sexual abuse triggered a shock reaction in Canadian 'settler' society (Regan 2010). But, does this mean we should continue to focus solely on abuse? I argue that abuse should not be the singular theme in looking back on the IRS legacy. Instead, stories of resistance are just as effective in raising awareness amongst the public and are more empowering to survivors (Haig-Brown 1988).

THE POWER OF THE LITERARY PEN

More important than the past itself . . . is its bearing upon cultural attitudes in the present. For reasons that are partly embedded in the imperial experience, the old divisions between colonizer and colonized have re-emerged . . . Are there ways we can reconceive the imperial experience in other than compartmentalized terms, so as to transform our understand of both the past and the present and our attitudes towards the future?

(Edward W. Said 1993:17)

Canada, with its goal of achieving transitional justice through the TRC, has narrowly focused on the abuse of children in residential school. Through the legal framework, beginning in the IAP, a preferred narrative has resulted in survivors being cast as victims and essentialized as such. As a result, testimonies commonly emphasize physical and sexual abuse, and victimization has become normalized at the TRC and in the eyes of the Canadian public. This arguably causes harm to survivors, their communities and inhibits the healing process.

In this section I argue for the incorporation of Indigenous literature, such as autobiographies, historical fiction, and children's books, into academia as they represent other ways of knowing the residential school legacy. This other kind of testimony provides an alternative way of understanding the past so as to transform our understanding beyond the normalized victim conceptualization and challenge what the legal system deems important. As will be discussed below, Indigenous literatures demonstrate autonomy, a portrayal of Indigenous knowledge, and an expanding Indigenous identity that

goes beyond victimization. Different IRS experiences, such as a sub-culture of resistance, then become apparent. Through these incorporations, Indigenous peoples are offered an avenue to express their self-determination in shaping the experiences they present to the public. The medium of literature presents these experiences in ways that afford the writers emotional distance from the continued position of victim that occurs in the context of the TRC and so shifts the survivors' position to one of agency. Aboriginal writings can also be viewed as a method of teaching and presenting their experiences to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. Overall, IRS literature can contribute to the healing process and act as a way of destabilizing the disciplined structure that has been embedded in survivor testimonies.

A Sub-Culture of Resistance

While the extent of abuse experienced by survivors has become increasingly known, we know little about how they survived. It is these experiences, represented in Indigenous literature, that convey to us those alternate truths. Indigenous literature speaks to a sub-culture of resistance against colonization that reflects the children's agency in the schools (Haig-Brown 1988). Further, this literature reflects the active agency of survivors to present particular experiences to the public that are not solely focused on victimization. These writings are important because they make obvious the fact that there are stories untold that can offer a more complete understanding of the IRS experience (Haig-Brown 1988:9-10).

Celia Haig-Brown (1988) in *Resistance and Renewal* speaks to a sub-culture of resistance by children within residential schools. Resistance could take form in the smallest actions: stealing food, using Indigenous languages whenever possible, or simply not resisting at all (Haig-Brown 1988:98-104). Resistance represents children's forms of power and control in an environment that seemed uncontrollable. Most importantly, this sub-culture was fundamental to their survival (Haig-Brown 1988:106). This is a central theme within Indigenous IRS literature and is reflective of the vitality and persistence of Indigenous peoples (Swann 1983:vv).

In residential schools, children of the opposite sex were separated (Haig-Brown 1988). However, in Campbell's children's

book *Shin Chi's Canoe*, she sets a scene in which the children have made up sign language in order to say 'Hi' or 'I miss you' to their loved ones (2008). In Thomas Highway's book *Kiss of the Fur Queen*, the protagonist Champion refuses to accept his Christian name 'Jeremiah.' He is aware that he will have to respond to his given Christian name, but will only concede to "Champion-Jeremiah" internally (Highway 2000:58). These examples demonstrate the self-determination of the children against the overbearing colonial structure (de Leeuw 2009:137). Basil Johnston in *Indian School Days* reveals another example of resistance and its sub-culture:

But as I was to learn later, the boys were not really waiting in the commonly understood sense of the word 'wait'. Though they may have appeared to be waiting, the boys in reality were exercising a form of quiet disobedience directed against bells, priests, school and, in the abstract, all authority, civil and religious They turned to the only means available to them: passive resistance, which took the form of dawdling. (Johnston 1988:29-30)

These narratives are important because they reflect an alternate unknown truth. They complicate the IRS discourse centered on victimization and contribute to a more complex understanding of the issue. These literatures represent experiences of agency that express survival and ultimately empower survivors.

