Settler Colonial Power and Indigenous Survival: Hockey Programs at Three Indian
Residential Schools in Northwestern Ontario and Manitoba, 1929-1969

by

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in

History

Carleton University

Ottawa, Ontario

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Abstract

Despite the growing national interest and body of literature concerning the Indian Residential School System, there has been little acknowledgement of the history of hockey within these schools. This thesis examines the hockey programs at three Protestant-run Indian residential schools in northwestern Ontario and western Manitoba during the middle of the twentieth century. By using church and government documents, this study highlights the complex relationship between settler colonialism, sport, and Indigenous survival. It reveals that while hockey was implemented into residential school curriculum as a means of assimilation, public relations, and eventually integration, it was also a space of negotiation, entertainment, identity, and even survival for Indigenous children within these schools. Microlevel decisions and effects greatly influenced the advancement of hockey from a local-level disciplinary technique to a federally mandated aspect of Indian education.

Acknowledgments

I would first like to voice my appreciation for the guidance provided by my supervisor, Dr. Michel Hogue, in researching, writing, and editing this thesis. His gentle yet firm voice along with his knowledge of Indigenous historiography was essential to my success as a graduate student. I also wish to thank Dr. John Walsh who graciously supervised my Honour's Thesis, which became the foundation for this project, and supported me as a young undergraduate fascinated with Canadian history and hockey. My gratitude also extends to Jean-Pierre Morin and Dr. Hugh Shewell for their comments and constructive criticisms on my thesis in its final stages. Furthermore, a gracious thank you to the administrative staff of the Department of History at Carleton University, specifically Joan White for all her help over the years. We would all be lost without her.

My entire academic career would not have been possible without the love and support of my parents who fostered a safe environment for their quiet and introspective son. Furthermore, to my partner Catherine, who understands the ups and downs of writing a thesis as if she wrote one herself, thank you (or merci).

Finally, I would like to dedicate this thesis to all the children who attended residential schools in Canada and never returned home the same, if they returned at all, and for all the parents who waited for them.

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Introduction

The closing of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) in 2015 ushered in a new era of national interest in the Indian Residential School System (IRSS). Although the IRSS had been brought to the attention of the Canadian public before, the TRC made national headlines of the issue.¹ This renewed interest in the IRSS has spurred a new debate about the nature of these schools. Indigenous and non-Indigenous people alike have criticized the narrative of residential schools in Canada by claiming that the positive influence of the schools has been neglected.² Some individuals who support this view have been rightfully criticized for their disregard of the cultural, physical, and sexual abuse students experienced at the hands of school staff, while others believe there is a place for both positive and negative experiences in the national narrative of the IRSS.³ Canadians are still struggling to comprehend the complex and traumatic history of the IRSS which is a hindrance to the process of reconciliation.

One of the most common positive experiences recounted by survivors of the IRSS is playing organized sports, especially hockey. For many survivors, including TRC commissioner Chief Wilton Littlechild, hockey offered an escape from the monotony and

¹ Susana Mas, "Truth and Reconciliation offers 94 'calls to action'," *CBC News*, December 15, 2015, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/truth-and-reconciliation-94-calls-to-action-1.3362258>, is one of numerous articles published by national media outlets. Several popular cultural works were also created during this period including Richard Wagamese, *Indian Horse* (Toronto: Douglas & McIntyre, 2012) and Gordon Downie and Jeff Lemire, *Secret Path* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2016).

² Paul Russell, "Paul Russell: Could it be that residential schools weren't so bad?" *The National Post*, January 11, 2014, <http://nationalpost.com/opinion/paul-russell-could-it-be-that-residential-schools-werent-so-bad>; Tim Fontaine, "Unless you've gone yourself, residential schools should remain indefensible," *CBC News*, March 11, 2017, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/indigenous/residential-schools-history-indefensible-1.4020519>.

³ Joshua Ostroff, "Tomson Highway has a Surprisingly Positive Take on Residential Schools," *The Huffington Post*, December 15, 2015, http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2015/12/15/tomson-highway-residential-schools_n_8787638.html; John Paul Tasker, "Senator Beyak says she has 'suffered' with residential school survivors," *CBC News*, March 27, 2017, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/senator-lynn-beyak-suffered-residential-schools-1.4042627>.

abuse endured while attending residential school.⁴ Numerous academic, popular, and government publications discuss the history of the IRSS, many of which allot only a few pages to sport if they mention it at all.⁵ Janice Forsyth, one of the few scholars studying residential school sport, laments the lack of research on this subject as it would allow for a greater understanding of both the development of Euro-Canadian sport practices and residential school history as a whole.⁶ This marks a significant failure in the scholarship as the emphasis survivors place on sport in their testimonies is not being reflected in the academic literature.

The fragments of scholarship that do discuss the role of sport in the IRSS all illustrate how sport was both a tool of assimilation wielded by the settler colonial state as well as a site of enjoyment and survival for Indigenous children. Many residential schools had adopted sport programs to foster bodily health, discipline, and self-confidence among the student body by the early decades of the nineteenth-century. These programs were viewed as complementary to the assimilationist agenda of the IRSS. One Indian Agent in the 1950s went as far as to say that, “a rink at this school is almost as essential as a classroom.”⁷ However, funding issues greatly affected the viability of these sports programs and created a wide variance in the strength of each individual school’s program.⁸ Some schools managed with only a few playground balls while others had thriving competitive hockey teams. Regardless of the

⁴ Duncan McCue, “How Hockey Offered Salvation at Indian residential schools,” *CBC News*, March 26, 2014, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/indigenous/how-hockey-offered-salvation-at-indian-residential-schools-1.2583531>.

⁵ J.R. Miller, *Shingwauk’s Vision: A History of Native Residential Schools* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 271-275; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *A Knock at the Door the Essential History of Residential Schools from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Edited and Abridged* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2015), 98-103.

⁶ Janice Forsyth, “The Indian Act and the (Re)Shaping of Canadian Aboriginal Sport Practices,” *International Journal of Canadian Studies* 35 (2007): 106.

⁷ Gifford Swartman, Re: Sioux Lookout Indian Residential School, 19 July 1951, RG 10, Volume 9274, File 494/6-1-014. Part 1, Library Archives Canada, Ottawa, Ontario.

⁸ Forsyth, “The Indian Act,” 105.

strength of sport programs, students tended to react positively to sports and the lessons that were gleaned from them.⁹ Sport offered students an escape from everyday life, a chance to develop self-esteem and identity, provided hours of enjoyment, and even broke down racial barriers.¹⁰ Scholars have thus arrived at a rather complex and somewhat contradictory history of residential school sport in which sport was seemingly able to benefit both the staff and the students who appropriated it for their own purposes.

As a non-Indigenous scholar of settler descent, it has been a challenging journey embarking on this project. I do not have the authority to speak about the residential school experience or the experience of Indigenous peoples in this country, but I do believe Settler scholars have a duty to perform this kind of research as it not only involves our ancestors but also the privilege that their descendants currently hold in Canada. By relegating this story to only one group we remove it from the shared history of Canada and enact what Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang have called a “settler move to innocence.”¹¹ Settlers must write of the atrocities that were committed in the name of Canada that gave us our privileges as Settlers, but also use that privilege to amplify the voices of Indigenous peoples that have been silenced and victimized in the Canadian historical canon. As John Milloy writes:

As such, it is critical that non-Aboriginal people study and write about the schools, for not to do so on the premise that it is not our story, too, is to marginalize it as we did Aboriginal people themselves, to reserve it for them as a site of suffering and grievance and to refuse to make it a site of introspection, discovery and extirpation—a site of knowledge from which we can understand

⁹ John Bloom, *To Show What an Indian Can Do: Sports at Native American Boarding Schools* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 2.

¹⁰ Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision*, 276.

¹¹ Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, “Decolonization is not a metaphor,” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1, no. 1 (2012): 10.

not only who we have been as Canadians but who we must become if we are to deal justly with the Aboriginal people of this land.¹²

The history of the IRSS is a Canadian story that involves both Settlers and Indigenous peoples alike. If the history of the IRSS is not labeled as a shared Canadian history, it becomes a story that can be neatly placed far away from the histories of our national heroes, instead of being placed directly beside them where it belongs.

This thesis will focus on the hockey programs that existed at three Indian Residential Schools during the middle of the twentieth century: Birtle Indian Residential School, Cecilia Jeffrey Indian Residential School, and Sioux Lookout (or Pelican Lake) Indian Residential School. Using these three case studies, it will study the complex nature of the IRSS and illustrate the agency of Indigenous actors within in. It will use hockey as a framework through which to view the local, or microlevel nuances and complexities that shaped each school's unique experience. Through this framework, it will argue that settler colonial power in the IRSS was not omnipotent but fragile even among its own assimilative projects, including hockey. It reveals that while hockey was implemented into residential school curriculum as a means to promote assimilation, public relations, and eventually integration, it was also a space of negotiation, entertainment, identity, and even survival for Indigenous children within these schools. In this sense, the history of hockey within the IRSS is double-edged as it speaks to the settler colonial mindset of assimilation, discipline, and race while also illustrating the strength of Indigenous peoples to subvert policies that were meant to promote their elimination. Hockey may not be every scholar's first choice to examine this traumatic history. "Why does anyone

¹² John Milloy, *'A National Crime': The Canadian Government and the Residential School System, 1879 to 1986* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1999), xviii.

care about hockey?” author Fredrik Backman asks. “Because it tells stories.”¹³ In this case, hockey tells stories of both genocide and of survival.

Historical Background

Birtle and Cecilia Jeffrey Indian Residential Schools were established by the Women’s Missionary Society of the United Church of England (WMS) in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century respectively. Both schools were built with funds provided to the WMS by the Indian Affairs Branch (IAB) who formed a partnership to educate and assimilate Indigenous children near Birtle, Manitoba and Kenora, Ontario. By the mid-1920s both schools had fallen into disrepair and were relocated closer to these two towns.¹⁴ The new locations of both schools facilitated the development of hockey programs due to their proximity to bodies of water (for skating in the winter) and to Euro-Canadian communities with thriving hockey cultures. In 1925, the WMS was transferred from the control of the United Church to that of the Presbyterian Church along with the duties of administering both schools.¹⁵ This organizational structure remained the same until the federal government took control of the administration of the IRSS in the spring of 1969. While some residential schools served a specific Indigenous community, both Birtle and Cecilia Jeffrey boarded and educated Protestant Indigenous children from a wide geographic area. Many students at Birtle came from the Waywayseecappo First Nation approximately thirty kilometres north of Birtle, Manitoba, but the school enrolled students from across western Manitoba and eastern

¹³ Fredrick Backman, *Beartown* (Toronto: Simon & Schuster, 2017), 36.

¹⁴ Indian Agent Angus to the DIA, January 15, 1927, RG 10, Vol. 6187, File 461-1, Part 2, Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada; Letter from Principal Currie to Duncan Campbell Scott, April 17, 1928, RG 10, Vol. 6252, File 575-5, Part 2, Letter from Indian Agent Edwards to the DIA, June 8, 1926, RG 10, Vol. 6187, File 461-1, Part 2, Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada.

¹⁵ Peter Bush, “The Presbyterian Church in Canada and Native Residential Schools, 1925-1969,” *Historical Papers: Canadian Society of Church History* (1993): 175.

Saskatchewan.¹⁶ Similarly, Cecilia Jeffrey also serviced a wide swath of northwestern Ontario and eastern Manitoba to counterbalance to the large Catholic influence in the area.

In 1926, Sioux Lookout Indian Residential School was built on the shore of Pelican Lake near the community of Sioux Lookout, Ontario by the IAB and the Missionary Society of the Church of England in Canada (MSCC). Its location on Pelican Lake became a central aspect of the school as it affected the school's accessibility as well as its recreational programs during the winter, especially skating and hockey, when the lake froze. The school was meant to address numerous issues facing the IAB including Indigenous population growth and a lack of educational facilities for Indigenous children in remote northwestern Ontario.¹⁷ The location was ideal for administrators because of its proximity to the rural settlement of Sioux Lookout which was close enough to provide education to local First Nations but far enough to avoid parental interference. Most students came from the Lac Seul First Nation, located about thirty kilometers west of the school, but many others came as far as the coast of Hudson Bay. The MSCC was charged with administering the school and conducting its day-to-day operations. Proximity to the town of Sioux Lookout solved some of the problems faced by many schools concerning access to supplies, but the isolated environment of northwestern Ontario still hampered the school's ability to acquire specialized supplies and retain staff.¹⁸ From its inception, the school was noted for its less than satisfactory conditions.

¹⁶ Norman Rusaw, Letter to the Indian Secretary of the WMS, no date, 1988-7004, Box 7, File 6, Women's Missionary Society fonds (hereafter WMS), Presbyterian Church of Canada Archives, Toronto, Ontario, Canada (hereafter PCCA).

¹⁷ The location of the schools often caused a lot of tension between the IAB and church societies. It was usually unregulated and began to require the input of the IAB to ensure needs were being met. A further discussion of the locations of residential schools can be found in Milloy, *'A National Crime'*, 78.

¹⁸ A.G. Hamilton, Inspector of Indian Agencies for Manitoba Report on Sioux Lookout School, 25 April 1946, RG 10, volume 6216, file 470-5, part 6, School Files Series, Indian Affairs (hereafter IAB), Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, Canada (hereafter LAC).

Historiography

Two fields of historical scholarship inform this thesis; one field concerns the history of the IRSS and the other, the limited scholarship concerning histories of hockey and Indigenous sport in Canada. The first section of this historiography will chronicle the evolution of IRSS scholarship along with its failures to acknowledge the complexities of this history and Indigenous agency within it. The second part of this historiography will detail the ways in which Indigenous sport and hockey are discussed in the Canadian history, particularly in terms of discipline, subversion, and resistance.

Residential School Historiography

The earliest scholarly works concerning residential schooling in Canada primarily view the history and legacy of residential schooling through a local perspective allowing for historical nuances and complexities including Indigenous agency.¹⁹ Celia Haig-Brown's *Resistance and Renewal: Surviving the Indian Residential School* was the first academic work published on the history of residential schools and one of the most influential. Haig-Brown studies the experience and legacy of the Kamloops Indian Residential School through a mix of oral and textual accounts.²⁰ She illustrates Indigenous resistance in its numerous forms and various spaces at the Kamloops Indian Residential School, arguing that an extensive and complex movement of resistance existed at residential school.²¹ Works such as Elizabeth

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Celia Haig-Brown, *Resistance and Renewal: Surviving the Indian Residential School* (Vancouver: Tillacum Library: Vancouver, 1988).

²¹ To Haig-Brown, there were two forms of Indigenous resistance at the school: the first, and most obvious, was direct confrontation which included such things as students challenging their teachers and parents hiding their children from school administrators, the second, and subtler form of resistance, was the creation of countercultures within the school where students were able carve out havens for survival within the cracks of settler colonial power, Ibid., 88. Although Haig-Brown was the first to published academically on the subject, there was numerous non-academic and government literature produced before this time. Residential Schools have been a long topic of study, and to think otherwise would be false. See Scott Trevithick, "Native Residential Schooling in Canada: A Review of Literature," *Canadian Journal of Native Studies* 18, no. 1(1998).

Furniss's *Victims of Benevolence: The Dark Legacy of the Williams Lake Residential School* and Noel Dyck's *Differing Visions: Administering Indian Residential Schooling in Prince Albert, 1867-1995* follow in the footsteps of Haig-Brown as they focus on specific regions and the relationships that shaped the residential school experience in that region.²² These works all discuss the influences of geography, culture, and individual actors on the life and legacy of residential schooling. Through this analysis, they provide rich, nuanced and locally-rooted histories that hint at national themes such as abuse, disease, and malnourishment.

The shift towards a national perspective on residential schooling arguably began with the field's most influential works, J.R. Miller's *Shingwauk's Vision: A History of Native Residential Schools* and J.S. Milloy's "*A National Crime*": *The Canadian Government and the Residential School System, 1879 to 1986*, both of which focus on the national themes hinted at by earlier scholars such as Haig-Brown. These accounts, created in the wake of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP), adopt a similar perspective—they chart the emergence of a national system of Indian residential schools and detail cultural trauma at the national level. Miller's narrative of residential schooling, which is based on archival documents and survivor accounts, discusses Indigenous experience from coast to coast to coast.²³ Milloy, who was personally involved in research for RCAP, analyzes the

²² It is significant to note that many of these early works were created in partnership with residential school survivors and First Nations communities, this is part of the reason these works focus on a local level and allow for Indigenous agency because they were working with the people who resisted and survived these structures. Elizabeth Furniss, *Victims of Benevolence: The Dark Legacy of the Williams Lake Residential School* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 1992); Noel Dyck, *Differing Visions: Administering Indian Residential Schooling in Prince Albert, 1867-1995* (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 1997).

²³ Miller was one of the first to write a large monograph on Indian residential schools in Canada. He worked to highlight the ways in which Indigenous agency shaped the system and how Indigenous people experienced it both on a local and a national level. His study into experience provides an important insight into the system but has come under criticism as being a "colonist alibi" due the ways in which he connects Indigenous desires to the development of the system. Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision*, 3.

administrative elements of the IRSS and draws almost exclusively from the IAB's records. The book documents the multiple ways in which the system both actively worked to destroy Indigenous cultures and failed to provide adequate education to Indigenous children.²⁴ Milloy became aware during his work for the RCAP the emphasis placed on the national narrative of residential schooling, which ultimately gave the shape to his book.²⁵ These books were the first major monographs that described the IRSS as a national institution.²⁶ Although they provide an essential in-depth background for the history of residential schooling, they lack specific details which shaped school experience. Furthermore, the high-level perspective they take makes it difficult to discern the influences of local actors and or to explore fully the potential for Indigenous resistance.

The national focus of these works meant that they were unable to give specific attention to the environment, personalities, and curricula of individual schools. One key aspect of school life that was almost entirely neglected in the first twenty years of residential school historiography is sport. Recently, Janice Forsyth has worked to fill this scholarly gap and provide details into residential school sports policy.²⁷ Her article, "The Indian Act and the

²⁴ Milloy came a few years after Miller attempting to create a similar study. Whereas Miller focused on Indigenous experience, Milloy focuses more on administration, policy, and the evolution of the system from settler colonial idea to the child welfare system, this perspective was greatly shaped by his time, and struggles in conducting research for RCAP. Milloy, *'A National Crime.'*; J.R. Miller, *Residential Schools and Reconciliation: Canada Confronts its History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017), 55.

²⁵ Miller, *Residential Schools and Reconciliation*, 66.

²⁶ The foreword to the newest edition of *'A National Crime'* features a detailed reflection on the legacy of the book by Mary Jane Logan McCallum. McCallum vividly illustrates how important the book was to not only residential school historiography but also Canadian historiography as an acknowledgement of the national institutionalization of settler colonial policies. Mary Jane Logan McCallum, "Foreword," in *'A National Crime: The Canadian Government and the Residential School System, 1879 – 1986'* by John Milloy (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2017), xxi.