Humor as Healing

Humor is another element of this sub-culture of resistance. It is especially important to the assertion of autonomy and to assist survivors in the healing process. The use of humor acts as a healing method in the writing of the above authors and can be extended to communities as well (Gross 2009:83). Furthermore, knowledge and stories of residential school become humorously intertwined within a larger IRS narrative.

Humor symbolizes a coping mechanism that is employed by children within the schools and by Indigenous authors today (Fagan 2009:204). In both instances, humor represents a means of survival (Fagan 2009:204). In *Kiss of the Fur Queen*, Thomson Highway

explicitly speaks to his experiences of sexual abuse in residential school while using humor as a story telling method. Kristina Fagan asserts that Indigenous writers use humor and storytelling to establish meaningful relationships between past traumas in a culturally and socially appropriate way (Fagan 2009:206). The passage below describes humor as an important tool for healing, both for the individual and the community:

And sometimes we just tell stories for fun, to laugh, because laughter is healing. Coming from this storytelling tradition, it is odd to know that our stories are sometimes excluded from the material scholars call 'literature. (Monture 2009:116)

Highway is confronting his past abuse and his use of dark humor acts as a healing practice. An example is the retelling of a Cree story of Weesageechak and Weetigo by Jeremiah and his brother Gabriel. Weetigo is a cannibalistic creature that Jeremiah, metaphorically portraying Highway, associates with the priest that sexually abused him. Weesageechak, a Cree trickster figure, takes the form of a weasel and “crawls up the Weetigo’s bumhole” killing the Weetigo (Highway 2000:118).

This story is important as it reflects multiple layers of resistance. First, the story can be regarded as resistance to abuse in which Weesageechak poetically kills the abuser. Second, while the story is dark in nature it reflects the use of humor as an instrument of resistance. Last, telling this story demonstrates the use of traditional Cree knowledge to resist victimization at the hands of the abuser and the assimilatory practices of residential schools. Highway is also employing the story of Weetigo and Weesageechack as a way of healing.

Basil Johnston also writes with a humoristic tone, using humor as a connection between the past and present. Johnston expresses how humor was practiced as a way of dealing with or resisting pain and suffering. For example, most students were starving, and food “was a reality that the boys could understand; it was a substance that could not only allay hunger but also bring some comfort to a desolate spirit” (Johnston 1988:137). They directed their insults at the food describing it as too salty and made jokes to the priests demanding that the priests ate it when they were scolded for

complaining about their meals (Johnston 1988:137). Here humor is utilized as a way of resisting physical suffering (starvation) and the impoverishment of the residential institution.

Within the pages of these literatures, powerful narratives are present. They exhibit experiences of resistance to abuse, not only physical and sexual, but to the residential school system as a whole. This contributed vitally to children's survival in Indian Residential Schools. They represent resistance by the authors to the disciplined structure as explained by Foucault within the Canadian legal framework. Last, but not the least, the stories in this genre of Indigenous literature are arguably liberating to survivors and contribute to the healing process.

Importance of Indigenous IRS Literatures

There is great power in words (Swann 1983:xii), and, as I have explained above, Indigenous literatures (whether autobiographical or children's stories) are important in reflecting on and illuminating the residential school legacy. Indigenous IRS literatures represents an alternate form of truth-telling that is not governed nor bounded by the Canadian legal framework that has disciplined the TRC narratives (Fagan 2009:215). According to Regan, truth is not singular or absolute, but rather it is multiple, subjective, and power-differentiated (Regan 2010:62). Storytelling acts as truth in another form and offers responses in importantly different voices to the disciplining dilemma. It acts as an alternative to the observing that occurs in the TRC (Fagan 2009:210).

The truths that come though storytelling represent a multitude of experiences, both good and bad. The authors bring forth experiences of suffering and resistance to suffering that have otherwise gone untold. What emerges from Indigenous IRS literatures is a narrative of strength that is shared by children and by the authors. These literatures are important because they represent Indigenous survivors speaking to their past in a way they personally see fit. For example, Highway still writes about sexual abuse, but uses humor as a way of representing that difficult past. At the same time, he is demonstrating resistance by escaping the control of the TRC's disciplined structure. Robina Thomas (2007:242) states that stories represent resistance and telling these stories is a form of asserting

Indigenous autonomy. What is apparent is that Indigenous IRS literatures are vital to other ways of knowing about the past and making sense of contemporary situations.

Indigenous Agency

These books reflect two forms of agency. First, they represent the agency of children as they resist the colonial regime. Children defied their school superiors in many ways that contributed to their survival in residential schools (de Leeuw 2009:137). Second, they represent the authors' agency in their ability to speak to their past in the ways they see necessary. Indigenous literature presents a new IRS narrative through autobiographies, historical fiction and children's books that, in a sense, frees the stories and allows the survivors their own voices and ways (Swann 1983; Weaver et al. 2006). Authors like Johnston and Highway have power in telling their stories and the truth-telling process is in their hands (Thomas 2007:245). As a result, our understanding of Indigenous peoples as victims and survivors of residential schools expands to include that of agent. The survivor identity grows to encapsulate agency as reflected in their reflections on the IRS experiences.

Literature as a Method of Teaching

It is not our intention to require you only to share your pain with us... We need you to look not only at the sadness and pain, but to talk about the good things that happened in the schools... It is important for your grandchildren to know why you survived

(Murray Sinclair as quoted by Ronald Niezen 2013:61)

As explained above, Indigenous IRS literature brings forth new knowledge and this becomes a very important tool for the education of Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. This statement from Justice Sinclair during one of the commission's sessions speaks to the significance of bringing forth past experiences other than abuse. Justice Sinclair recognizes the impact positive experiences can have on Indigenous peoples. An example of "good things that happened in the schools" is Highway's recollection of his

traumatic past; while it is undoubtedly a negative one, the way he writes about his trauma can be considered a helpful narrative towards the healing process.

Indigenous literature has the power to instruct (Swann 1983:xiv), and expressing positive experiences is not only important for current survivors but contributes to the understanding of future generations. These pieces hold real knowledge, both good and bad, regarding the whole of the past that help in contributing to new ways of knowing about the past (Krupat 1992:17; Thomas 2007:245; Gross 2009:80). Further, these narratives can be used to pass on teachings about the strength of Aboriginal identity and instill a sense of pride and strength amongst survivors and future generations (Igloliorte 120; Thomas 2007:253; Regan 2010:6).

MOVING FORWARD

As explained in Section I, the IRSSA legal framework acts as a hierarchical observation in which survivors are coerced into emphasizing their experiences of trauma. This begins in the IAP and is continuing, despite the intent of the commissioners, into the current TRC. These literatures are valuable because in and of themselves, and their authors, represent their various ways a resistance to such hierarchical observation. They speak not exclusively to trauma, but also remind by recounting other experiences of strength that was shown and continues to remain.

IRSSA, the IAP and even the TRC have combined in a disciplining that has further resulted in the normalizing of a victim narrative. Those that deviate from the narrative of trauma are considered deviant. Many survivors choose to withhold expressing the full range of their experiences because they believe their stories do not fit the preferred traumatic account. Indigenous IRS literatures, by presenting other forms of narratives that do not focus too narrowly on physical and sexual abuse, disrupt the normalized victim narrative. What they show is that this disciplined structure is not immutable, but can be changed through a counter-narrative that is part of and emerges within these literatures (Regan 2010:65).

In disrupting the hierarchical observation and the normalized judgment as disciplined by the Canadian legal framework (which has been argued to cause more harm than healing) survivors become

empowered. The deconstruction of the overarching power helps survivors feel unshackled by the system and gives them strength; they feel as though the power is back in their hands. These new perspectives promote healing and inspire survivors to share their experiences—experiences that include the full scope of residential school survivors’ experiences. According to Thomas storytelling not only validates the experiences of the storyteller (2005:252), but also has the ability to give others the strength, encouragement and support they need to tell their own stories. Other narratives destabilize the hierarchy and the normalized victim narrative. As these narratives continue to increase it is possible that the underlying structure, as described by Foucault, can be dislodged completely.

The Role of Academia

With the TRC coming to an end, further initiatives need to be taken toward exposing the residential school past and promoting the healing of survivors and their communities. Arnold Krupat (1993:xxi) believes that academics have a responsibility to share their tools with Indigenous peoples, and academia provides a forum for the incorporation of Indigenous literatures and an outlet to shine light on the residential school legacy. I am not suggesting that academic exposure is the only context in which this can take place and it certainly cannot replace the narrative constructed by Aboriginal writers, but it represents one of many possibilities. The importance of having collaborative exchange between academic and Indigenous IRS literatures is three-fold. First, it makes new space for Indigenous voices. This undisciplined voice speaks to other IRS experiences and contributes to the empowerment of survivors. Second, it furthers the destabilization of the disciplining power that the legal framework has established within society. Last, it bridges new meaningful relationships between academics (especially anthropologists and historians) and Indigenous peoples.