²⁷ Forsyth, "The Indian Act"; Janice Forsyth and Michael Heine, "'A Higher Degree of Social Organization': Jan Eisenhardt and Canadian Aboriginal Sport Policy in the 1950s" *Journal of Sport History* 35, no. 2 (2008); Janice Forsyth and Michael Heine, "'The only good thing that happened at the school': Colonising Narratives of Sport in the *Indian School Bulletin*," *British Journal of Canadian Studies* 30, no.2 (2017). These works may not

(Re)Shaping of Canadian Aboriginal Sport Practices,” is an overview of the ways in which Indian policy engaged with sport, with one section focused on residential schooling.²⁸ Within this article, she also call for more scholarship to fill the alarming dearth of such studies.²⁹ However, it is important to acknowledge that the IRSS did not exist in a vacuum but was influenced by Indian educational policy in the United States. This connection helps bridge the gap in scholarly literature on residential school sport in Canada due to the existence of academic work which examines the role of sport in Native American Boarding schools and the ways in which the settler colonialism operated in the United States. John Bloom’s monograph, *To Show What an Indian Can Do: Sports at Native American Boarding Schools*, is the first, and only major work, that focuses purely on sport in a setting of Indigenous education. Bloom discusses a variety of topics including discipline, publicity, and bodily health along with hints of Indigenous agency in these colonial institutions.³⁰

The national attention brought to the history of residential schools in Canada by major works such as those by Milloy, Miller, and most recently the TRC, along with the existence of residential schools from coast to coast to coast has cemented historical analysis at the national level.³¹ Publications such as the TRC’s Final Report and its abridged version, *A Knock at the Door: The Essential History of Residential Schools from the Truth and Reconciliation*

focus specifically on residential school sport, but they do mention it and provided an important contextual framework for studying it. Forsyth is working with graduate students to highlight residential school sports specifically.

²⁸ Forsyth, “Indian Act,” 105.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Bloom, *To Show What an Indian Can Do*, XVII.

³¹ Scholars such as Eric Woods also point to the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement (IRSSA) as another essential step in the evolution of the historiography of residential schooling as the government and other legal entities were forced to identify and categorize trauma across the country. Eric Taylor Woods, “On Making of a National Tragedy: The Transformation of the Meaning of the Indian Residential Schools,” in *Power through Testimony: Reframing Residential Schools in the Age of Reconciliation*, ed. Brieg Capitaine and Karine Vanthuyne (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2017), 40.

Commission of Canada, intentionally take a national perspective on the issue to highlight the connection between residential schooling and settler colonial state-building. *A Knock at the Door* opens with the powerful, yet broad, statement:

For over a century, the central goals of Canada's Aboriginal policy were to eliminate Aboriginal governments; ignore Aboriginal rights; terminate treaties; and, through a process of assimilation, cause Aboriginal peoples to cease to exist as distinct legal, social, cultural, religious, and racial entities in Canada.³²

Although acknowledgments such as these are an important part of the journey towards reconciliation, especially the use of the term cultural genocide later in the book,³³ some scholars have criticized the implications of a national perspective on this complex and traumatic era in Canadian history.

Moreover, the move to the national scale also raises other potential complications. Brian Gettler fears that the “homogeneous national space” which the TRC’s historical report inhabits limits the historical nuances of the IRSS while promoting a national meta-narrative of multiculturalism and progressive liberal values.³⁴ According to Gettler, a heterogeneous framework which acknowledges differing cultures, geographies, and actors is essential if the historiography is to produce a “more satisfying, if far more complex, history of residential schooling.”³⁵ This national perspective undertaken by the TRC and others can be traced back to the original RCAP mandate which was focused on “the evolution of the relationship among aboriginal peoples (Indian, Inuit and Métis), the Canadian government, and Canadian society as a whole.”³⁶ The purpose of these government commissions, then, has been to start national

³² TRC, *A Knock at the Door*, 3.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Brian Gettler, “Historical Research at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada,” *The Canadian Historical Review* 98, no. 4 (December 2017): 646.

³⁵ Ibid., 673.

³⁶ Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, *Volume 1: Looking Forward, Looking Back* (1996), 11.

conversations about the historical treatment of Indigenous peoples in this country along with promoting reconciliation and educating the Canadian public. While the TRC succeeded brilliantly in igniting that national conversation, the national focus has forced residential school histories into a neat and easily understandable narrative, flattening nuances, complexities, and counternarratives. It is at the local and regional levels where complications to the national narrative, such as Indigenous agency, survival, and even enjoyment, are found. These counternarratives should be inserted into these national conversations of reconciliation and used to underscore expressions of Indigenous strength in the face of settler colonialism.

Residential school historiography finds itself at a crossroads. The continued emphasis on a national perspective has been an important part of exposing the Canadian public to this long and traumatic history of residential schools in Canada while also highlighting the continued socioeconomic struggles of Indigenous peoples. Eric Woods recently described residential schools as “the eminent symbol of the maltreatment of Indigenous peoples in Canada.”³⁷ However, in this long process to simplify the historical narrative for public and legal consumption, the nuances and complexities of the history have been lost. As early as 1994, Mary-Ellen Kelm and Robin Brownlie challenged the direction of residential school historiography. They were concerned that the historiography would either continue to cast Indigenous actors as victims or use Indigenous agency as colonist alibi and advocated for an honest discussion of settler colonial power and Indigenous strength to resist.³⁸ Currently, the nation-centred perspective silences the local and individual voices that are required for the

³⁷ Woods, “On the Making of a National Tragedy,” 44.

³⁸ Robin Brownlie and Mary-Ellen Kelm, “Desperately Seeking Absolution: Native Agency as Colonialist Alibi?” *The Canadian Historical Review* 75, 4 (1994), 545.

nuanced space proposed by Kelm, Brownlie, and most recently Gettler. Supplementing the national narrative that exists around residential schools with local nuanced histories is the only way the historiography can move forward and create a “satisfying” history of this traumatic past. The goal is to craft a historiography that does not shy away from settler colonial genocide while still acknowledging that Indigenous peoples “were victims but they were not *only* victims.”³⁹

Sport Historiography

Canadian sport historiography has primarily focused on the development and influence of Euro-Canadian sport practices which has left little room for the acknowledgement of Indigenous histories of sport. Recently, there has been a desire by some scholars to right this wrong. Allan Downey’s use of Indigenous storytelling methodologies in *The Creator’s Game: Lacrosse, Identity, and Indigenous Nationhood* is symbolic of this movement to reclaim and publicize Indigenous sport histories.⁴⁰ The TRC has also encouraged this movement among their 94 Calls to Actions, one of which desires “to provide public education that tells the national story of Aboriginal athletes in history.”⁴¹ Many sports that would be classified as uniquely “Canadian” began, or at least were greatly shaped, by Indigenous peoples and cultures.⁴² Canadian sport has not developed in a vacuum but as part of, and a reflection of,

³⁹ Paige Raibmon, “Unmaking Native Space: A Genealogy of Indian Policy, Settler Practice, and the Microtechniques of Dispossession,” in *The Power of Promises: Rethinking Indian Treaties in the Pacific Northwest*, ed. Alexandra Harmon and John Borrows (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008), 78.

⁴⁰ Downey channels Indigenous methodology from scholars such as Thomas King (who, it is important to note, were greatly inspired by traditional First Nations storytelling) into his academic work, using conversations with the First Nations trickster deity Coyote to explain his self-positionality and methodology. Allan Downey, *The Creator’s Game: Lacrosse, Identity, and Indigenous Nationhood* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2018), 13 – 19.

⁴¹ TRC recommendation number 87, TRC, *A Knock at the Door*, 186.

⁴² Lacrosse and hockey both are argued to have roots in Indigenous sports and games, although the connection to the latter is the focus of some debate. See Michael Robidoux, “Imagining a Canadian Identity through Sport: A Historical Interpretation of Lacrosse and Hockey,” *The Journal of American Folklore* 115 (Spring 2002): 212.

Canadian society. As Richard Gruneau and David Whitson write, “the sport we call hockey has emerged out of a series of clashes of cultures and traditions that have occurred against the backdrop of Canada’s development as an industrial and consumer society.”⁴³ This statement can be further expanded to acknowledge Canada’s continued existence as a settler colonial nation, the backdrop against which Indigenous peoples, cultures, and athletes have struggled for recognition. The story of residential school hockey players is only one among a neglected tapestry that continues to shape Euro-Canadian sport to this day.

Indigenous peoples have frequently appeared on the peripheries of Canadian sport histories which has spawned a growing literature in Canada focused purely on Indigenous sporting practice and experience. Michael Robidoux’s *Stickhandling through the Margins: First Nations Hockey in Canada* examines how hockey, a sport introduced to Indigenous peoples through the IRSS, has become a primary signifier of identity for many rural First Nations.⁴⁴ Similarly, in terms of the relationship between sport and colonialism, Mary-Ellen Kelm’s *A Wilder West: Rodeo in Western Canada* comes to similar conclusions as Robidoux but studies First Nations’ relationship with rodeo instead of hockey. Kelm asks readers to question the dichotomy of the “cowboy” and the “Indian” by showing that many Indigenous men acted in both roles concluding that this history, “helps us move beyond bland dichotomies, to see ‘us’ and ‘them’ as the very icons of denial in a world that is always already more complicated than that.”⁴⁵ Downey’s *The Creator’s Game*, meanwhile, chronicles the history

⁴³ Richard Gruneau and David Whitson, *Hockey Night in Canada: Sport, Identity and Cultural Politics* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 6.

⁴⁴ Michael Robidoux, *Stickhandling through the Margins: First Nations Hockey in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012).

⁴⁵ Kelm’s work in *A Wilder West* has been extremely influential on this thesis. Her analysis of not only Indigenous agency, but the ways in which Indigenous peoples were able to challenge colonial binaries through sport provides an important framework for studying Indigenous hockey in Canada. Although rodeo and hockey

of lacrosse in Canada, its appropriation by settler-Canadians, and its role in aiding Indigenous cultural rejuvenation. He concludes that the history of lacrosse is a history of trickery, where Euro-Canadians appropriated it for their own identity purposes yet continue to struggle to define themselves. “And yet in this process of trickery,” he writes “the story of lacrosse provided Indigenous peoples with a series of sleights of hands for their own use. Colonial history did not always lie at the centre of Indigenous history.”⁴⁶ Through sport, scholars have reclaimed Indigenous personhood and agency in the historical canon while simultaneously illustrating the fractured nature of settler colonial power and the autonomy of Indigenous peoples.

Hockey lies at both the heart of this thesis and the heart of Canadian sporting history and consciousness. However, even with its position within the Canadian public sphere, there is still a surprising lack of theoretical scholarship on hockey.⁴⁷ Gruneau and Whitson were the first scholars to truly theorize about the place of hockey within the Canadian consciousness, examining the ways in which it reflects, but also works to mold, Canadian society.⁴⁸ Furthermore, they have been extremely critical of the sport’s use in national myth-making claiming it, “creates a kind of cultural amnesia about the social struggles and vested interests—between men and women, social classes, regions, races, and ethnic groups—that have always

may seem drastically different, the ways in which Indigenous communities have appropriated these sports is very similar. Mary-Ellen Kelm, *A Wilder West: Rodeo in Western Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011), 235.

⁴⁶ Allan Downey, *The Creator’s Game*, 254.

⁴⁷ A lot of scholarship is written about hockey but much of this literature focuses on themes that are related to social history including amateurism, gender, and the development of the business practices of hockey leagues. There is a surprising dearth of scholarship that specifically studies hockey in theoretical ways, especially in terms of Canadian society and identity.

⁴⁸ Gruneau and Whitson, *Hockey Night in Canada*, 3; Richard Gruneau and David Whitson, *Artificial Ice: Hockey, Culture, and Commerce* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006).

been a part of hockey's history."⁴⁹ Robidoux has taken up the mantle of providing a theoretical framework for studying hockey from Gruneau and Whitson. His article, "Imagining a Canadian Identity through Sport: A Historical Interpretation of Lacrosse and Hockey" examines the ways in which the national sport in Canada has evolved, from lacrosse to hockey, and illustrates how Indigenous sport practices influenced this change while offering a framework for other scholars to study hockey's meaning in Canada.⁵⁰

Theoretical Framework

The IRSS is an expression of the continued settler colonial relationship between Euro-Canadians and Indigenous peoples. Examining the IRSS, and the sports programmes within residential schools, through a variety of theoretical perspectives can help explain this relationship.

Settler colonialism has only relatively recently been acknowledged as its own unique theoretical framework. Lorenzo Veracini writes that settler colonialism,

is a global and genuinely transnational phenomenon, a phenomenon that national and imperial historiographies fail to address as such, and that colonial studies and postcolonial literatures have developed interpretative categories that are not specifically suited for an appraisal of settler colonial circumstances.⁵¹

Canadian historiography has struggled to find an adequate framework to study the relationship between Euro-Canadians and Indigenous peoples because Canada was never properly colonial and may never be postcolonial. Canada functions as an exemplary settler colonial state (according to Patrick Wolfe's definition), the primary objective of which is, "the land itself

⁴⁹ Ibid., 132.

⁵⁰ Robidoux, "Imagining a Canadian Identity through Sport."

⁵¹ Veracini's work here is the first theoretical overview of settler colonialism, he combines the work of a number of scholars into one work. Lorenzo Veracini, *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 2.

rather than the surplus value to be derived from mixing native labour with it.”⁵² Wolfe goes on to describe settler colonialism as a “winner-take-all project whose dominant feature is not exploitation but replacement.”⁵³ It is a structure, a frame of mind, not an event and should be studied as such. Veracini urges the study of settler colonialism as a unique historical position and as a system which actively covers its tracks. He adds that, “it is important that we focus on the settlers, on what they do, and how they think about what they do” in order to expose the workings of settler colonialism.⁵⁴

The IRSS, as Woolford demonstrates, was itself key to the settler colonial desires for land, resources, and national consolidation.⁵⁵ He argues that the supposed benevolence of the school system should not be separated from its destructive purpose, that they are in fact two sides of the same coin and that they are inseparable from the policies that resulted in the forced removal of the original inhabitants of North America and their replacement by the Canadian state.⁵⁶ This removal constitutes genocide, or a, “networked process eclectic in its construction yet also an assemblage with a distinct and identifiable purpose: group destruction.”⁵⁷ Put

⁵² Wolfe was the first to carve out a specific space for the study of settler colonialism. His definition, which is partially presented here, is the first description of settler colonialism and forms the backbone of studies that come after. Patrick Wolfe, *Settler Colonialism, and the Transformation of Anthropology: The Politics and Poetics of an Ethnographic Event* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 1998), 163.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Veracini is grateful for the research that is being conducted on Indigenous voices and those that seek to highlight Indigenous experience, but he is worried that the study of settlers and the settler colonial state will be neglected in the wake of this new scholarship. The study of settlers is equally as important as the study of Indigenous peoples. Veracini, *Settler Colonialism*, 15; furthermore, recent work has been conducted by Eva Mackey which brings this idea specifically to North America. In her book, Mackey attempts to understand the lived practices and discourse of settlers trying to defend their right to the land and through this argues settler colonialism is not in the past but in the ongoing present. Eva Mackey, *Unsettled Expectations: Uncertainty, Land, and Settler Decolonization* (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2016), 4.

⁵⁵ Andrew Woolford, *This Benevolent Experiment: Indigenous Boarding Schools, Genocide, and Redress in Canada and the United States* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2015), 3.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 12.

another way, schools reflected settler colonialism's "logic of elimination."⁵⁸ Woolford argues that genocide, like settler colonialism, is not an event but a process with the IRSS being only one part of a much larger settler colonial framework that sought the elimination of the native.⁵⁹

Still, Woolford sees in the IRSS a rather unique expression of settler colonial desires. He presents the settler colonial practices of the IRSS as a collection of nets that operate on three distinct societal levels: macro, meso, and micro.⁶⁰ These nets of settler colonial assimilative practices work across time and space to form a "settler colonial mesh" which entraps Indigenous peoples within the settler colonial assimilative project.⁶¹ Woolford notes that these nets are not infallible but prone to snags and tears due to relations between actors and institutions which allow for moments of Indigenous agency and subversion, even if they do not allow for a complete bucking of the system.⁶² Woolford's framework allows for a shifting of scales to illustrate the ways in which the settler colonial mesh operated as a somewhat holistic institution where occurrences on one level of the mesh affected the whole. This analysis is extremely potent for understanding the history of the largely unregulated IRSS and the resulting variance in survivor accounts. That is, the macro, meso, and micro levels of the settler colonial mesh—and the policies and actions represented within them—aimed to achieve similar goals and outcomes but rarely worked in concert. The discrepancies in actions at these different levels makes it difficult to view the IRSS from purely a national perspective.

⁵⁸ Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (2006): 38.

⁵⁹ Woolford, *This Benevolent Experiment*, 12.

⁶⁰ Woolford's analysis throughout the book depends on these layers of power beginning with the individual school (micro), the government and church entities (meso), and the settler colonial framework that shaped all three (macro). Power and decision-making does not just flow from the top-down but exists throughout the system as each level interacts with one another and influences each other. *Ibid.*, 3.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² *Ibid.*, 4.

However, by studying the microlevel, the actions of various individuals are seen as they influence student experience and allowed spaces of Indigenous survival.

The history, and subsequent experience, of hockey at residential school is a vivid example of the ways in which settler colonial policy can be both benevolent and destructive. Woolford theorizes that both discipline and desire operated in residential schools as assimilative techniques.⁶³ Michel Foucault writes that discipline, “may be calculated, organized, technically thought out; it may be subtle, make use of neither weapons nor of terror and yet remain of a physical order.”⁶⁴ For Foucault, discipline does not have to take the form of physical punishment or strict authoritarian rule; rather, it is most effective when it is subtle and complex. Scholars such as Woolford show how, in residential schools, discipline could take a traditional role such as strict rule, authoritarian surveillance, and even physical violence, but it could also be shaped by Indigenous desires which led to “softer” techniques of discipline. These “softer” techniques, “show how pleasure and excitement were deployed, and operated in conjunction with discipline, as techniques to co-facilitate Indigenous assimilation.”⁶⁵

Through this framework, hockey at residential school becomes both a site of negotiation and space of contestation between settler colonial officials and Indigenous children. As Robidoux argues, hockey holds a special power as it confines participants to specific rules which they willingly subject themselves to.⁶⁶ Indeed, sport functions as a somewhat hidden expression of power relationships as the power that is exerted on bodies is seen to be benevolent or even welcomed by the subjugated. The requirement of all sports,

⁶³ Woolford, *This Benevolent Experiment*, 139.

⁶⁴ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 26.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 140.

⁶⁶ Robidoux, *Stickhandling through the Margins*, 46.

including hockey, to embody physical artistry is something that comes from a civilizing training process according to Whitson and Gruneau. They write that as much as sport has been used to civilize, it has been used to dehumanize far more.⁶⁷ However, research into colonial sport practices has often illustrated how this power relation is a two-way street where subjugated groups can appropriate sport for their own use including identity and subversion. The artistry of sport can also become an important expression of self, rediscovery of the body, and performance of identity.⁶⁸ While sport helps to maintain the power of dominant groups exerted over subjugated ones, it also holds the potential for the subversion of that power.

As an expression of Canadian history and identity, the study of hockey also offers insights into the history of settler colonialism. Robidoux argues,

Hockey is more than a mythological construct; it is a legitimate expression of Canadian national history and identity. Hockey does speak to issues of gender, race, ethnicity, and region in this nation, albeit not in an entirely positive manner. For this reason, hockey moves beyond symbol and becomes more of a metaphoric representation of Canadian identity.⁶⁹

Hockey is not a colonial sport that was imported from the metropole to the hinterland of empire, but a sport that was created in Canada as a uniquely Canadian experience separate from Britain.⁷⁰ This connection was a key part of its implementation and development in IRSS curriculum. Viewed in this light, the study of hockey in the IRSS becomes a complex and layered subject as it speaks to not only cultural genocide, but also to settler colonialism, Canadian identity, and national consolidation, all of which work to remove Indigenous peoples from the land.

⁶⁷ Gruneau and Whitson, *Hockey Night in Canada*, 29.

⁶⁸ Robidoux, *Stickhandling through the Margins*, 143.

⁶⁹ Robidoux, "Imagining a Canadian Identity," 218-219.

⁷⁰ Gruneau and Whitson, *Hockey Night in Canada*, 3.