In Section I, documentation was described as a means of disciplining and of aiding in the normalizing of victim narratives. However, the incorporation of Indigenous knowledge regarding the residential school legacy into academic documentation represents another method of disrupting the disciplined nature of IRS survivor narratives. Incorporating literature by Indigenous authors marks a step

towards deconstructing the underlying disciplining structure that governs the hierarchy of narratives. New narratives of agency, like Highway's, differ from victim narratives by highlighting individuals' resilience, potentially altering the hierarchy of experiences. Further, inclusion in academic analyses of the perspectives these 'other' narratives provide offer another procedure for empowering survivors and inspiring others to share their experiences.

Bridging the gap between the academy and Indigenous literature will mark a step toward strengthening the relationship between academics and Indigenous peoples, while simultaneously leveraging Indigenous self-determination. It also opens a new way of involving subjects (Regan 2010:65; Sluka 2007:182). In incorporating the knowledge held within these books, anthropologists are making space for the survivor voice and accepting survivor agency. Thus, anthropologists become "instrumental" or helpful figures (Deloria 1969:190) in Indigenous societies (Sluka 2007:180) and can interdict the public disciplining. The new knowledge that Indigenous literature brings to light challenges the academic view and its incorporation within the scholarly narrative challenges 'settler' society to question the normalized view of the victimization of residential school children (Regan 2010:55). More specifically, as an additional narrative it can contribute to the healing process and the empowerment of survivors and of Indigenous communities.

It also demonstrates what Paulette Regan (2010:42) would describe as an encounter between Canada or 'settler' society (i.e. anthropologists) and Indigenous peoples. While the legal framework represents the domination of Canadian ideology over that of Indigenous ideologies, academia acts as a means to bring together both sides to help shape a new relationship of mutuality and reciprocity (Regan 2010).

CONCLUSION

Canada, in an attempt to achieve reconciliation, has begun to address the human rights abuses experienced in the IRS system through a transitional justice model. The focus is on the victimization (physical and sexual) of children over the cultural and psychological abuse because tort law can easily compensate those forms of harm. I have argued that disciplining power, as described by Foucault, is

woven through the IAP and TRC process due to the legal framework. Hierarchical observation, normalizing judgment, and examination, have resulted in testimonies that focus on physical and sexual abuse as the abuse experienced by the normalized victim. This ultimately hinders the healing process of survivors. As the TRC comes to an end there is little dialogue about how to continue the healing process and explore IRS history.

Indigenous literatures that speak to residential school experience present one resolution to disciplining power. The authors reflect on the entirety of the IRS experiences. These stories are important because they present new knowledge regarding IRS. An example is through the description of a sub-culture of resistance. These pieces also act as a way of educating Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities about the past. They can inspire others to share their stories and contribute to the healing process.

Indigenous literatures may also fall victim to disciplining power. However, they can act as a way of deconstructing the overarching discipline that has been implanted through the Canadian legal framework. First, through the presentation of alternative narratives not only focused on physical and sexual abuse. Second, authors still speak to abuses but do so according to their own terms and in ways they see appropriate (such as humor being used as a tool to discuss sexual abuse). Last, these powerful narratives can inspire other survivors (those who thought their experiences were 'insignificant') to share their experiences thus enabling a new generation to learn the full IRS history.

The incorporation of academic and Indigenous literatures into the sphere of the academy, where it heretofore has had little place, offers a hybrid path for disseminating the full scope of knowledge regarding IRS experiences to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. While Foucault forcefully argues that academia itself is a form of repressive documentation and thus disciplining, the joining of these two fields represents an additional opportunity to destabilize the disciplining power of which he warns. The coming together of academia and Indigenous IRS literatures also represents a way of forging new and productive relationships between the academy and Indigenous peoples through the incorporation of missing Indigenous voices that speaks to their own history. Ultimately, recognizing the

knowledge that the pages of Indigenous IRS literatures possess is a way of reflecting on the past and achieving transitional justice.

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