Methodology

This study focuses on two Presbyterian Indian Residential schools and one Anglican Indian Residential School from 1929 - 1969. The research is drawn primarily from three kinds of primary sources: government records, church records, and local newspapers.

Government records were collected from Library Archives Canada (LAC) primarily in the School Files Series of the IAB records. These records deal with administration of individual schools and mostly consist of financial accounts, school reports, and correspondence about various administrative matters. They provide important insights into the ways in which the IAB financed the IRSS and interacted with the school administrators. Although the IAB was never officially involved in the microlevel, day-to-day administration the schools, these sources nonetheless illustrate the ways IAB officials greatly affected the outcome of these schools and how they worked to support the assimilationist agenda of the IRSS. These records were read both along and against the archival grain to reveal the superficial information of the records as well as the underlying settler colonial goals behind these conversations.⁷¹ While these government documents provide the structure for this study, church records offer more specific details, circumstances, and other microlevel information of life at the schools.

This project's focus on northwestern Ontario and western Manitoba seeks to address some of the important gaps in the existing literature on residential schools. To date, residential school histories have generally focused on institutions in the Prairie provinces and British Columbia, and much less attention has been given to schools in Ontario and Québec. Moreover,

⁷¹ This is an attempt to discover the “unwritten” things in the archival, that they may not constitute “the real” or “hidden message,” but rather the ways in which settler colonial officials made decisions in regard to Indian education that may not be specifically described within textual accounts. Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 3.

Gettler argues that the work performed by the TRC existed in an “officially mandated geography” which ignores the influence of specific regional contexts on residential schooling.⁷² This work therefore seeks to illuminate the history of residential schools in a region that has been neglected by historiography, namely Northwestern Ontario.⁷³ Northwestern Ontario, with its large population of Indigenous peoples and its cultural connections to hockey along with its historical neglect, was a space that was chosen early in the research process for studying residential school hockey. While I would have liked to research other schools in the area (including St. Mary’s Indian Residential School and McIntosh Indian Residential School), the Catholic Church remains opaque regarding their historical involvement in the IRSS. Whereas accessing these Protestant archives was relatively easy, the Catholic church records continue to be hidden behind archival fog and bureaucratic tape.⁷⁴ Hopefully, future researchers will not face these problems with the opening of the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation’s records and the stories hidden in Catholic archives will be told in full.

Documents found at the Presbyterian Church Archive and the Anglican Synod Archive come from a variety of missionary fonds including Presbyterian Women’s Missionary Society and Missionary Society of the Anglican Church in Canada. They are mainly composed of annual reports, correspondence, and school newspapers. These sources provided a detailed account of school life as well as insight into administrative decisions. These sources cannot be

⁷² Gettler, “Historical Research, 666.

⁷³ Much of the historiography focuses on either the system as a national institution or on specific schools in the western provinces, there has been a surprisingly lack of scholarship on this area in Ontario even though there exists a large Indigenous population and the highest concentration of residential schools.

⁷⁴ Gettler also refers to similar experiences faced by the TRC as expressed by John Milloy, the research director of the TRC in 2010, who stepped down from his position following public comments concerning the uncooperative behaviour of the Catholic church. *Ibid.*, 657.

taken at face value, but they do offer an interesting perspective into the life of the school. These records underscore the duality that Woolford notes between the benevolence and destruction in these institutions as school staff often work to justify their involvement in an assimilationist system. Although Indigenous voices are usually not found directly in these records, there are documents where the voices of students are present (albeit in an edited form) as well as moments of Indigenous agency which emerge when these documents are read against the archival grain. These files make up the bulk of the project with their attention to detail and their insights into the minds of staff, students, and even parents.

Chapter Summary

This thesis is divided into three thematic chapters that are organized in roughly chronological order. The first chapter follows the development of hockey and other recreational programs at each of the three schools and examines how these programs were used as tools for encouraging discipline and bodily health among the student body. Furthermore, the chapter also details the ways in which Indigenous children appropriated the sport for their own survival. It shows how the desire of students was one of the primary reasons for adopting hockey as the sport of choice for residential schools at first a local level and eventually a national one by the 1950s, illustrating the connectivity between microlevel problems and mesolevel policy as per Woolford. The next chapter details the use of hockey as a means of publicity for the IRSS during the 1950s and the early 1960s, an era of uncertainty for school officials. The opportunity to play in front of Euro-Canadian audiences provided Indigenous students with experiences that they would have not partaken in had they not been involved in the hockey programs. While these Indigenous students were put on display as “proof” that the IRSS was working, they also broke through colonial binaries through their performance on and

off the ice. Lastly, the final chapter delves into a neglected era of residential school history, namely the period of integration during the 1950s and 1960s. Hockey provides a framework through which to see the struggles and successes of this program. The shift towards integration was a sign of the dismantlement of the IRSS but a continuation of policy of assimilation and trauma for Indigenous students.

Chapter 1: At the Junction of Discipline and Desire: Hockey, Assimilation, and Indigenous Survival at Indian Residential School, 1929 – 1955

Introduction

A male student and hockey player at Birtle Indian Residential School lamented the 1954 hockey season and the fact that the school team failed to make the championship. “We should have gone down the line to the championship, but other things crept into the ‘minds’ and ‘hearts’ of some of the juveniles and sent them ‘coo-cooed’ in their heads,” he wrote in the school’s newspaper.¹ His personal commitment and enjoyment of hockey is evident in his emotional response to the team’s failure to perform. Indeed, sport has long celebrated the ability of athletes to control both their mental state and bodily motions, and it was no different for the staff and students at Indian residential schools across Canada during the middle of the twentieth century. School administrators saw the “jealous fascination”² many Indigenous boys had for hockey and thus implemented it into their curriculum as a tool of assimilation. However, to approach hockey at residential schools as merely a tool of colonizers that was strategically imposed on Indigenous children is to tell only half the story.

Hockey constituted what Andrew Woolford has described as a “softer” disciplinary technique, but it also created space for types of Indigenous resistance. Understaffing and other material constraints meant that residential school staff were never fully able to enact complete authoritarian rule over their students, and instead adopted different methods to discipline Indigenous bodies and minds. Hockey was quickly noted by school administrators on the

¹ Gordon Johnny “Juvenile Hockey,” *Wigwam News*, 1954, File 6, Box 12, 1988 – 7004, Women’s Missionary Society Fonds (hereafter WMS), Presbyterian Church of Canada Archives, Toronto, Ontario, Canada (hereafter PCCA).

² Bob Fulford, “Indian Lads’ Hockey Tour Cost \$1,800-‘Well Worth it,’” *The Globe and Mail*, April 17, 1951. ProQuest Historical Newspapers: *The Globe and Mail*, <http://search.proquest.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/hnpglobeandmail/docview/1287349935/8B58069E95BD4ACEPQ/1?accountid=9894>.

microlevel of the settler colonial mesh to be an efficient and effective way to create docile bodies largely because Indigenous children willingly subjected themselves to the disciplinary power of sport. However, this indirect and subtle expression of settler colonial power was a minor snag in the settler colonial mesh as it created spaces for subversive resistance and Indigenous survival. As Celia Haig-Brown writes, not all residential school students directly confronted settler colonial power some “found refuge inside the system, cutting out their own place among it for immediate survival.”³ Significantly, the artistry of a sport such as hockey along with its bodily aspects allowed Indigenous students a certain amount of self-expression and bodily rediscovery,⁴ at least when compared to the rest of their experiences at residential school. Indigenous survival requires the continuous adaptation of Indigenous peoples to contemporary circumstances,⁵ and many children at residential school were able to adopt hockey as a method to survive.

While residential schools illustrated the underlying settler colonial desire to eliminate Indigenous culture and to assimilate them into the Canadian state, students also faced many other more immediate social, environmental, and even physical threats in their daily lives at these schools. The fact that they endured such threats while they were children, who are naturally inclined to play, only intensified these experiences. It is no strong wonder why residential school administrators experienced undisciplined behaviour from their students, nor why they desperately sought a solution to the disciplinary problems posed by such behaviour.

³ Celia Haig-Brown, *Resistance and Renewal: Surviving the Indian Residential School* (Vancouver: Tillacum Library: Vancouver, 1988), 88.

⁴ Michael Robidoux, *Stickhandling Through the Margins: First Nations Hockey in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 143.

⁵ Andrew Woolford, *This Benevolent Experiment: Indigenous Boarding Schools, Genocide, and Redress in Canada and the United States* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2015), 30.

Furthermore, the students' attraction to this "softer" disciplinary technique is unsurprising considering the authoritarian methods that were synonymous with residential schools. Administrators within the IAB and missionary societies proposed numerous methods—from boy scouts, to music programs, and even physical violence—in an effort to instill discipline among Indigenous students. By 1951 many of these officials believed sport was the best solution. In particular, hockey's ability to operate at the junction of discipline and desire appealed to both administrators and students. It was a disciplinary technique imposed by settler colonial authorities to create "civilized subjects." At the same time, the implementation of hockey programs yielded to the desire among Indigenous youth for play. There is no doubt that hockey was a tool in a settler colonial system that furthered the assimilation of Indigenous children in Canada. At the same time, however, hockey also allowed Indigenous children to escape the monotony of school life, release their adolescent energy, and create spaces of survival.

This chapter will examine the development of hockey programs at Birtle, Cecilia Jeffrey, and Sioux Lookout Indian Residential Schools during the first two decades of the implementation of hockey at these schools, that is, from the late 1920s until the peak popularity of residential school sports in the early 1950s. It will begin by explaining disciplinary issues experienced at each of these schools with an emphasis placed on the ways in which these issues were associated with "native weakness" and a presupposed natural inclination of Indigenous boys for unruly behaviour. The chapter will then examine the implementation of hockey as a response to the desire among Indigenous students for sport. Boys and girls came to excel at the sport and to embrace its benefits of entertainment and health, which allowed them to create spaces for their own survival. The growing popularity and success of hockey programs,

meanwhile, also caught the attention of IRSS administrators and staff which created tensions and allowed for a further influencing of Indian education policies towards sports in appeasement of Indigenous desires.

Euro-Canadian Discipline and “Native Weakness”

Birtle, Cecilia Jeffrey, and Sioux Lookout Indian Residential Schools were all tasked with educating an Indigenous population that administrators regarded as uncivilized and in need of the paternalistic guidance of the Canadian state. This mission was not assumed to be easy. For example, Gifford Swartman, the Indian agent for Sioux Lookout agency, the Ojibway and “half-breeds” on the Ontario-Manitoba border were all but hopelessly lost whereas the Cree were prime subjects for assimilation into Canadian citizenship. However, even the Cree were not perfect; as Swartman noted, “they have not all the Whiteman’s vices, and none of his virtues.”⁶ Swartman specifically pointed to the resistance of parents to send their children to residential as the primary deterrent to assimilation.⁷ Likewise, in the 1940s, many Indigenous parents in the neighboring Kenora Agency refused to send their students to Cecilia Jeffrey due to concerns with nutrition and education. The WMS was quick to dismiss any suggestion that school conditions were sub-standard.⁸ Instead, school administrators characterized efforts by Indigenous parents or community members to resist sending their children to schools as ungrateful and as part their natural inclination to “childish hedonism.”⁹ For his part, J.Y. Garret, a minister on the Waywayseecappo reserve in Manitoba, wrote about the Indigenous

⁶ Gifford Swartman, Memorandum RE: Sioux Lookout Agency, Administrative Problems, December 12, 1946, File 494 1-1, Vol. 11431, RG 10, Library Archives Canada, Ottawa, Ontario (Hereafter LAC).

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Indian Agent Edwards, Letter to the DIA, March 10, 1930, File 464 1-1 Part 2, Vol. 6187, RG 10, LAC.

⁹ Janice Forsyth, “The Indian Act and the (Re)Shaping of Canadian Aboriginal Sport Practices,” *International Journal of Canadian Studies* 35 (2007), 106.

peoples around Birtle saying, “of course, I suppose you know the difference between the Indian and the White man. The White takes what is given to him and is thankful for that. The Indian takes what he gets and asks for more.”¹⁰ The racist attitudes of many officials involved with the residential school system formed the foundations of an institution that was premised on the erasure of Indigenous cultures.

Indeed, the IRSS was designed to use education to fix the “Indian Problem,” or the presupposed racial inferiority of Indigenous peoples and the impediments they posed to the expansion of the Canadian state. Students attending residential school during the first half of the twentieth century experienced a “half-day system” where half of the day was spent in the classroom and half was spent in practical training. Reports from the 1930s and 1940s illustrate a strong emphasis placed on the academic development of what the Missionary Society of the Church of England in Canada (MSCC) described as the four R’s, “reading, ‘riting, arithmetic, and religion,” which helped students overcome their supposed natural shyness and backwardness.¹¹ Ironically, these traits were thought to be problematic in the classroom. Agent John P Sigvaldason wrote about students at Birtle that, “generally, the oral expression is poor since the children appear to dislike the sound of their voice when reading,”¹² after which he advocated for the special characteristics of Indigenous children that needed to be considered when lesson planning. When he wrote about the problems teachers were experiencing teaching complex reasoning he observed, “this is not the fault of their training as far as I can judge but

¹⁰ Norman Rusaw, letter to the Indian Secretary of the WMS, no date, File 6, Box 7, 1988-7004, WMS, PCCA.

¹¹ The Indian School Administration, M.S.C.C., June 26, 1950, File 4, Box 21, GS75-103, MSCC, Indian Schools Administration, General Synod Archives – Anglican Church of Canada, Toronto, Ontario (Hereafter GSA).

¹² John P. Sigvaldson, Inspector’s Report, 1939, File 511/23-5-014, Vol. 8449, RG 10, LAC.

rather a native weakness.”¹³ These problems with educating Indigenous children were placed solely on the shoulders of the students themselves but providing proper education at residential school was all but impossible due to underfunding, inadequate staff, and lack of time in the classroom.¹⁴

The half of the day which was spent in manual training was primarily a means through which administrators sought to reduce costs associated with the school, all the while justifying their use of student labour as a key part of their education. Residential schools were more than just educational facilities, they were also residences, farms, and churches. The varied social spaces of residential schools allowed for divisions of labour based on gender with male students working on the school farm while female students helped in domestic work. These programs were thought to be essential for the livelihood of the school as they greatly reduced costs of food, supplemented the per-capita grant system provided by the IAB and even allowed the schools to cover other expenses.¹⁵ Significantly, school administrators sometimes justified the financial advantages brought by student labour in terms of physical education, especially for the boys. According to officials, manual labour programs engaged student bodies in discipline and released adolescent energy.¹⁶ In contrast, students and parents saw these

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ It is significant to note that even when the education that was provided was thought to be sufficient by staff, it often left Indigenous graduates with no real knowledge of the modern world and how to function within it. Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Volume One: The History, Part 2, 1939-2000* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015), 107 – 108.

¹⁵ A.G. Hamilton, Report on Birtle 1936, December 4, 1936, File 511/23-5-014, Vol. 8449, RG 10, LAC. This was especially true at Birtle in the early years under Lockhart. Lockhart worked so hard to improve the farm that he was reprimanded by higher authorities that the farm was for the school and not vice versa. It is believed that the extra funds provided by the school aided in the development of sports programs at the school during an era when the IAB was not providing extra funds. One of the reasons that the recreational programs at Birtle became so much more advanced than those of Cecilia Jeffrey and Sioux Lookout may be due in part to the high-quality farm which was run on the property by Principal Norman Rusaw.

¹⁶ H.A. Hoey, Superintendent of Welfare and Training letter to Florence Lang, Indian Secretary of the WMS, January 11, 1941, File 461-5, Part 8, Vol. 6189, RG 10, LAC.

programs as extra and unnecessary work that added to the already intensive schedule of residential school life and left little time for regular youthful activities including play.¹⁷

There remained, however, a small amount of time for extracurricular activities at all three schools in first two decades of their existence. In the early years, recreational activities at the schools were unorganized and rudimentary thanks largely to inadequate funding. At most, the Indians Affairs Branch (IAB) supplied schools with basic playground equipment and miscellaneous toy balls.¹⁸ Without targeted funding for recreation from the IAB, schools were forced to improvise.¹⁹ For example, at Sioux Lookout during the early 1940s, Indigenous children would clear a section of Pelican Lake in the winter time, strap blades to their boots with wire, and skate on the lake.²⁰ These children, who had been taken from their families and were largely confined within dilapidated school walls, were able to experience the temporary freedom and joy that came with skating. Another recreational activity was the music program at Cecilia Jeffrey. At one point, almost every student enrolled at the school was learning music by either playing an instrument or singing in the choir.²¹ The music program would become a hallmark of the school as students excelled at music and played numerous concerts throughout

¹⁷ John P. Sigvaldson, letter to H.A. Hoey, December 22, 1938, File 1, Box 7, 1988-7004, WMS, PCCA.

¹⁸ Bill from Ketchum & Company, Limited, November 23, 1929, File 575 – 5, Part 2, Vol. 6252, RG 10, LAC; Bill from Charles Ogile Department Store, July 21, 1930, File 461-5, Part 3, Vol. 6188, RG 10, LAC. For a deeper discussion of extracurricular activities at the school during this era see TRC, *The History Part 2*, 461 – 496.

¹⁹ It wasn't until after WWII that the IAB began to fund sports programs in earnest. Before that time the recreation was minimal and often involved military drill, calisthenics, and gymnastics. See Braden Te Hiwi and Janice Forsyth, "A Rink at this School is Almost as Essential as a Classroom": Hockey and Discipline at Pelican Lake Indian Residential School, 1945 – 1951," *Canadian Journal of History* 52, no. 1 (2017): 85.

²⁰ M.G. Webster, Report of Visit of Miss M.G. Webster to Chapleau, Elkhorn, and Sioux Lookout Schools, 29 March to 9 April 1947, File 4, Box 28, GS 75-103, GSA.

²¹ A.G. Hamilton, Inspector's Report on Cecilia Jeffrey, February 26, 1936, File 461-3, Part 5, Vol. 6188, RG 10, LAC. There is a small section on the existence of music programs in the IRSS, which surprisingly does not detail the CJ program, TRC, *The History Part 2*, 479-480.

eastern Canada. These activities were used to get students involved with the school life while training their bodies and minds.

For administrators, recreation helped address a recurring problem in the residential school system: student discipline.²² An incident occurred during the late 1940s at Sioux Lookout which illustrates the types of disciplinary problems that schools experienced. G.R. Turner, a Major General of the Anglican Church, visited the school in October 1948 after receiving a series of complaints about the principal and his staff. Turner found the school to be in a state of disrepair and the children in an undisciplined state. He noted that the boys were particularly uncontrollable. Turner was dumbfounded when he found Principal Evans and several male pupils fixing the road to the school. He perceived Evans as unable to manage his staff and, as a result, blamed him for creating a chaotic environment which was hampering the school's assimilationist policies.²³ Near the end of his report, Turner remarked that one of the teachers mentioned that she wished he would visit more often because the school was in much better shape in preparation for him. He wrote with full emphasis: "I SHUDDER TO THINK WHAT IT MUST HAVE BEEN BEFORE I ARRIVED AS IT DEFINITELY WAS MUCH WORSE THAN I HAVE SEEN IN ANY OF THE OTHER SCHOOLS I HAVE VISITED."²⁴ Unfortunately for all involved, the school at Sioux Lookout was the rule rather than the exception when it came to what was occurring at residential schools across the country before the 1950s.²⁵ The mixture of mismanaged staff, inadequate facilities, chronic underfunding, and

²² Discipline was a major issue at schools across the country and school staff desperately sought a solution, see TRC, *The History Part 2*, 367 – 375.

²³ G.R. Turner, Visit to Anglican Indian Residential School Sioux Lookout, Ont, G.R. Turner, September 18 and 19, 1948, File 5, Box 23, GS 75-103, MSCC, GSA.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ A great discussion of the ways in which disciplinary issues were seen as a holistic problem that stemmed from the underfunding of the schools can be found in John Milloy, '*A National Crime*': *The Canadian*

a student body under pressure from an authoritarian and racist environment, led to unacceptable conditions at many residential schools both for the students and administrators.

Unfortunately, the students were the primary victims. A haunting example of the ways in which students suffered at the hands of school staff occurred at Cecilia Jeffrey in 1944. Lily Ross, a young teacher who was recently hired at the school, detailed the chronic failure of the school and its principal Mr. Pitts in a complaint given personally to the Indian Committee of the WMS. Her biggest concern was with the atmosphere of fear that she claimed hung over the school.²⁶ On one occasion, she overheard Pitts physically assaulting three female students claiming, “the noise it [made] seemed as if the girls were being knocked against the wall.” She also remembered hearing Pitts call the children “filthy rats” and “dirty lying sneaks.”²⁷ This all occurred because half of a lemon pie had gone missing from the kitchen, which was later found at the local hospital where a teacher had taken it. Pitts backpedaled after the pie was found stating that he beat the girls for their dishonesty about the pie rather than their assumed theft of it.²⁸ Ross was soon let go for her supposed ignorance of proper Indian education. Physical punishment and fear were thought to be appropriate means of discipline at many schools. Indian Agent John P. Sigvaldson wrote of discipline at Birtle in 1939 that, “little more self-restraint and wholesome fear of authority might make the instruction more effective.”²⁹

Government and the Residential School System, 1879 – 1986 (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1999), 67-69. Another description of discipline at the schools can be found in *Shingwauk's Vision* where survivors challenge the dominant narrative of “well-run” residential schools. J.R. Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision: A History of Native Residential Schools* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 290.

²⁶ Ross also mentioned other failings including the feeding of unpasteurized milk to the children. Meeting of the Indian Committee of the Women's Missionary Society, April 27, 1944, 2000 – 7004, Box 5, File 8, Women's Missionary Society fonds, Presbyterian Church of Canada Archives, Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Unfortunately, this kind of physical abuse was common, see TRC, *The History Part 2*, 367-368.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Douglas Pitts, Letter to Indian Secretary of WMS, May 6, 1944, File 3, Box 8, 1988 – 7004, WMS, LAC.

²⁹ John P. Sigvaldson, Inspector's Report, 1939, File 511/23-5-014, Vol. 9449, RG 10, LAC.

Disciplinary issues at the school were often “solved” through the physical punishment of students, or at least through the fear of it. As Milloy writes, “discipline, regimentation, and punishment in the service of cultural change, was the context of children’s lives,” explaining that some school staff thought physical punishment and authoritarian rule to be the best way to encourage assimilation.³⁰ This system of aggressive authoritarian rule, however, could only have limited effectiveness in maintaining discipline forcing administrators to seek other options.

These incidents demonstrate that disciplinary issues at residential school were heavily shaped by racist and gendered assumptions of Indigenous characteristics. In the view of those who operated the schools, Indigenous boys were seen to be unruly, uncivilized, and often prone to violence, whereas Indigenous girls were thought to be shy and sneaky. It was the goal of the schools to educate and assimilate Indigenous children as well as instill in them ideals of European civilization including gender roles. This led to separate education and differential treatment.³¹ In the early reports on the schools from the 1930s and 1940s, the girls are often described as being in much better shape than the boys in terms of cleanliness and discipline.³² Inspectors often noted boys to be unkempt and uncontrollable. The efforts to control the boys led to a grievance from the Grand Council of Kenora in 1938 when they complained that the doors to the boys’ dormitory were locked shut at night. The council expressed concern about

³⁰ Milloy frequently refers to the atmosphere of fear that hung over many residential schools due to the lack of funding, and therefore training for teachers. Milloy, *‘A National Crime’*, 138.

³¹ The gendered nature of the schools is a thread that can be found throughout residential school literature as notions of gender shaped curriculum almost as much as ideas of race; boys worked on the farm while girls learned domestic tasks; boys were the priority when it came to sport with only secondary attention given to girls. Milloy, *‘A National Crime,’* 40; Te Hiwi, “‘A Rink at this School is Almost as Essential as a Classroom’,” 95.

³² Inspector’s Report on Birtle, no date, File 511/23-5-014, Vol. 8449, RG 10, LAC; J.F.J Marshall, Re: 153-13, April 29, 1938, File 461-5, Part 6, Vol. 6186, RG10, LAC.

the dangers this posed to the boys in case of fire. But, according to staff, the doors had to be locked due to fears of the boys running away or entering the girls' dorm. Principal Marshall of Sioux Lookout wrote to Principal Byers and supported Byer's claim that this was standard procedure at all residential schools and was offended by the council's proposal to have a staff member stay in the dorm to monitor the boys. He wrote, "it is trying enough to work with these children in the daytime without having to sleep in the same dormitory and continually getting the Indian odor from them."³³ Byers saw these Indigenous boys as a threat to the school and its staff. Racist notions of Indigenous nature were central to the ways in which school administrators ran the schools and responded to disciplinary issues.

Hockey's Implementation as a Disciplinary Technique

All three schools eventually turned to hockey and other athletics to solve these perceived problems of "native weakness" and to instill discipline among their students. Hockey provided the schools with a uniquely Canadian disciplinary technique that taught specific expressions of Canadian masculinity such as toughness, perseverance, and loyalty.³⁴ Furthermore, the artistry of hockey mixed with its inherent tendencies towards physical aggression made it the perfect sport for assimilation as it channeled Indigenous "weakness" and "aggression" into disciplined bodily movement.³⁵ As agent Swartmen wrote in 1946, "the Indian children seem to enjoy sports and games even more than our own children do. Under proper supervision this would go a long way toward developing character and physique."³⁶ It

³³ Ibid. Residential schools were such fire hazards during the later stages of the IRSS that the TRC dedicated an entire chapter to the subject. TRC, *The History Part 2*, 301 – 335.

³⁴ Richard Gruneau and David Whitson, *Hockey Night in Canada: Sport, Identity and Cultural Politics* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 193.

³⁵ Ibid., 29.

³⁶ Gifford Swartman, Memorandum RE: Sioux Lookout Agency, Administrative Problems, 12 December 1946, File 494 1-1, Volume 11431, RG 10, LAC.

was the dynamics of power within hockey that were especially appealing to settler colonial officials as the children willingly subjected themselves to the rules of the game.³⁷ Officials at all levels of the settler colonial mesh began to encourage hockey, among other sports, during the latter half of the 1940s as local-level programs began to illustrate the benefits of its implementation in the creation of “useful Christian citizenship.”³⁸ The benefits of sport were not just for the children but also for members of the IRSS as sport’s nature as a “softer” disciplinary technique can be a self-reflexive defence mechanism. As J.A Mangan writes, sport, “when necessary, could prove a relaxing couch for conscience.”³⁹ Administrators were able to move away from more physical and violent methods of violence towards an effectual, subtle, and complex form of discipline that helped remove guilt from settler consciousness while bringing Indigenous children under the influence of Euro-Canadian culture.

The introduction of hockey began as a local-level decision which occurred at different times at each school. Due to this, the beginning of hockey programs can be difficult to determine. For instance, hockey at Cecilia Jeffrey is especially hard to pinpoint because there is not a specific request from a principal to the IAB or WMS asking for sports equipment. It is possible that a team existed at the old Cecilia Jeffrey school due to its location on Shoal Lake, and there is evidence that the children did make use of the lake for some recreational activities. In fact, an article in the *Kenora Daily Miner* discussed the entrance of a team of “Indian boys”

³⁷ Robidoux, *Stickhandling Through the Margins*, 46.

³⁸ The Canadian Church Missionary News, M.S.C.C, No. 1, Vol. 11, January 1950, Box 119, GS 75 – 103, MSCC, GSA. The TRC does dedicate a small section to the development of hockey in the IRSS in the 1940s and 1950s, see TRC, *The History Part 2*, 470 – 476.

³⁹ J.A. Mangan, “Britain’s Chief Spiritual Export: Imperial Sport as Moral Metaphor, Political Symbol and Cultural Bond,” *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 27 Nos. 1–2 (2010), 329.

into the local youth hockey league in 1930.⁴⁰ Regardless, if there were early attempts at maintaining a hockey program at the school, it did not become prevalent until 1941. In that year, one of the teachers at Cecilia Jeffrey petitioned the WMS for physical education programs and the building of a gymnasium. When the WMS denied this request, the school was forced to turn to other options.⁴¹ Norman Rusaw, who was hired as a teacher that year, built a rink with the help of the boys.⁴² This action had a major impact. By 1942 the school had multiple boys' hockey teams, including the Chiefs and the Flyers, which were composed of the school's best players and played in local youth leagues. There were six other teams at the schools which had regular intramural games after classes.⁴³ The quick and enthusiastic adoption of hockey by students at Cecilia Jeffrey reflects a common experience among Indigenous children at residential schools.

The beginning of the hockey program at Birtle is much easier to pinpoint due to the concentrated efforts of Principal Lockhart and the desire among students for more sports. Lockhart noted that the boys took great interest in the playground balls and equipment that were provided for them at the school. In 1936, he wrote to the IAB asking for funding to purchase more sports equipment. He claimed that the current equipment was insufficient as a single football lasted "a very short time, for it is used almost incessantly throughout the day."⁴⁴ This was part of a larger request for extra funds to purchase sports equipment. The principal

⁴⁰ "Strong Line-Up Promised for Comm'l League," *Kenora Daily Miner and News*, December 13, 1930, <http://www.kenorapubliclibrary.org/library-resources/newspaper-archives.aspx>.

⁴¹ Phillip Phelan, Chief of Training Division of DIA, letter to Indian Secretary of the WMS, January 20, 1941, File 461-5, Part 6, Vol. 6189, RG 10, LAC.

⁴² Douglas Pitts, Annual Report on Cecilia Jeffrey, March 16, 1943, File 3, Box 8, 1988 – 7004, Box 8, File 3, WMS, PCCA.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ E.H. Lockhart, Letter to A.F. MacKenzie Secretary of the DIA, October 18, 1936, File 575-5, Part 5, Vol. 6253, RG 10, LAC.

specifically requested full hockey gear, so he could set up a proper team at the school. He wrote, “the hockey equipment is a necessary safeguard. Hockey has been found to be very popular with the boys and pads are of course necessary for a real team.”⁴⁵ At this point in time, the IAB was not offering extra funding for recreational activities at residential schools and an IAB official firmly told Lockhart that he should find the money in the per-capita grant they were already giving to the school.⁴⁶ Furthermore, Janice Forsyth points to the chronic underfunding of residential schools before 1951 and the poor health that it begot as a primary reason for the implementation, and eventually encouragement, of residential school sport.⁴⁷ Lockhart was able to procure the money through other means, possibly through donations given to the WMS for Indian education from Presbyterian congregations. By 1938, Birtle had the early stages of a hockey program and entered local leagues in Manitoba where the school team played against local teams. A report from that year celebrated the excellent hockey teams at the school and the interest the entire student body had taken in them.⁴⁸

As for Sioux Lookout, evidence suggests that financial pragmatism led the staff to favour outdoor sports and hockey in particular. A report from 1947 reveals the MSCC encouraged the development of outdoor recreational activities at residential school due to their inexpensive nature. Significantly, the natural environment of Sioux Lookout consisted of long and harsh winters which suited the development of hockey, whereas the seasons for other sports was far too short. The beginnings of the hockey program can be primarily attributed to

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ A.F. MacKenzie, Letter to Principal E.H. Lockhart, November 4, 1936, File 575-5, Part 5, Vol. 6253, RG 10, LAC.

⁴⁷ Forsyth, “The Indian Act and the (Re)Shaping of Canadian Aboriginal Sport Practices,” 102.

⁴⁸ John P. Sigvaldason, Inspector’s Report on Birtle Indian Residential School, January 12 and 13, 1938, File 511/23-5-014. Vol. 8449, RG 10, LAC.

the efforts of agent Swartman. Until 1948, the IAB was hesitant to support sport, especially hockey, due to the finances required for a proper team and the relatively untested benefits of its implementation. Yet, in the fall of 1948, things began to change. An estimate produced on September 7, 1948 for the upcoming years (1949-1950) requested the purchase of ice skates and hockey sticks.⁴⁹ Although the school would not purchase equipment until the following year, Swartman actively promoted hockey during this period in the school's history. In October 1948, he ordered Principal John Evans to dismantle two old huts on the property to be used as boards for the future rink.⁵⁰ Within three years, the Sioux Lookout Black Hawks were a dominant youth hockey team in northwestern Ontario winning numerous awards and accolades, and even participated on a tour to Ottawa and Toronto to play against settler teams from southern Ontario (see Chapter 2).

Administrators quickly noticed the powerful influence of hockey as a disciplinary technique. The WMS encouraged Lockhart's pursuit of hockey stating, "we consider games an important part of the training and competition might help interest and school spirit."⁵¹ Similarly, Principal Pitts wrote that, at Cecilia Jeffrey, "these boys like hockey best of all sports and we find that when we have organized hockey our problems in discipline are reduced to the minimum. They seem to be much more progressive in their work and a much better school

⁴⁹ An estimate from August 30, 1948 shows that the school was only interested in purchasing footballs and volleyballs but only a few days later Evans amended its decision and also requested skates and hockey sticks. Departmental Estimates, 1949-1950 Anglican Indian Residential School Sioux Lookout, Ontario, 30 August 1948, File 470-5, Part 8, Volume 6216, RG 10, LAC; Sioux Lookout Indian Residential School Estimates, 1948-1950, 7 September 1948, File 470-5, part 8, Volume 6216, RG 10, LAC.

⁵⁰ G.R. Turner, Visit of Major General G.R. Turner to Anglican Indian Residential School Sioux Lookout, Ont, 18 and 19 September 1948, File 5, Box 23, GS 75-103, MSCC, GSA.

⁵¹ Frieda Matthews, Letter to Principal Lockhart, December 6, 1939, File 2, Box 7, 1988 – 7004, WMS, PCCA.

spirit is most evident.”⁵² The most vibrant examples of the ways in which hockey improved school life and discipline occurred at Sioux Lookout. A letter from 1949, roughly a year after the start of the school’s official hockey program, notes that the school has been in the best shape it has been in for years, primarily due to the cooperation the principal received from his staff and his students. In an inspection report filed a few months later in April 1950, Superintendent Hamilton also suggested that the students are “happy and well-behaved without being brow-beaten” and that Principal Wilson claims that the interest the children have in hockey has been a “grand thing for the school.”⁵³ Indeed, school administrators were noticing the great potential of hockey as a disciplinary technique and the overwhelming interest Indigenous students had for the sport.

Gender was another important terrain of struggle within residential schools as Euro-Canadian ideas of masculinity and femininity were subtly imposed on developing Indigenous youths through hockey. Numerous Indigenous sport historians, including Mary-Ellen Kelm and Michael Robidoux, discuss the ways in which Euro-Canadian sport has both mimicked and reflected traditional Indigenous notions of masculinity. Kelm specifically argues that many of the characteristics embodied by cowboys in early twentieth century western Canada had connections to traditional markers of Indigenous masculinity allowing Indigenous cowboys to reconnect with their culture.⁵⁴ Similarly, Robidoux illustrates the ways in which Indigenous lacrosse players were celebrated by Euro-Canadians in the late nineteenth century for their

⁵² Douglas Pitts, Annual Report of Cecilia Jeffrey for 1942, March 16, 1943, File 3, Box 8, 1988 – 7004, WMS, PCCA.

⁵³ A.G. Hamilton, Visit of the Superintendent to Sioux Lookout School, April 4, 1950, File 7, Box 23, GS 75-103, MSCC, GSA.

⁵⁴ Mary-Ellen Kelm, *A Wilder West: Rodeo in Western Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011), 25.

display of Indigenous masculinity on the playing field.⁵⁵ However, it is important to note, especially in the context of residential schooling, that notions of Indigenous masculinity have been complicated by “the layering of racialized, patriarchal gender systems over pre-existing, tribally specific cosmologies of gender,” by settler colonialism as part of dispossessive policy.⁵⁶ This greatly complicates the struggle over gender within residential school hockey as Indigenous children were at once attempting to discover their own sense of Indigenous masculinity or femininity through hockey, a sport with some connections to traditional signifiers, while being confronted by Euro-Canadian notions of gender by their teachers and coaches.

Indigenous boys were able to explore notions of masculinity on the hockey rink without the direct interference of school staff. During a game in 1950, three boys from the residential school were playing for the Birtle Jr. B's and became involved in a physical altercation on the ice. The principal, Norman Rusaw, who saw the fight, celebrated the outburst of violence on the ice. “From my point of view, I could see Nelson’s fists flying in the duel, so I went down on the ice when they suddenly disappeared, but he was all right, it was a spectacular round,” he wrote.⁵⁷ Rusaw saw this action as part of the game, as an expression of youthful masculine energy that was part of the spectacle of sport. His lackadaisical attitude towards this type of behaviour was also apparent at the school. While he did not encourage undisciplined behaviour amongst the boys, he did treat it in a less serious manner than some of his counterparts. Rusaw

⁵⁵ Michael Robidoux, “Imagining a Canadian Identity through Sport: A Historical Interpretation of Lacrosse and Hockey,” *The Journal of American Folklore* 115 (Spring 2002): 214.

⁵⁶ Sam McKegney, *Fulfilling Masculinities: Conversations about Indigenous Manhood* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba, 2014), 2.

⁵⁷ Norman Rusaw, Letter to the Indian Secretary of the WMS, February 6, 1950, File 2, Box 12, 1988-7004, WMS, PCCA.

once wrote, “these little lads are real boys and what a very nice little bunch they are... yesterday three of them had a real fight at the table over the butter. It was most difficult to keep a straight face during the peace court.”⁵⁸ Rusaw made an exception for what he saw as the normal behaviour of “real” boys, whether they were on the hockey rink or in the dining room. He was able to enjoy both the displays of athletic skill as well as the emotional outbursts of these Indigenous students as he came to recognize them as individuals discovering themselves and their masculinity within the mandated confines of residential schooling.

Hockey as gendered performance was not limited to boys as Indigenous girls were also taught and displayed a specific brand of femininity through hockey. It was not uncommon for women to participate in hockey during this period, but there was some moral panic around the practice of women participating in a masculine sport which “encouraged particular brands of femininity and worked to censure the way the women’s game was played.”⁵⁹ Carly Adams argues that the physical and social nature of the hockey rink made women’s bodies threatening to the masculine sport of hockey, therefore women were encouraged through discourse to play the sport in distinctly feminine ways as to not upset the supposed natural order of the sport.⁶⁰ Reports from this period at Birtle show that many girls were taking quite well to recreational activities including tobogganing and skating, and WMS officials believed they should be introduced to hockey.⁶¹ By the end of the 1940s many girls were playing hockey recreationally,

⁵⁸ Norman Rusaw, Letter to the Indian Secretary of the WMS, October 10, 1950, File 2, Box 12, 1988-7004, WMS, PCCA.

⁵⁹ Carly Adams, “Troubling Bodies: ‘The Canadian Girl,’ the Ice Rink, and the Banff Winter Carnival,” *The Journal of Canadian Studies* 48, no. 3 (Fall 2014): 211.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 212.

⁶¹ Frieda Mathews, Letter to Principal Lockhart, January 16, 1941, File 3, Box 7 1988 – 7004, WMS, PCCA. The TRC only offers a very brief section on female participation in sports which does not acknowledge the true extent of these programs. TRC, *The History Part 2*, 476-477.

and by the end of the 1950s there were several girls' hockey teams. In the Birtle school newspaper for 1952, one girl reflected on her experiences playing sports that year writing that:

We believe all these sports are a wonderful pastime, but this certainly isn't the main reason for engaging ourselves in them so enthusiastically. There's our health... and our waistlines to look after. As natural as anything can come, we cannot boast we are experts or champs at these, but at least we can say we're always out for all the fun we can get, and we certainly get heaps of it.⁶²

While the boys were being taught to control their natural energy, girls were being told that they should participate in sports for the sake of their waistlines. The gendered difference between boys' hockey and girls' hockey continued well into the 1950s. Principal Rusaw, the same Rusaw who helped spark the hockey program at Cecilia Jeffrey who was then principal of Birtle, wrote of girls' hockey that: "It has amazed me how our girls are taking a hold. There is no hesitancy whatever and it has given them a feeling of importance, at least on the same basis as the boys."⁶³ Rusaw highlights how the girls lost their shyness on the ice, that they competed in a physical game without any hesitation much like their male counterparts. Hockey was a tool used by administrators to instill certain aspects of femininity that they saw as important while also encouraging the girls to overcome their supposed natural shyness.

Hockey as a Space for Indigenous Survival

The effect hockey had on the students' demeanor was quickly noticed by school administrators and celebrated for its positive influence on school life. In 1939, Lockhart mentioned the wonder and excitement of the hockey teams at the school. "Speaking generally of our children's physical condition I might say it would do you good to see the energy of our boys in action in the hockey games," he wrote. "Their speed and enduring powers are

⁶² Ruth Ann, "Girls' Sports," the *Teepee Times*, September 1952, File 5, Box 12, 1988-7004, WMS, PCCA.

⁶³ Norman Rusaw, Letter to Frieda Matthews, February 22, 1959, File 3, Box 13, 1988-7004, WMS, PCCA.

repeatedly commented on by spectators.”⁶⁴ The energy that administrators once saw as hampering the school’s progress was now being channeled into hockey. Reports from all three schools in the years following the implementation of hockey programs frequently point to the attitude changes that accompanied the transformation of boys from rowdy and unmotivated children to content and attentive students. At Cecilia Jeffrey the boys were considered trustworthy enough to play on their own in the evening, this only a few years after they were forcibly locked into their rooms at night.⁶⁵ These drastic changes were directly attributed to hockey’s influence. In 1950, the regional supervisor for Indian agencies, F. Matters, wrote to the IAB about Sioux Lookout stating that the students “...are quite lively, speak freely, and look healthy. There is no doubt that the morale of the school has been improved beyond measure during the last two years. Part of this can be credited to the work of the principal and staff, also in a large measure to the spirit that has been developed through sports, mainly hockey.”⁶⁶ Administrators perceived that hockey was greatly aiding the atmosphere of the schools even if the reality was that personnel factors were also behind the improvements in health and discipline among the student body.

Through student newspapers written at Birtle, it is possible to glimpse into the ways in which Indigenous children themselves felt about hockey. The appearance of contentment and excitement is reflected in these writings. One student, writing about sports at Birtle, indicated that, “it may be somewhat of a problem to hold the boys’ interest in basketball come the snow,

⁶⁴ E.H. Lockhart, Annual Report for Birtle 1939, File 2, Box 7, 1988-7004, WMS, PCCA.

⁶⁵ Douglas Pitts, Annual Report for Cecilia Jeffrey 1943, File 5, Box 8, 1988-7004, WMS PCCA.

⁶⁶ F. Matters, Re: File 470-5, Letter August 29/50, 5 October 1950, File 494/6-1, Part 1, Volume 8274, RG 10, LAC.

Figure 1: *Teepee Times*, September 1952, File 5, Box 12, 1988-7004, WMS, PCCA.

ice, and hockey.”⁶⁷ He went on to discuss his equal desire for baseball in the spring including the wish for warm sunshine on the baseball diamond. In another newspaper from 1954, a student reflected on his hockey season and mentioned the Midget hockey team going on a “scalping” spree in a game against the non-Indigenous players from the neighbouring community of Russell. This type of racially infused imagery associated with First Nations peoples was not lost on

the students as it was also accompanied with a caricature of an Indigenous hockey player quite literally stepping over a Euro-Canadian hockey player on the ice (See Figure 1). Another student made several jokes throughout his article, illustrating the camaraderie that existed between hockey players at the school including a description of their red, white, and blue uniforms as joker suits as well as a teasing comment to a teammate, “body checking was clean but at times there was the odd bulldozing (Is that right Tony?).”⁶⁸ Interestingly, this hockey fellowship also extended to the girls. Later in the paper, the girls’ hockey team is discussed in a brotherly tone, “so the girls should be proud of putting on such a splendid showing in their first year of competition, and I’m sure the ‘hockey wars’ they played will remain long in their

⁶⁷ Ruth Ann, “Girls’ Sports,” the *Teepee Times*, September 1952, File 5, Box 12, 1988-7004, WMS, PCCA.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

memories.”⁶⁹ Administrators’ claims that hockey made students happy is born out to some degree by the accounts of hockey players themselves.

Student interest in hockey was also reflected in the successes these teams enjoyed. Residential hockey teams dominated local leagues and tournaments. In 1948, one of the Birtle teams was so dominant in their league that the local teams refused to play them. Principal Rusaw wrote in a letter to the WMS that:

We are more less up against for games right now. Birtle is through with us as they have been beaten so much they have given up any hope of beating our lads and now they do not want to play... Binscarth happened to see our lads playing the Russell team so they do not wish to tackle them, so our only hope is Shoal Lake.⁷⁰

For their part, the Cecilia Jeffrey teams, known as the Chiefs and Flyers (or Flyweights), won their division of the Kenora hockey league several times in the late 1940s. From there, they would play in the regional championship held in Winnipeg, though they never won a regional title. The Sioux Lookout team, named the Black Hawks after the National Hockey League team, was entered in a local minor hockey league in Sioux Lookout for the 1949 season and went on to win the championship that spring, only two years after these same children had learned to skate on Pelican Lake. In that season, they had 17 wins and 1 loss with 92 goals for and 21 against.⁷¹ Significantly, they only took six penalties over the course of two seasons. Some journalists claimed how the discipline taught at residential school was being reflected on the ice. However, Euro-Canadian media were still prone to engage in racist stereotypes.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Norman Rusaw, Letter to Frieda Matthews, February 22, 1949, File 2, Box 12, 1988-7004, WMS, PCCA.

⁷¹ Stan Houston, “All Indian Team on Ice Warpath: Bantams from Sioux Lookout on Lookout for Scalps,” *The Telegram*, April 13, 1951, m2014 – 10/12 [33], Blackhawks file, General Synod Archives – Anglican Church of Canada, Toronto, Ontario.

The Black Hawks were noted for their defeats of several Euro-Canadian junior All-Star teams, some of whose members were four years older than themselves. One article in *The Telegram* vividly claimed they “scalped” the competition and “ravage[d] the town's best 34-3” in Dryden, Ontario.⁷² The Indigenous children who participated in hockey were excellent athletes who were able to compete with, and beat, Euro-Canadian children of their own age and skillset.

Many of these individual Indigenous children were noted for their athletic prowess by both administrators and locals. Individual students were also able to make their own reputation as athletes and individuals. Older students became greatly sought after by local Euro-Canadian Juvenile and Junior teams. In some cases, Indigenous hockey players from residential schools were chosen over white players for the teams which represented local communities.⁷³ Numerous other boys won league wide awards for Most Valuable Player and the best players for positions such as goalie or forward throughout the years.⁷⁴ A ceremony was held at the end of every year in the town of Birtle where these players were honored amongst their peers. Similarly, many of the boys that played on the school hockey teams would go onto to have successful careers outside of hockey including Colin Wasacase. The starting goalie on the 1954-1955 Midget team at Birtle and winner of the goalie of the year in the Snake Creek Hockey League (SCHL), Wasacase became the principal of Cecilia Jeffrey at the end of the 1960s.⁷⁵ Hockey was a means through which Indigenous children could display their individual skills and receive credit for their abilities.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Norman Rusaw, Letter to Frieda Matthews, February 10, 1948, File 1, Box 12, 1988-7004, WMS, PCCA.

⁷⁴ Norman Rusaw, Annual Report for Birtle 1960, File 4, Box 10, 1988-7004, WMS, PCCA.

⁷⁵ “Midget Hockey Team,” *Wigwam News* in 1954 – 1955, File 5, Box 12, 1988-7004, WMS PCCA.

The hockey rink at each of the schools was originally intended purely for hockey, but it also became an important recreational site on the school grounds for skating and other activities. At all three schools, a majority of the student body used the rink for recreational skating. Boys and girls both claimed that the time spent on the rink was among some of their most enjoyable moments at the school.⁷⁶ Significantly, boys and girls could skate together on occasion. This was often the only opportunity where students were able to interact with the opposite sex at the school, even if they were brothers and sisters. Birtle implemented a mixed gender skating hour every Saturday from 4 to 5pm which school administrators remarked worked out “splendidly.”⁷⁷ Hockey also became a spectacle for the students as they were sometimes able to watch their school team in action. At Sioux Lookout in March 1950, a game was played between the Sioux Lookout and McIntosh Indian Residential School teams. The excitement for both players and spectators was such that Superintendent Neary of the Department of Education described it as a “red Letter day in the lives of the pupils.”⁷⁸ As John Bloom writes in reference to boxing matches held at Native American boarding schools, “they illustrate moments when student life broke from the monotony of daily routine, when students were able to interact with society outside the walls of the campus, and when they could observe their teachers acting in ways that they had not seen.”⁷⁹ School administrators were able to use the rink both as a site for hockey as well as skating for the rest of the student body. Hockey,

⁷⁶ Ivan Robson, Letter to Frieda Matthews, January 10, 1955, File 1, Box 16, 1988-7004, WMS, PCCA.

⁷⁷ Norman Rusaw, Letter to Frieda Matthews, March 12, 1946, File 6, Box 7, 1988-7004, WMS, PCCA.

⁷⁸ Bernard Neary, Report on Sioux Lookout Indian Residential School, March 1, 1950, File 470-5, part 10, Volume 6216, RG 10, LAC.

⁷⁹ John Bloom, *To Show What an Indian Can Do: Sports at Native American Boarding Schools* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 72.

and the infrastructure that was needed to maintain it, was a great aid to the school beyond the sport. It provided recreation and entertainment for the whole student body.

While hockey created a space through which Indigenous children were able to improve their situation, they could not completely change the situation they found themselves in. Settler colonialism is never a complete nor omnipotent power but one which functions on numerous levels and through a variety of means. As Woolford suggests, this multi-layered settler colonial mesh becomes prone to rips and tears due to its diverse nature.⁸⁰ It is within these spaces where Indigenous peoples and cultures were able to survive. Hockey was imposed as a method for Indigenous assimilation, as part of the settler colonial mesh which was supposed to tighten around Indigenous peoples, but it also created a space where Indigenous children found contentment, excitement, and even a rediscovery of their own bodies after experiencing the rigid nature of residential school life. Furthermore, although the goals of the IRSS stayed the same—namely, the assimilation and destruction of Indigenous cultures—the desire Indigenous students had for hockey led to a renegotiation of settler colonial policies within the school, however limited it might have been. Colonial sport historians have often discussed the realm of sport as a contact zone of negotiation between the colonized and the colonizers,⁸¹ and it was no different at residential school. These Indigenous children, who were stuck in a settler colonial institution which sought their erasure, were able to subtly guide policies towards their

⁸⁰ Woolford, *This Benevolent Experiment*, 3.

⁸¹ Patrick McDevitt, *May the Best Man Win: Sport, Masculinity, and Nationalism in Great Britain and the Empire, 1880-1935* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008). The classic study, still cited by all scholars in the field, remains C.L.R. James, *Beyond a Boundary* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993 [orig. 1963, 1983]), which considers cricket in the West Indies as metaphor, battlefield, and site of negotiation for the British Empire.

own survival as their fascination and response to the hockey programs began to guide official policy.

The hockey programs that were implemented were in large part a response to the demands from these students for sport. Moreover, as these student athletes took to hockey and as the sport grew in prestige, it drew greater investments from school administrators and staff. At Sioux Lookout, tension between church and government officials illustrates the ways in which these officials became personally attached to hockey, specifically between Principal Wilson and agent Swartman. In June 1950, Wilson felt Swartman was impossible to work with and claimed he was taking complete credit for the Black Hawks' success. In one instance, the environment around the team grew so intense that Swartman slammed the dressing room door in Wilson's face when he attempted to enter it.⁸² In an action that only intensified the strain between the two men, Swartman arranged for the team photo to be taken when Wilson was away from the school. Hockey had a certain amount of social capital amongst school administrators, and this was associated with both teams and individual athletes. In 1953, Cecilia Jeffrey accepted several Indigenous children from the Sioux Lookout area due to overcrowding at the Sioux Lookout school. The principal at the time, Eric Barrington, wrote a public letter to the parents and guardians of the students in which he wrote, "we look forward to seeing what sort of hockey players these Sioux Lookout boys are going to be."⁸³ Barrington hoped to relate to these parents through hockey, something originally intended as an

⁸² G.R. Turner, Report on Visit to Sioux Lookout Anglican School, June 16 and 17, 1950, File 7, Box 23, GS 75-103, MCSS, GSA.

⁸³ Eric Barrington, Letter to Parents, Guardians, and Friends, December 1, 1953, File 4, Box 15 1988-7004, WMS, PCCA.

assimilatory tool. As time went on, hockey moved beyond an institutional program and became a personal hobby for staff just like it was for the students.

However, hockey was not always for pure pleasure as the pressure to succeed became a central part of the residential school hockey experience. Rusaw burdened the boys who played for the school by emphasizing the importance of maintaining the reputation of the team. Rusaw writes about the feelings of one of the boys in a letter to the WMS saying, “Charlie said the other day, ‘since we have been playing professionally we haven’t lost a game.’”⁸⁴ This pressure to succeed was seen in the school newspaper as one of the students wrote after a losing season that, “none of these three teams were altogether too strong to beat but the only thing our side lacked was the real determination to do their best and try to keep up the reputation of the Birtle Indian School hockey teams high.”⁸⁵ The pressure to maintain the reputation of the school peaked in the 1966 hockey season when no teams were formed at Birtle due to the boys’ lack of interest. Some suspected that the boys who had played in the previous season had played for the principal’s sake, and not for their own enjoyment. The following year, the boys refused to sign up for the team.⁸⁶ Both staff and students became greatly involved in the school’s hockey team, and the mounting pressure from this investment was a major factor in the sport’s dismantlement at the school.

Conclusion

Hockey was implemented into the curriculum of each of these three residential schools as a cure for disciplinary issues that administrators saw as symptoms of Indigenous racial

⁸⁴ Norman Rusaw, Letter to Freida Matthews, February 25, 1950, File 2, Box 12, 1988 – 7004, WMS, PCCA.

⁸⁵ Gordon Johnny, “Juvenile Hockey,” *Wigwam News*, 1954, File 6, Box 12, 1988 – 7004, WMS, PCCA.

⁸⁶ Norman Rusaw, Annual Report for Birtle 1966, File 2, Box 11, 1988-7004, WMS, PCCA.

inferiority. However, in some ways, hockey's use as an assimilatory tool was ineffective as it created a space in which Indigenous students could not only survive, but also thrive as Indigenous athletes and even shape the system which sought to erase them. The school environment in which these Indigenous children lived was hostile. The rigid schedules, unhealthy policies, and even physical abuse gave empirical expression to the racist assumptions that underpinned the school system. The desire Indigenous students had for hockey is perhaps not terribly surprising. They sought recreational activities through which they could find a release for their youthful energy and from the underlying sinister purposes in a settler colonial institution. Local circumstances greatly shaped the programs that developed, but the ways in which students responded to hockey were all but universal as they came to love and excel at the sport of their colonizers. Administrators and staff at these schools were drawn to the sport in a similar way to their students as they became personally involved in these hockey programs and the lives of these Indigenous hockey players.

Chapter 2: From Residential School Rinks to Maple Leaf Gardens: Hockey's Role in Indian Residential School Public Relations, 1945 – 1965

Introduction

On the morning of April 15, 1951 Maple Leaf Gardens experienced a moment of peace between the chaos of two hockey games. The first game had occurred the evening before and saw the Montreal Canadiens claim their only win in the 1951 Stanley Cup Final against the Toronto Maple Leafs. The second took place that afternoon and constituted a very different spectacle. In the place of “Rocket” Richard or Bill Barilko, twelve Cree and Ojibway boys from Northwestern Ontario took to the ice. The children were invited to Maple Leaf Gardens, to play on the same rink as their hockey heroes, because they themselves were noted hockey players. The invitation was part of a public relations experiment conducted by government and church officials. The players were students at the Sioux Lookout Indian Residential School. Hockey, with its spectacle and prevalence in Canadian culture, was a perfect vehicle to “prove” to the settler public that assimilationist policies of Indian Residential schools were solving the “Indian problem.”¹ However, these public hockey events also created subtle tears in the settler colonial mesh, tears that allowed for Indigenous survival and resistance. Whether at a game, a tournament, or on tour, these Indigenous athletes were able to challenge common-sense understandings of race held by the settler public and engage in activities that would have otherwise been unavailable to them.

The strict hierarchical racial binary upon which settler colonialism is constructed, between European and Indigenous, creates a fascination within settler consciousness

¹ John Bloom, *To Show What an Indian Can Do: Sports at Native American Boarding Schools* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), xvii.

concerning the Indigenous Other which has long been the subject of study.² Within this framework, the nuances and complexities of Indigenous culture are disregarded in favour of comfortable settler common-sense understandings of what it means to be “civilized” or “savage.” As Daniel Francis writes, “through the prism of White hopes, fears and prejudices, indigenous Americans would be seen to have lost contact with reality and to have become ‘Indians’; that is, anything non-Natives wanted them to be.”³ This comparison, however, is useless unless these symbols already exist within settler colonial consciousness. Stuart Hall argues that the Indigenous Other must be brought into the colonial public sphere as a constructed and symbolic outside in order to illustrate to the settler public what not to be.⁴ Settler colonial structures therefore depend on the ongoing balance between Europeanization and Indigenization, and the representation of the Indigenous Other in the public sphere is a primary method to achieve this balance. Indian Residential School System (IRSS) administrators tapped settler colonial fascination with the Indigenous other to promote themselves and their mission through a variety of public events, including hockey games and tournaments. Whether these individuals knew it or not, their actions also aided in the maintenance of settler colonial power as they brought the Indigenous Other under the gaze of settler audiences.

² Philip Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998) ; Philip Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004) ; Daniel Francis, *The Imaginary Indian: The Image of the Indian in Canadian Culture* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 1997) ; Andrew Holman, “Telling Stories About Indigeneity and Canadian Sport: The Spectacular Cree and Ojibway Indian Hockey Barnstorming Tour of North America, 1928,” *Sport History Review* 43, no. 2 (2012).

³ Francis, *Imaginary Indian*, 5.

⁴ Stuart Hall, “When was the Postcolonial? Rethinking the Limit,” in *The Post-Colonial Question: Common Skies, Divided Horizons* ed. Iain Chambers and Lidia Curti (New York: Routledge, 1996), 252.

Yet, the hockey rink was also a contact zone between Indigenous children, Euro-Canadian players, and local audiences and, as such, created a space for these Indigenous athletes to challenge the colonial binary itself. The hockey rink became a site where different cultures and perspectives clashed with audience expectations, rooted as they were in oppositional notions of “Indians” vs. “Canadians.”⁵ These Indigenous athletes were subjected to settler colonial ways of life at the school, but they were still able to exercise a certain amount of agency over their behaviour on the ice through hockey. The Indigenous children who played on these residential school hockey teams were subject to the harsh realities of settler colonial rule, yet they were also experts at playing the sport of their colonizers. As a result, these Indigenous students enacted hybridized identities as they competed against local Euro-Canadian teams across Canada. The ways in which they conducted themselves, both on and off the ice, came to define them as teams and individuals, at least in the minds of Euro-Canadian spectators. The ways in which Indigenous hockey players on residential school teams were able to form identities within this racial gap between European and Indigenous illustrates the flexibility of colonial metanarratives while undermining the political purpose of this binary to keep the colonized in a place of subjugation.⁶ The autonomy of these Indigenous athletes was greatly limited by their circumstance but the public performance of their identities through sport nonetheless challenged settler colonial rule in subtle and subversive ways.

This chapter examines how the hockey programs at Birtle, Cecilia Jeffrey, and Sioux Lookout Indian Residential Schools fulfilled important public relations functions, as school

⁵ Holman, “Telling Stories About Indigeneity and Canadian Sport,” 192.

⁶ Paige Raibmon, *Authentic Indians: Episodes of Encounter from the Late-Nineteenth-Century Northwest Coast* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 46.

officials sought to promote their mission of Indian education to the Canadian public. It also illustrates the ways in which students used these hockey programs as an opportunity for survival and subversion. It will begin by discussing the ways in which each residential school worked to interact with the public and to promote itself to settler society in the era before the hockey programs were implemented at these schools. It will then discuss the tour of the Sioux Lookout Black Hawks across southern Ontario which emerged as a public relations experiment that was meant to use hockey to demonstrate the success of the residential school program. It shows how, in the aftermath, other schools sought to replicate its success by using Indigenous hockey teams as a publicity tool for the schools. Finally, the chapter examines the annual Ice Carnival held at Birtle. Although carnivals such as this one worked in opposite ways to the Black Hawks' tour—they brought settlers to the school and local arenas to watch Indigenous hockey—they were nonetheless meant to achieve similar ends. The chapter argues that, despite these aims, student hockey players were able to confound settler colonial expectations that underpinned the staging of these sporting events. The story of hockey at residential school is twofold as administrators sought to meet their own ends through the sport while students used it as an opportunity to survive and challenge settler colonial expectations.

The Importance of Hockey and Public Relations, 1945 – 1950

The conflict that existed between Protestants and Catholics is a key part of the story of public relations at the schools as they sought to promote their own brand of assimilation and salvation to gain more Indigenous students; and with more students came more government funding. From the outset, Protestants and Catholics undertook the administration of residential schools as they sought to save the souls of Indigenous peoples and bring them into the realm of their own particular Christian doctrine. This meant that denominational rivalries were

hardwired into the residential school system. John Milloy goes as far as to describe this rivalry in terms of the original colonization of Canada writing, “the situation was reminiscent of the old days of fur-trade rivalry with Hudson’s Bay Company and Northwest Company posts leap-frogging each other across the west... The quest for the souls and minds of Indian pupils was as hard and bitterly fought by the churches.”⁷

This rivalry remained a key feature of the IRSS in the 1950s and 1960s, causing the system to overextend itself which was one of the numerous reasons the federal government decided to take control of school administration in 1969. Significantly, annual reports from Cecilia Jeffrey often referred to the attendance numbers at St. Mary’s Indian Residential School, a Catholic-run school that also operated within the city limits of Kenora. On one occasion, there was a debate between the schools over where a female student would be educated. The student’s father practised traditional Indigenous spirituality but attended Cecilia Jeffrey while her mother, who was no longer involved in the student’s life, was believed to be a Catholic by administrators at St. Mary’s.⁸ Her parents were never officially married which made her religious affiliation central to the debate. Cecilia Jeffrey eventually accepted her, and the per-capita grant that came with her, into the school after a long bureaucratic process with

⁷ John Milloy, *‘A National Crime’: The Canadian Government and the Residential School System, 1879 to 1986* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1999), 57.

⁸ E.W. Byers, “Re: Pupil Victoria Pitchenese,” December 8, 1939, File 8, Box 1, 1988-7004, Women’s Missionary Society Fonds (hereafter WMS), Presbyterian Church in Canada Archives, Toronto, Ontario (hereafter PCCA) ; A similar event occurred around the acceptance of a student in 1945, there seems to be a reoccurring issue between the schools, Douglas Pitts, “Re: Children of Moses Bird” March 14, 1945, File 461-10 Part 1, Vol. 6150, School Files Series RG 10, Indian Affairs Branch Fonds, Library Archives Canada (hereafter LAC).

government officials. More children meant more money for the school and more souls saved therefore creating a sense of ownership of Indigenous children among church officials.⁹

Denominational rivalry stemmed primarily from the competition that existed among the different sects of Christianity vying for the souls of Indigenous peoples, but it was further heightened by what administrators saw as the discrepancy in government treatment between denominations. In 1940, a Presbyterian minister on the Waywayseecappo reserve wrote of the negative influence a Catholic priest was having among the Indigenous people in the community. He described the priest lying about purposely evangelizing to Protestant families on the reserve while encouraging their children to be placed in the local Catholic residential school. He wrote, “Regarding the [Roman Catholic] activities. No one wishes more heartily than I for their activities to be checked... I contend that the Department are favouring the [Roman Catholics] in the removal of children from protestant schools, but strenuously object to children being removed from [Roman Catholic] schools.”¹⁰ This conspiratorial thinking continued through the 1940s and into the 1950s. The Anglican church believed that decisions made during the revision of the Indian Act in 1951 favoured the Catholic church and their schools by awarding new freedoms to Indigenous peoples.¹¹ They even had Anglican bishops petition the Indian Affairs Branch to hire a non-Roman Catholic as the Chief of the Training Division, second in authority to the Superintendent, in an attempt to halt the perceived Catholic

⁹ In the 1950s, many schools were forced to overcrowd their classrooms in an attempt to gain more money from the IAB through per-capita grants which only exacerbated problems with education, health, and sanitation. The IAB was eventually forced to intervene in 1957 when they officially ended the per-capita grant system, Milloy, *A National Crime*, 270.

¹⁰ H. Crump, Letter to Rev. E.H. Lockhart, February 1, 1940, File 8, Box 8, 1988-7004, Women’s Missionary Society Fonds, PCCA.

¹¹ “Report of the Indian School Administration to the Board of Management, M.S.C.C. General Synod 1952,” File 7, Box 21, GS 75-103, M.S.C.C. Indian Schools Administration, General Synod Archives, Toronto, Ontario (hereafter GSA).

take-over.¹² This conflict only intensified the importance of public relations and publicity as Protestant schools actively worked to challenge Catholic schools.

Public relations became increasingly important as residential schools appealed to the public in an attempt to improve their public face and gain support by illustrating the ways in which they were educating, or assimilating, Indigenous peoples into the Canadian state, sometimes literally illustrating the progression from “savage” to “civilized.” Birtle participated in the annual parade held every June in the town of Birtle to keep the students and the school in the daily consciousness of local residents. The school became so accomplished at creating floats for these parades that local settler schools began to accuse them of cheating. Principal Rusaw saw it differently and suggested that the settler complaints arose because “they dislike[d] being beaten by the Indian School.”¹³ These parade floats took the subtle assumptions of the advancement of Indigenous children that were on display at Cecilia Jeffrey and made them literal. In one float during the parade in 1964, one half was dedicated to a teepee surrounded by students dressed in stereotypical Indigenous garb while the other half displayed a student wearing a business suit.¹⁴

The beginning of hockey programs at each of the schools, Cecilia Jeffrey and Birtle in the early 1940s and Sioux Lookout in the late 1940s, created a new and important avenue for public relations between their residential schools and the local communities. These schools enrolled their hockey teams into local leagues where they played against settler teams in township arenas in front of settler audiences of varying sizes. Local newspapers kept track of

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Norman Rusaw, Letter to Frieda Matthews, June 6, 1950, File 2, Box 12, 1988-7004, WMS, PCCA.

¹⁴ Norman Rusaw, Letter to Giollo Kelly, Director of National Missions, December 10, 1964, File 6, Box 13, 1988-7004, WMS, PCCA.

these local minor leagues and brought attention to the “Indian School” teams (as they were often referred to) while encouraging people to attend the games and support young athletes. An article titled, “Small Fry and Pro’s – Hockey Mad” in *The Kenora Daily Miner* from 1961 described the predominance of hockey as spectacle in Ontario:

Hockey is played in Ontario on frozen ponds, rivers, lakes, in open air school yards and community rinks and in natural and artificial ice arenas wherever possible. It’s said that some 85,000 Ontario boys and girls play hockey... More than 90 city, town, and village teams play in Ontario Junior A, B, C, and D Leagues. The fast, rugged, playmaking of these teenage hockey players is said by many fans to be very nearly as spectacular as in the National League... Altogether, hockey is Ontario’s most popular winter-time spectator sport.¹⁵

These residential schools were able to use the popularity of hockey as a method to connect with communities. The residential schools also hosted games and then sometimes offered school tours for interested spectators.¹⁶ The rink at Cecilia Jeffrey became known as the best in the Kenora district and was commonly used as the site for hockey games.¹⁷ The rink at Birtle likewise became a league rink which hosted hockey games even when the school teams were not playing.¹⁸ In just this way, hockey provided an important cultural connection between residential schools and the communities in which they existed.

In subtle ways, these hockey teams reaffirmed settler colonial ideas of race. The imagery and names of these hockey teams interacted with settler colonial common-sense understandings of race in Canada. That this was so only further “othered” these Indigenous athletes while working to solidify the binary of “European” and “Indigenous” in the settler

¹⁵ “Small Fry And Pro’s – Hockey Mad,” March 6, 1961, *Kenora Daily Miner*, Kenora Public Library, <http://www.kenorapubliclibrary.org/library-resources/newspaper-archives.aspx>.

¹⁶ “Tom Thumb Hockey,” *Birtle Eye Witness*, February 10, 1959, NewspaperArchive.com, <https://newspaperarchive.com>.

¹⁷ Ivan B. Robson, Letter to Frieda Matthews, January 4, 1956, File 4, Box 16, 1988-7004, WMS, PCCA.

¹⁸ Norman Rusaw, Letter to Frieda Matthews, February 22, 1959, File 3, Box 13, 1988-7004, WMS, PCCA.

consciousness. For example, by naming their teams “the Chiefs”, or “the Black Hawks” these schools tapped into a long tradition of using Indigenous imagery in sports in North America. In this case, these images of stereotyped and caricatured Indigenous peoples and cultures that were emblazoned on hockey jerseys and written on scoreboards transferred settler colonial assumptions directly onto Indigenous bodies. Due to this complex expression of settler colonial common-sense, Indigenous athletes were often expected to reflect white cultural understandings of “Indianness” back to white audiences with sport being a potent way to accomplish this.¹⁹ This further entrenched ideas of the Indigenous Other during the postwar period which existed along contradictory axes—so close as to be part of a slowly forming multicultural society; yet so distant as to be racially distinct.²⁰

Skill became the primary signifier of residential school hockey teams as they came to dominate local Euro-Canadian hockey leagues and tournaments. This in turn greatly aided the promotion of the educational, and assimilatory, goals of the schools for which these students played. Many teams over the years went undefeated during season play and won championship titles. An important part of the hockey culture at the schools was the maintenance of the school’s reputation as the source of excellent hockey players. In the annual report for Cecilia Jeffrey from 1945, Principal Pitts wrote that, “The boys have much fun in [*sic*] their hockey as well as a good reputation for themselves as hockey players.”²¹ The students themselves began to feel this pressure to succeed as well. In the Birtle school newspaper, *Wigwam News* from 1954, a student writer criticized the school hockey team after it sustained a loss. The article

¹⁹ Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places*, 129.

²⁰ Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 153

²¹ Douglas Pitts, Annual Report of the Cecilia Jeffrey for 1945, March 1, 1946, File 4, Box 2, 1988-7004, WMS, PCCA.

noted that, “none of these three teams were altogether too strong to beat but the only thing our side lacked was the real determination to do their best and try to keep up the reputation of the Birtle Indian School hockey teams high.”²² These teams of Indigenous boys, who often had only recently learned how to play hockey, were not just participating in the sport of their colonizers but defeating their colonizers in it.

The talent and skill of these teams generated numerous opportunities for publicity and new opportunities for the students as well. The Cecilia Jeffrey Chiefs had a successful season in 1946 going all the way to the league finals, losing there in overtime. In the following year, they were invited to Winnipeg to play the Winnipeg Midget Seniors in March 1946.²³ Principal Pitts wrote about how the boys financed the trip themselves through either their parents or working on the weekend and said, “we consider this a wonderful opportunity to show the boys a new side of life, and to make new friends. It is also good publicity for the Church here in the West.”²⁴ School administrators saw hockey as an important opportunity to showcase the ways in which the school was assimilating Indigenous children. In March 1951, Principal Rusaw took four boys from Birtle to Winnipeg to watch La Pas Indian Residential School play a hockey game in the “Ice Cycles” festival held in the city.²⁵ The boys experienced many things that they would not have been able to otherwise. The first thing they demanded to do was skate on the city rink. During the rest of the weekend they saw a stage performance of *Hamlet*, went roller skating, and wore out the escalators and elevators at Eaton’s.²⁶ While eating dinner at a

²² Gordon Johnny, “Junior Hockey Team 1954”, *Wigwam News*, 1954, File 6, Box 12, 1988 – 7004, WMS, PCCA.

²³ Douglas Pitts, Re: Hockey Team—Winnipeg Trip, March 16, 1946, File 6, Box 14, 1988-7004, WMS, PCCA.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Norman Rusaw, Letter to Frieda Matthews, March 22, 1951, File 3, Box 12, 1988-7004, WMS, PCCA.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

Winnipeg restaurant, Principal Rusaw recalled having several people come up to him and comment on how well-behaved and sociable the boys were.²⁷ Indeed, Rusaw used that compliment to draw comparisons with the staff and students from La Pas, whom the Birtle students met after their game. “I conversed with the Priest and the Agent from there,” Rusaw wrote, “but the boys were so shy, they would not even talk to my lads who were so enthused in seeing them and anxious to find out something about them. The contrast between the two groups was so different.”²⁸ The reaction of Rusaw concerning his interaction with a Catholic principal may be shaped by the inter-denominational rivalry that was experienced on the mesolevel of the settler colonial mesh.

The Sioux Lookout Black Hawks’ Tour of Southern Ontario, 1951

The reputation these teams gained in their local communities was quickly noticed by administrators who sought to capitalize on their popularity. Soon after the Sioux Lookout Black Hawks won the league championship in 1949, school administrators noted that the problems they were having retaining staff were finally starting to subside.²⁹ Many credited new publicity programs for the wave of workers coming to the Missionary Society of the Church of England in Canada (MSCC). A school inspector made a point to mention the good work of J.S. Wilson in accomplishing this goal and that he has “captured the attention of the Indian Superintendent.”³⁰ This rhetoric does not appear to have been exaggerated. In February 1950,

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ A relatively large amount of the section concerning hockey in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s final report is dedicated to the success of the Black Hawks and their tour of southern Ontario, see Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Volume One: The History, Part 2, 1939-2000* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2015), 472 – 473.

³⁰ Henry G. Cook, Quarterly Report of the Superintendent, Indian School Administration to the M.S.C.C. Executive Committee, 9 May 1950, File 5, Box 21, GS 75-130, MSCC, GSA.

Health Minister Paul Martin was in Sioux Lookout for the opening of a hospital and made a point to see the Black Hawks play in person. Impressed by what he saw, Martin personally invited the team to come play exhibition games in Ottawa the following spring.³¹ The sportsmanship of these Indigenous boys had caught the attention of some of the most important officials in government, even if church administrators insisted on crediting Wilson rather than the athletes themselves for the team's success. Hockey provided important opportunities for residential school officials, at both the microlevel and mesolevel, to promote Indian education and its apparent benefits through the disciplined bodies of Indigenous students.

In April 1951, the Sioux Lookout Black Hawks finally made the trip to Ottawa embarking on a publicity experiment to demonstrate the assimilatory abilities of Indian education and improve the reputation of residential schools in southern Ontario. During their weekend in the south, the Black Hawks played two games in Ottawa and an exhibition game in Toronto at Maple Leaf Gardens. In an interesting connection between schools in this study, two hockey players from Cecilia Jeffrey were also with the team as replacements for two Black Hawks players who were unable to travel.³² The trip was arranged by a wide variety of people including government officials such as the Superintendent of Indian Affairs Walter Harris, Health Minister Martin, and the Supervisor of Physical Education and Recreation in

³¹ "All-Indian Bantam Team to Play Here," *The Evening Citizen*, April 4, 1950, 24, Google Newspaper: *Ottawa Citizen*, <https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=2194&dat=19510404&id=pHgvAAAAIBAJ&sjid=ltwFAAAAIBAJ&pg=6842,547956&hl=en>.

³² This is an interesting illustration of the church rivalry that existed. Protestant schools tended to support each other regardless of denominations and even worked together in creating policy but would never think to do similar things with the Catholic church. Freida Matthews, Letter to Mrs. T.C. Ross, April 17, 1951, File 10, Box 14, 1988-7004, WMS, PCCA.

the Indian Affairs Branch, Jan Eisenhart.³³ It was arranged for two reasons: as a reward for the team's accomplishments in the “hockey wars” of northwestern Ontario and as an opportunity for the federal government to encourage hockey among the Indigenous youth of the North.³⁴ Nevertheless, the publicity for the MSCC and Indian Affairs Branch(IAB) was surely a major reason to pursue the tour. The entire trip was financed by the Black Hawks Hockey Club at Sioux Lookout which was composed of Gifford Swartman and his friends. It was to include two games in Ottawa: one on April 13 against the municipal champions, the Ottawa East Browns and another on April 14 against the Ottawa Combines, an all-star team composed of the best players in the area. From there the team would travel to Toronto on Sunday April 15 to play against Shopsy's Bantam Hockey team at Maple Leaf Gardens.

Publicity for the IRSS on this tour happened both on and off the ice. The team arrived at the Ottawa's Union Station on the morning of Thursday April 12, 1951, and it marked the beginning of a weekend busier than the boys had ever seen. They were paraded through Ottawa in their brightly coloured Chicago Black Hawk jackets as physical representations of the Indigenous Other. They met numerous influential people including the Mayor of Ottawa, Grenville Goodwin, the Member of Parliament for Kenora-Rainy River, William Benidickson, ex-NHL players Bucko McDonald and Lionel Conacher, and even the Governor General Harold Alexander.³⁵ They also toured institutions such as Parliament Hill, the House of Commons, and the National Museum. They were visiting places that were considered

³³ Jan Eisenhardt, Memorandum to Mr. P. Phelan, Superintendent of Education Re: Blackhawk Indian Bantam Hockey Team visit to Ottawa and Toronto, April 13,14,15, and 16th, 1 May 1951, m2014 – 10/12 [33], Blackhawks file, GSA.

³⁴ “12 Indian Puck-Toters Here for Bantam Series,” *The Evening Citizen*, April 12, 1951, m2014 – 10/12 [33], Blackhawks file, GSA.

³⁵ “Indian Team in Capital for Games,” *The Evening Citizen*, April 12, 1951, m2014 – 10/12 [33], Blackhawks file, GSA.

important sites of Canadian identity while being actively constructed as the racial other. For instance, one *Evening Citizen* reported: “The eager band also looked forward to an inspection of the tomahawks, arrow heads, and other relics in the Indian exhibits at the National Museum.”³⁶ Their image was circumscribed through racial othering by presenting what the newspaper audience would expect of these young Indigenous boys. In many ways, these boys were as much of a spectacle as the things they were seeing.³⁷ As the *Evening Citizen* observed: “Their three-day program is packed with receptions, visits to public buildings, luncheons and sightseeing tours. Who wouldn't be a good boy for all that?”³⁸ The Black Hawks were living illustrations of what the residential school system was trying to accomplish: the assimilation of the Indigenous Other that still existed on the Canadian periphery.

Finally, on the evening of Friday, April 13, 1951, over 1,500 local spectators filed into the Ottawa Auditorium along with the Sioux Lookout Black Hawks, the Ottawa East Browns, and numerous residential school officials who were all surely anxious for the game. Ottawa, which had long been a hockey city, was gripped by the excitement of these young Indigenous hockey players. As one *Evening Citizen* article claimed, the Black Hawks were the most exciting thing to happen in Ottawa since the introduction of the trolley car.³⁹ The game opened with a ceremonial face-off with the puck being dropped by the Governor General. Furthermore, the game was refereed by ex-NHL players turned Members of Parliament Bucko McDonald

³⁶ “12 Indian Puck-Toters Here for Bantam Series,” *The Evening Citizen*. Michelle Hamilton describes how exhibits such as these were often meant to be true or “pure” representations of a fading and racialized Indigenous other, in this case the Indigenous boys were becoming consumers of their own constructed images in the museum. Michelle Hamilton, *Collections and Objections: Aboriginal Material Culture in Southern Ontario* (Montréal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s Press, 2010), 8.

³⁷ Raibmon, *Authentic Indians*, 9.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ “Indian Team in Capital for Games.” *The Evening Citizen*.

and Lionel Conacher.⁴⁰ After a long, and hard-fought game, which was only made more strenuous by the other events the Black Hawks had attended during the day, the Black Hawks claimed their first, and only victory, of the tour with a score of 5-3 over the Ottawa East Browns. David, Albert, and Ernie were the goal scorers for the Black Hawks, and although the documents show that these boys were very familiar with scoring goals, these were surely memorable for both themselves and the 1,500 Ottawa spectators.

For many Euro-Canadian journalists, the progression of these children from “savages” to well-mannered Indigenous boys, or at least a symbol of their progression towards Europeanization through Indian education through Indian educational policies enacted within the IRSS. Significantly, the only penalty of the weekend called against the Black Hawks went to Walter during the game. When the penalty was called Walter could not find the penalty box and had to be ushered off the ice by Bucko McDonald. In fact, as the newspaper was careful to report, the penalty was only the seventh in Black Hawks’ history.⁴¹ Beyond the representational significance of this being reported upon, it is interesting that Walter couldn’t even find the penalty box. This could be a product of the Black Hawks unusual degree of discipline on the ice or that the rink was merely unfamiliar. Regardless, it was thought noteworthy enough for the settler media to write about it. One journalist also noted that the boys had only recently learned they did not have to apologize after body checking opponents further emphasizing their disciplined play.⁴² The Black Hawks’ reputation preceded them as they beat

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Wilf Bell, “All-Indian Bantams Win from Ottawa East Six,” *The Evening Citizen*, April, 14, 1951, m2014 – 10/12 [33], Blackhawks file, General Synod Archives – Anglican Church of Canada, Toronto, Ontario.

⁴² Houston, “All Indian Team on Ice Warpath.” *The Telegram*.

the East Browns in their first game of the tour showing, *The Globe and Mail* claimed, “Ottawans the way they think hockey should be played.”⁴³

The second game occurred the following afternoon on Saturday, April 14, 1951 against the Ottawa Combines, an All-Star team of local bantam players. The Black Hawks lost 8-7 but observers commented on their ability to continue playing strongly even after they went down by a score of 8-5.⁴⁴ In an interesting display of ceremony, the Black Hawks offered each opposing player lacrosse sticks during the second intermission. In fact, they did the same during every game of the tournament.⁴⁵ The documentation around this action is sparse; reporters only commented on it in passing. However, the symbolic action of othering is significant. Lacrosse is a European adaptation of traditional aboriginal games such as baggataway and tewaarathon that were played by First Nations people across Canada including the Ojibway of northern Ontario.⁴⁶ In this symbolic event, the Black Hawks gave a gift of their sporting heritage from the northern periphery of Canada to settler youths within the country’s geopolitical centre. In doing so, the Black Hawks displayed their own traditions and an authenticity that Canadian society desired in the postwar period. Deloria writes that, “for those in modern urban strongholds, Indians quickly became objects of nostalgic desire as they reflected both an earlier, virile time of colonization and an authenticity that modernity seemed

⁴³ “Indian Hockeyists Play in Ottawa,” *The Globe and Mail*, April 13, 1951, 30, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: *The Globe and Mail*, <http://search.proquest.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/hnpglobeandmail/docview/1314020079/F87EBF2D92684A7EPQ/1?accountid=9894>.

⁴⁴ Bill McNamee, “Hawks Move to Toronto After Even Break Here,” *The Evening Citizen*, April 16, 1951, 24, m2014 – 10/12 [33], Blackhawks file, GSA.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Don Morrow and Kevin Wamsley, *Sport in Canada: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 78; Allan Downey’s recent monograph is also important to note as the first major academic monograph published on the Indigenous history of lacrosse, within its pages Downey argues for the sport’s relevance in Indigenous culture, European settler colonialism in Canada, and Indigenous rejuvenation, Allan Downey, *The Creator’s Game: Lacrosse, Identity, and Indigenous Nationhood* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2018), 20-21.

to deny.”⁴⁷ These ceremonies were part of the greater spectacle of who the Black Hawks were and although lacrosse and gift giving were part of the boys’ Indigenous heritage it was still an attempt to create “authentic Indians” for settler consumption.⁴⁸

The Black Hawks played their third game in southern Ontario at the matinee of semi-final games of the TMHA's Midget Championship on Sunday April 15, 1951 at Maple Leaf Gardens in downtown Toronto, Ontario.⁴⁹ They played Shopsy's Bantams of the THA and lost by a score of 5-1, the first major defeat in the team's history. The opposing team’s players were much larger than the Black Hawks and their manager, Henry Schade, was quick to point to the boys’ exhausting weekend as a key reason for their loss.⁵⁰ One Black Hawks’ player named Albert put on a show for the 500 people in the audience. He was the smallest and the fastest one on the ice making a strange sight when he danced around the much larger defensemen of the Toronto team. The “happy little fellows” won the respect of the crowd that was enthusiastically on their side by taking no penalties compared to Shopsy's five and never giving up even when they were down 4-0 after the first period.⁵¹ Frieda Matthews, the National Executive Secretary of the WMS, along with two other women from the National Headquarters of the Presbyterian Church went to the game and were quite happy to see the boys play like “little gentlemen.” Matthews went on to say:

⁴⁷ Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places*, 232.

⁴⁸ Raibmon, *Authentic Indians*, 3.

⁴⁹ “Indian Pucksters Play at Gardens,” *The Globe and Mail*, April 16, 1951, 24, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: *The Globe and Mail*, <http://search.proquest.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/hnpglobeandmail/docview/1287349245/290A1BFAADF24C30PQ/1?accountid=9894>.

⁵⁰ Fulford, “Indian Lads' Hockey Tour.” <http://search.proquest.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/hnpglobeandmail/docview/1287349935/8B58069E95BD4ACEPQ/1?accountid=9894>.

⁵¹ Ibid.

It was heart warming to hear the applause when they got the puck and appeared as though they were going to get away with it. Of course, most of the people who were there were from the various Anglican Churches throughout the city. I think it will do much to create a greater interest in the Indian work. I imagine it will be hard for the little fellows to settle down and I am sure they have great stories to tell to the rest of the pupils at the school.⁵²

The crowd of spectators who watched these games were an ideal audience for school officials as it was composed of Euro-Canadian church-goers from the geopolitical south, a demographic which could provide both financial and spiritual support for the schools. Over the course of the tour, several players on the Black Hawks caught the attention of the Euro-Canadian spectators. After the second game in Ottawa, Albert accepted a cup created by the Kiwanis Club for the team in the exhibition games that scored the most goals. For non-Indigenous observers, though, this game was notable less for all the goals scored than it was for the way the Black Hawks had played.⁵³ John Bloom writes that this aspect of sport was an important part of publicity for Indigenous boarding schools as, “[sports] publicly demonstrated controlled violence and physical competition, rationally coordinated bodily movement, and a corporate hierarchy of human organization... Yet a large part of its ideological power lay in the way that it rewarded the ability to rationally channel and control this same violent passion.”⁵⁴ The Black Hawks were stuck in the gap of the colonial racial binary as they were channeling the “savageness” and aggression they were supposed to display as Indigenous peoples into talent in a settler colonial sport. The Black Hawks were applauded for illustrating presumed Euro-Canadian characteristics on the ice, that of skill, discipline, and resilience.

⁵² Freida Matthews, Letter to Principal T.C. Ross of Cecilia Jeffrey, April 17, 1951, File 10, Box 14, 1988-7004, WMS, PCCA.

⁵³ Fulford, “Indian Lad’s Hockey Tour.” *The Evening Citizen*.

⁵⁴ Bloom, *To Show What an Indian Can Do*, 9.

Similarly, this fascination with the Indigenous Other also manifested itself in sympathetic, and paternal, feelings towards the Black Hawks players. Matthew, the Black Hawks goalie from the coast of Hudson Bay, gained a lot of sympathy after the event as he was seen to be deserted by his defensemen. As one *Globe and Mail* journalist wrote: “It must have occurred to him that the Toronto boys had started to refight the Indian wars as they dashed around his net shooting the puck at him with rare abandon.”⁵⁵ Just because the crowd was on the side of the Black Hawks does not mean they were accepting of these children. Settlers can at once value athletic skill while denying special privileges; this genuine affection many had for the Black Hawks was both condescending and paternalistic.⁵⁶ As had been the case in Ottawa, these Indigenous youth were celebrated for mimicking Euro-Canadian sporting qualities such as resilience, discipline, and sportsmanship but were constantly separated from settler players and audiences by the racialized language that was used to describe them.

The Black Hawks were consistently noted for their athleticism, speed, and discipline.⁵⁷ One can imagine the games in which they played and the chaos of the hockey rink. Bodies and sticks rapidly moving across the ice surface while the players and fans alike created a soundtrack of excitement.⁵⁸ Yet, the Black Hawks somehow managed to control themselves and their emotions like no other minor hockey team in Ontario at the time. They distinguished themselves as different from the other teams and not simply because of the colour of their skin. Taken from their Indigenous communities and placed within the residential school they were forced to create their own image of what it meant to be Indigenous. They refused the colonial

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places*, 120.

⁵⁷ Houston, “All Indian Team on Ice Warpath.” *The Telegram*.

⁵⁸ Fulford, “Indian Lad’s Hockey Tour Cost \$1,800.” *The Evening Citizen*.

binary of Indigenous and Euro-Canadian. Instead, they existed in the space between creating their own identities through sport displaying grace, perseverance, and skill while wearing a jersey emblazoned with a settler colonial stereotype of their culture.⁵⁹ They played out their identities against Euro-Canadian teams and other residential school teams alike as it came to define themselves both as a team and as individuals; it was not just what they were supposed to do. The “symbolic outside” that the Black Hawks inhabited became their identity, one that produced hybrid spaces and colonial anxieties as they subverted the sport of their colonizers.

Behind the scenes, the off-ice conduct of the Black Hawks also received scrutiny. Jan Eisenhardt noted in a memorandum to Mr. P. Phelan, the Superintendent of Education, that “[t]he boys made a great impression upon the people with whom they came in contact... Off the ice they were well disciplined, well mannered, and all in all a great credit to their school and club officials.”⁶⁰ Among the bright spots was Albert who was not only extremely skilled on the ice and well-mannered off it, but was also identified as adapting to “Canadian” culture. Many of the boys could barely speak English and often chattered to each other in either Cree or Ojibway but were seen to be “picking up dressing room banter.” In one case Albert was forced to intervene in a sweater-tossing duel between two of the Black Hawks players shouting: “Let's go fellas, and take it easy!”⁶¹ The hybridity displayed here is similar to that which Mary-Ellen Kelm analyzes in her study of rodeo where racial binaries began to weaken through

⁵⁹Mary Ellen Kelm uses similar language and analysis to show how aboriginal cowboys created their own aboriginal identities between the binary of cowboy and Indian. Mary Ellen Kelm, *A Wilder West: Rodeo in Western Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011), 216.

⁶⁰ Jan Eisenhardt, Memorandum to Mr. P. Phelan, Superintendent of Education Re: Blackhawk Indian Bantam Hockey Team visit to Ottawa and Toronto, April 13,14,15, and 16th, 1 May 1951, m2014 – 10/12 [33], Blackhawks file, GSA.

⁶¹ “Young Indian Puck Stars Thrilled by Ottawa Trip; See Gardens Next,” *The Evening Citizen*, April 13, 1951, m2014 – 10/12 [33], Blackhawks file, GSA.

the contact zone of sport. Contemporary settler audiences surely perceived this as important evidence of cultural assimilation, but we can perhaps see something else unfolding in these observations. The children that made up the Black Hawks roster were both producing and inhabiting hybrid spaces.⁶² They played hockey just like any Euro-Canadian would and their lives outside of hockey were beginning to mimic the colonizers as well. Although this was what the residential school system strove to produce it evidently created anxiety amongst the settler population in front of which the Black Hawks played. The consistent effort by the media to construct these boys as racial others is a reaction to colonial fear of hybridity. The boys were everything the residential school system hoped to create and yet they were still considered to be “others.”

Following the tour’s conclusion, officials were left to assess its effects. The tour cost Henry Schade and the Black Hawks Hockey Club \$1,800 to travel the 2,300 miles of the entire tour and although the team did not have a winning record it was a “wonderful education” for the boys.⁶³ Despite the costs, those behind the tour were convinced of its success. Swartman and Schade recalled a time when Indigenous peoples ran away from bush planes in fear but now their children were playing hockey and having to be told to get out of the pool at the Chateau Laurier.⁶⁴ Swartman remembered when the boys that composed the Black Hawks watched other children play hockey with a “jealous fascination” for the game.⁶⁵ Now hockey was central to both their life and education. It provided a means for them to become the boys

⁶² Notions of hybridity and hybrid spaces are primarily found in Homi Bhabha, *the Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994) but a more specific treatment of these ideas in relation to aboriginal peoples in Canada can be found in Raibmon’s study of Kwakwaka’wakw culture on display at Chicago’s World’s Fair in 1893 in her book, *Authentic Indians*, 46.

⁶³ Fulford, “Indian Lad’s Hockey Tour.” *The Evening Citizen*.

⁶⁴ “Young Indian Puck Stars Thrilled.” *The Evening Citizen*.

⁶⁵ Fulford, “Indian Lad’s Hockey Tour.” *The Evening Citizen*.

that were seen in both Ottawa and Toronto. But beyond that it was also what consumed their personal lives; as one reporter noted, “the chatter always returned to the biggest thing in their lives at the moment – hockey.”⁶⁶ Hockey had shaped the Black Hawk’s lives both in public and private.

Judged by its original purpose—to raise money for Sioux Lookout—the tour was a failure, but many administrators still saw the tour as a successful experiment in generating positive publicity for the school. For his part, Schade hoped it would become an annual occurrence.⁶⁷ But, behind closed doors, school officials and some government administrators, such as Swartman, involved in the tour were concerned for its lack of finances. The tour generated essentially no profit for the school as the money made at the three games was only barely able to offset the costs of travel from Sioux Lookout to southern Ontario.⁶⁸ However, federal officials such as Eisenhardt were generally unconcerned as the Sioux Lookout Hockey Club was left to absorb most of the financial damage. For them the tour was more of an experiment, and one that was seen to be successful. As Eisenhardt noted, “there is no doubt but that such projects would be worthwhile considering from time to time, not alone for hockey, but also for all activities organized by Indian residential schools and Indian reserves, but with more preparation even greater success can be assured.”⁶⁹ Eisenhardt became an essential figure in the development of Indian Affairs new emphasis on sport. Janice Forsyth argues that, unlike others in the DIA, Eisenhardt downplayed the assimilative qualities of sport

⁶⁶ Houston, “All Indian Team on Ice Warpath.” *The Telegram*.

⁶⁷ Fulford, “Indian Lad’s Hockey Tour.” *The Evening Citizen*.

⁶⁸ Jan Eisenhardt, Memorandum to Mr. P. Phelan, Superintendent of Education Re: Blackhawk Indian Bantam Hockey Team visit to Ottawa and Toronto, April 13,14,15, and 16th, 1 May 1951, m2014 – 10/12 [33], Blackhawks file, GSA.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

in favour of a more humanistic view.⁷⁰ Almost immediately after the Black Hawks tour, Eisenhardt sent a circular letter that requested reports of all the physical activities that were occurring at residential schools across the country. The Black Hawks seemed to have helped spark a change in governmental attitudes towards the use of sport as a tool of publicity and assimilation.

Birtle Ice Carnivals, 1959 – 1964

The Black Hawks tour was a one-time experiment in publicity that proved unsustainable overall. However, although the schools did not give up on hockey as a means of promoting their mission they did, instead, adopt less ambitious plans to promote themselves through the sport. Residential school hockey teams continued to play in local leagues throughout the 1950s with many schools enrolling more teams as the sport gained popularity—especially among female students.⁷¹ Hockey remained a major part in life at the school as both education and entertainment. The importance of the sport to school life during this period was “difficult to over-estimate” according to Principal Andrews of Cecilia Jeffrey.⁷² Watching hockey became an important means of entertainment during this period with buses regularly arranged for students to attend local hockey games at other residential schools and in surrounding communities.⁷³

On one occasion in 1950, a bus was arranged for the senior girls and boys to attend the local Ice Carnival in Birtle, Manitoba where they watched several hockey games including an

⁷⁰ Janice Forsyth, “‘A Higher Degree of Social Organization’: Jan Eisenhardt and Canadian Aboriginal Sport Policy in the 1950s,” *Journal of Sport History* 35 No 2 (2008), 262.

⁷¹ Freida Matthews, Letter to Principal Lockhart, January 16, 1941, File 3, Box 7, 1988 – 7004, WMS, PCCA.

⁷² J. Eldon Andrews, Letter to Norman Patterson, Superintendent of Kenora Indian Agency, July 6, 1953, File 6, Box 15, 1988-7004, WMS, PCCA.

⁷³ Norman Rusaw, Annual Report of Birtle 1961, December 1, 1961, File 5, Box 10, 1988-7004, WMS, PCCA.

“All Indian” match-up between the Griswold and Birdtail Indians⁷⁴ Ice Carnivals appeared to be a common occurrence during Manitoba’s and Ontario’s long winter months.⁷⁵ The carnivals consisted of numerous outdoor sports including dogsledding, tobogganing, and skating. Dinners, dances, and other social activities also commonly occurred in the evenings. The primary focus, though, were the hockey games between local teams. Ice Carnivals were an opportunity for rural communities to gather and to use sport and social activities as a break from the harsh winter. Hockey culture was on the rise during this period in both rural and urban communities often conforming to industrial capitalist orders and coding symbols for settler consumption.⁷⁶ Birtle administrators saw in these events potential opportunities to boost their public relations and to provide students with recreational opportunities.

Birtle held its first Ice Carnival on February 21, 1959. The events began at 10:00am with a shinny game played between the Birtle Residential School Flyers and the Birtle Town team at the town arena.⁷⁷ This game had no rules and was played solely for enjoyment. When one player from the residential school tripped an opponent and refused to go the penalty box, his coach stepped in and carried him off the ice. The coach’s actions brought a wave of laughter from the spectators, as did many similar events during the game.⁷⁸ This game was followed in

⁷⁴ The Griswold Indians were an adult hockey most likely composed of players from the Sioux Valley Dakota First Nation near Brandon, Manitoba while the Birdtail Indians were an adult team from the Birdtail Sioux First Nation. These teams may have very well been composed of some of the students’ parents, Norman Rusaw. Letter to Frieda Matthews, March 12, 1950, File 3, Box 15, 1988-7004, WMS, PCCA.

⁷⁵ Although I have been unable to find any specific academic literature concerning Ice Carnivals, the concept frequently came up in the documentation, both in church and newspaper archives in the context of both Ontario and Manitoba.

⁷⁶ Colin Howell, *Blood, Sweat, Cheers: Sport and the Making of Modern Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 29.

⁷⁷ The extent of the popularity of these carnivals is hard to determine due to the lack of scholarship on them, the TRC does acknowledge their existence but only about those which occurred at Birtle. TRC, *The History Part 2*, 476.

⁷⁸ Bryden Thomas, “Ice Carnival,” *TeePee Times* 1958-1959, File 4, Box 13, 1988-7004, WMS, PCCA.

the afternoon by a match between the girls' hockey team from the residential school and their counterparts from Birtle Town. The girls team battled back from a 3-2 deficit to win their first game of the season and of their hockey careers in overtime. Next was the Juvenile Boys' hockey game between Birtle Indian Residential School and Portage La Prairie Indian Residential School. The game was "fast and furious" and tied at 5-5 until the closing frame when Birtle scored two unanswered goals to win a score of 7-5.⁷⁹ According to principal Rusaw, these hockey games were the highlight of the whole carnival as the Birtle school dominated their competition in front of a mixed audience of settlers, school staff, and students at the local arena. The losses suffered by Portage were of little concern however, as the author of *Wigwam News* article reassured their audience writing: "Were the losers downhearted[?] No, for there was more entertainment."⁸⁰

The girls' hockey games at the first Birtle Ice Carnival illustrates the strong gendered nature of residential school hockey and the ways in which it was used for publicity reasons. The girls' team from the Birtle school was officially formed in 1959 and had not experienced much success before their game against the Birtle Town Girls.⁸¹ Significantly, observers commented more frequently on their appearance than their skill: "The newly-formed girls' team in their hockey outfits of red sweaters and blue slacks looked very striking as they took their places on the ice... The Indian School girls were complimented on their freshness and neat appearance maintained throughout the game."⁸² The appearance of the girls overshadowed the drama of an overtime goal which won the girls their first game of the season.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

The gendered nature of residential school hockey which encouraged boys to be tough, disciplined, and loyal and girls to be brave, strong, yet still feminine is further apparent in Rusaw's recollections of the event about which he wrote: "I have gotten them new red and white sweaters, in which they look very lovely. The colors were chosen by them. Their games are very nice to watch, the people go for that much more than the boys ['] hockey."⁸³ Girls' hockey became an important spectacle as the settler colonial sport of hockey was played by both Indigenous boys and Indigenous girls, further othering and exoticizing the participants. As Carly Adams writes, women's hockey was often used as promotional strategy as it was, "a familiar sport contested by 'different' bodies"⁸⁴

The evening entertainment at the first Birtle Ice Carnival included "races, games, and contests for all" followed by a moccasin dance for the seniors at the Birtle school rink.⁸⁵ The festivities that evening began with the crowning of the "Sport's Queen" which included an elaborate procession composed of students and staff from Birtle who entered the school rink underneath a decorative arch and proceeded to skate a lap on the rink to the sounds of many "'Oh's!' and 'Ah's!'"⁸⁶ The procession ended with the queen sitting on the "decorative snow-throne" on the rink, receiving gifts from both school principals, and thanking all for attending. The evening continued with free skating and an awards ceremony during which participants won prizes for such things as best costume.⁸⁷ This event was followed by numerous activities on the ice including obstacle courses, scooter races, sleigh rides, and speed skating between

⁸³ Norman Rusaw, Letter to Freida Matthews, February 22, 1959, File 6, Box 16, 1988-7004, WMS, PCCA.

⁸⁴ Carly Adams, "Troubling Bodies: 'The Canadian Girl,' the Ice Rink, and the Banff Winter Carnival," *The Journal of Canadian Studies* 48, no. 3 (Fall 2014): 209.

⁸⁵ Bryden Thomas, "Ice Carnival."

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

students from Birtle and Portage La Prairie. After all these events had finished, a dinner was served, and the younger students went to bed while the seniors returned to the rink for a moccasin dance.⁸⁸ Evidently, the hockey rink at the school came to serve a greater purpose than just a site for hockey games for the boys. It became a central aspect of the school and entertainment for the children at the school—a connective tissue that was shared between staff and students of multiple residential schools.

Birtle was the first residential school in the area to experiment with this kind of publicity, and soon several other schools in western Manitoba adopted the idea for themselves. Eventually, there existed a triangular relationship between Birtle, Portage La Prairie, and Brandon Indian Residential Schools with each hosting an annual Ice Carnival which the other two schools attended. After the first Birtle Ice Carnival in March 1959, Portage La Prairie hosted their own carnival which several students from Birtle attended including the Sr. Boys' Hockey Team and the Girls' Hockey team. Principal Rusaw claimed that this was the “highlight” of their entire year as they were able to travel to a different school and interact with other children.⁸⁹ The programme was almost identical to that at Birtle with two hockey games played in the afternoon (Birtle won both by a score of 7 - 0) following by the crowning of a Snow Queen, indoor sports, and a contest for free items from the tuck shop. One student in the *TeePee Times* recollected the evening fondly after spending the day with “new and old friends,”: “Tired, but very contented, we boarded our bus at 11:15. We arrived home 1:30am, very sleepy..... and still dreaming about Portage. Good night girls, come down to earth!”⁹⁰

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Norman Rusaw, Annual Report for Birtle 1959, File 7, Box 16, 1988-7004, WMS, PCCA.

⁹⁰ Laura Wasacase, “Trip to Portage,” *TeePee Times* 1958-1959, File 4, Box 13, 1988-7004, WMS, PCCA.

These Ice Carnivals became major events in the lives of the students as they were frequently referred to as the highlight of their year and constituting “perfect” days.⁹¹ At times, it was only the hockey teams which were invited to put on a show for the hosting school but even then buses would be chartered to take spectators from each school to watch the game.

Birtle Ice Carnival Post, February 1959, File 3, Box 13, 1988-7004, WMS, PCCA.

Hockey provided an opportunity for Indigenous children, school administrators, and staff to come together for community entertainment, but it was not without settler colonial assumptions of racial hierarchy and the subjugated place of Indigenous peoples within it. The flyer for the first Birtle Ice Carnival, crowned with an overtly “savage” and stereotypical caricature of an Indigenous man with a tomahawk, shows how these events worked as an important connection between the school and Birtle as well as an expression of settler colonial racial understandings.⁹² The Ice

Carnival’s hockey games became an exotic show for local settlers as they came to view Indigenous children play their sport and view “savage Indians” who, in turn, served as

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² The creator of the poster is unknown, and it may have very-well been a student at the school. Regardless, the use of the stereotypical Indian was a means to attract local people to the events by sparking their curiosity of witnessing the spectacle of the Indigenous Other playing a Euro-Canadian sport. Interestingly, there seems to be quite a lot of hand drawn art by students in existence, see the illustrations in TRC, *The History Part 2*, 474 – 475.

“oppositional figures against whom one might imagine a civilized national Self.”⁹³ Much like the ways in which the Black Hawks were constructed in the settler media during their tour, the primitivism of the imagery on the Ice Carnival flyer tapped into settler colonial anxieties about identity. As Deloria argues, people often looked to what things that they were not in order to reassure themselves of what they are.⁹⁴ Modern societies look at what they perceived as primitive culture to reaffirm their place in the present. Indian Others represented this break, “not only historically, but also racially, socially, and developmentally.”⁹⁵ The first Birtle Ice Carnival operated on an opposing axis as it at once brought Indigenous and settler children together for mutual play but also worked to reaffirm racial stereotypes through its stereotypical displays of Indigenous culture.

While administrators sought to capitalize on the exoticism of Indigenous hockey, especially that of the girls, to display the progress assimilatory institutions made on Indigenous bodies, Indigenous children saw these Ice Carnivals as an escape from school life and an opportunity to interact with other Indigenous children. Ice Carnivals were contact zones where Euro-Canadian and Indigenous cultures interacted and produced their own meanings. As Bloom writes, “sports served as a meeting place for transformation and persistence; for distinct, even mutually exclusive Indian and White interpretations, and for shared understandings.”⁹⁶ By focusing primarily on the ways in which these carnivals stereotyped Indigenous peoples while promoting the agenda of the IRSS, the voices of the children themselves are lost. These carnivals held meaning for all parties involved and while they may differ, they are equally

⁹³ Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 3.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 105.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ Bloom, *To Show What an Indian Can Do*, 120.

important. Ice Carnivals, like the Western Canadian rodeos written about by Kelm, were places “of surprising possibilities, of mutual enjoyment, of confrontation, of dismaying discrimination, and of embodied display...”⁹⁷ Indeed, Indigenous children were able to use a situation that was supposed to further their assimilation to survive and even create lasting pan-Indigenous bonds through the opportunities created by hockey.

Conclusion

Hockey played a crucial role in the evolution of the attempts of residential schools to improve their public image, illustrate what administrators saw as the great potential for Indian education, and ultimately reinforce settler colonial racial binaries. School administrators used settler colonial mythologies about and fascination with Indigenous peoples to further their quest for financial aid and social support of their assimilatory institutions. Significantly, the public appearance of these Indigenous athletes worked to disrupt settler colonial understandings of race that clearly associated Indigenous peoples with savagery. Indigenous children subtly challenged the colonial binary racial understanding through hockey in both their local leagues and around the province. They were able to use public events to escape the monotony of school life, connect with other Indigenous children, and carve out spaces in the settler colonial mesh for survival. These events constituted contact zones where Euro-Canadian and Indigenous culture interacted and created their own meanings, even if the children lacked true autonomy in their actions they were still free to make the meaning they wanted of these situations.

⁹⁷ Kelm, *Wilder West*, 228.

The Toronto Maple Leafs won the Stanley Cup Final against the Montréal Canadiens in front of a sold-out crowd at the Maple Leaf Gardens on April 21, 1951. The series clinching goal was scored in overtime by Bill Barilko which has since become cemented in Canadian folklore as “the last goal he ever scored.”⁹⁸ Hockey stories of the greats of the sport, like that of Barilko, are passed down from generation to generation in Canada, but the stories of the Indigenous children who skated on the same rinks and dominated at their sport have regrettably been forgotten in the national narrative. Their stories share important points of contact as residential school hockey teams constituted many of the same characteristics Canadian hockey heroes are remembered for such as perseverance, toughness, and character, both on and off the ice. They appropriated hockey, the sport of their colonizers, to escape the monotony of school life and even create at least the perception of new hybrid identities that confounded colonial binaries. The story of these Indigenous athletes and their public displays reveals a complex and nuanced settler colonial past in Canada. It shows that colonial power was not omnipotent but constantly negotiated and challenged by Indigenous actors, even by children at residential schools. These young Indigenous hockey players were not just the nameless and faceless victims of a settler colonial system but Cree and Ojibway individuals with hopes, dreams, and a love of hockey.

⁹⁸ The Tragically Hip, “Fifty Mission Cap,” *Fully Completely* (Toronto: MCA Records, 1992).

Chapter 3: “Out of the Teepee or Bust, In Integration We Must Trust”: Integration, Hockey, and the Dismantling of the Indian Residential School System, 1950 – 1970

Introduction

In December of 1964, two students at Birtle Indian Residential School approached Principal Norman Rusaw with an idea for a float to join in the local Santa Claus Parade of Birtle, Manitoba. Rusaw described the float as a truck with, “The front banner ‘Out of the Teepee[sic] or Bust’ and the back banner ‘In integration we must trust.’ On the float was the teepee[sic], native Indians, and a young Indian dressed as a business man... We got much favourable comment on it.”¹ The appearance of this float in the parade occurred during a transitional period for Crown-Indigenous relations. Indigenous peoples in Canada began to regularly protest the social injustices they experienced while major media outlets documented and broadcasted these stories to a listening, if not entirely sympathetic, audience. Residential schools faced major criticism from Indigenous peoples during this period as the Canadian public and federal government finally realized that residential schooling was neither effectual nor appropriate as a tool for the assimilation of Indigenous peoples.² Integration was believed to be the answer for both racial tensions and Indian education: namely, the integration of Indigenous peoples into Canadian society and of the IRSS into provincial school systems. It was hoped that these Indigenous children who desired to build a float for the Santa Claus Parade would graduate and become full-fledged Canadian citizens instead of merely wards of the state.

This shift towards policies of integration in the 1950s and 1960s marked the beginning of dismantling the Indian Residential School System (IRSS). Reports of poor conditions and undesirable outcomes among residential school graduates during this period along with high

operational costs greatly diminished the federal government's interest in continuing the IRSS.³ The lack of interest and dissatisfaction of government agencies combined with increased pressure from Indigenous parents to reshape the IRSS made it, "increasingly hard for churches to justify their so-called benevolence at the schools," thereby creating cracks in the religious institutional matrix.⁴ It is also important to acknowledge the historical context in which these changes happened. There was a shift in post-war Canadian society as citizenship became the primary identifier of belonging to the Canadian community at large, working to erase cultural difference and combine it into one unified citizenship.⁵ The dissatisfaction with Indian education of government officials along with the cultural climate of the time were both key to the development of integration policies for Indigenous children. Integration programs marked a significant shift in the settler colonial mesh as it was transformed by policy. The public-school system continued the assimilatory mission begun by the schools but in a different form, reshaping and loosening the settler colonial mesh to varying degrees. Indigenous children no longer faced the abysmal environment of the school nor its authoritarian structure but instead entered racially charged public schools that were unequipped to educate these new students. Indigenous children were no longer separate, but they were still far from equal.

Hockey played a significant role in these attempts at integration. Its existence as a contact zone between Indigenous children and Euro-Canadian children, as well as between the

³ Milloy, *'A National Crime,'* 196.

⁴ Andrew Woolford, *This Benevolent Experiment: Indigenous Boarding Schools, Genocide, and Redress in Canada and the United States* (University of Manitoba Press: Winnipeg, 2015), 90.

⁵ Heidi Bohaker and Franca Iacovetta, "Making Aboriginal People 'Immigrants Too': A Comparison of Citizenship Programs for Newcomers and Indigenous Peoples in Postwar Canada, 1940s-1960s," *The Canadian Historical Review* 90, no. 3 (September 2009):433; A more specific conversation of the impacts of this cultural change on Indigenous peoples can be found in the work of Hugh Shewell, "Dreaming in Liberal White: Canadian Indian Policy, 1913-2013" in *Aboriginal History: A Reader* ed. Kristin Burnett and Geoff Read (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 185.

IRSS and Canadian society, made it a valuable vehicle for preparing students to integrate into public schools and into the broader Canadian society. However, unlike the contact zones which existed between residential school teams and town teams in the earlier period of hockey programs, in the 1950s and 1960s the contact zone became more diffuse and varied as Indigenous hockey players joined local teams. In the right circumstances sport created mutually respectful relationships between Euro-Canadian and Indigenous players as they competed on the rink, often engaging in acts of controlled violence.⁶ Indeed, hockey allowed individuals to form relationships that challenged the colonial binary of European and Indigenous and created a mixed community which transferred to the hallways of public schools and the streets of rural Canadian towns. Mary-Ellen Kelm discusses similar circumstances around rodeo in western Canada where Euro-Canadian and Indigenous cowboys, when forced to interact on an individual basis, disregarded the ways in which settler colonial structures encouraged them to see the world and to act within it.⁷ While Indigenous peoples may not have been considered equals outside the hockey arena, they could be viewed as such when on the ice.

This chapter studies the ways in which the settler colonial mesh was reshaped by integration policy on the local level at Birtle and Cecilia Jeffrey Indian Residential Schools. It begins with an examination of the first integrated students in the early 1940s following the transition of these schools to federally-run Indian residences in 1969, and the ways in which

⁶ John Bloom, *To Show What an Indian Can Do: Sports at Native American Boarding Schools* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 47.

⁷ This topic is littered throughout her book, but it is especially seen in the fourth chapter entitled “Heavens No! Let’s Keep It Rodeo! Pro Rodeo and the Making of the Modern Cowboy,” Mary-Ellen Kelm, *A Wilder West: Rodeo in Western Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011), 156.

hockey enabled Indigenous children to cross the colour line in postwar Canada. It also focuses on the ways in which Indigenous peoples influenced and reacted to policies of integration, as both students and athletes. It discusses Indigenous experiences in integrated classrooms and among their Euro-Canadian peers as they transitioned from residential school students to provincial school students. Here, hockey becomes a focus as the experience of Indigenous athletes was drastically different from that of their peers who did not play sport. Finally, the chapter examines the dismantlement of the IRSS through the eyes of local residential schools and emphasizes the ways in which media influenced public opinion and the transfer of Birtle and Cecilia Jeffrey residential schools to the federal government. Integrated education did not improve the lives or the education of Indigenous students. These students, even with new social and academic opportunities available to them, continued to face racism and trauma albeit in a new environment.

The Evolution of Integration Policy at Birtle and Cecilia Jeffrey 1945-1951

The slow move towards integrated schooling began with the implementation of the full-day system at Birtle in the middle of the 1940s.⁸ Many Indigenous parents criticized the half-day system at residential school, which required students to spend half of their day working at the school and half in the classroom, because they felt their children were being overworked and undereducated.⁹ In the fall of 1944, pressure from the parents of the children who attended Birtle helped push Principal Roy Webb to drop the half-day system and to have the students in

⁸ A deeper discussion of the half day system can be found in Chapter One during the first section, “Euro-Canadian Discipline and ‘Native Weakness,’” but the primary reason this is important for this chapter is twofold. One, it illustrates the continuous evolution of the system towards more education, and two, the labor of the children lost during this period was greatly detrimental to the function of the IRSS.

⁹ Milloy, *A National Crime*, 169.

the classroom all day beginning in November of that year.¹⁰ The Women's Missionary Society (WMS) originally responded negatively to this new policy as they worried that losing the students' labour would greatly affect the school's ability to stay under budget.¹¹ However, by the end of the 1950s, most residential schools across the country followed suit and adopted the full-day system as a way to encourage and enhance education among Indigenous peoples. In the annual WMS report on missionary projects for 1945, the author wrote that although the Indian Affairs Branch (IAB) still preferred the half-day system, the students at Birtle, "went to classes for the whole day as white children do. It has given them a much greater opportunity so that a child is able to make a grade a year. The prospects for the future are very much better."¹² The desire to transition towards a similar system as that of provincial schools began with this shift to the full day system.

The push to end the half-day system was part of a broader desire to reshape dissatisfying policies of Indian education during the 1940s and 1950s. The most pressing concern of school administrators was intensified financial constraints placed on the IRSS following the Second World War. In a self-admitted "rambling" letter written by Principal Norman Rusaw in November of 1945 the dire situation at Birtle was laid bare. He listed numerous unavoidable expenses which the school was struggling to pay.¹³ The per-capita-grant system had never been sufficient to sustain the IRSS, but following the Second World War

¹⁰ J. Florence Lang, Indian Secretary for the WMS, Letter to Principal Douglas Pitts, December 8, 1944, File 4, Box 8, 1988-7004, WMS, PCCA.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Annual Report on WMS Missions, 1945, File 5, Box 7, 1988-7004, WMS, PCCA.

¹³ Clothing, staff, and food were the three major expenses that concerned Rusaw. The pressure to find sufficient food was especially worrying to him due to the fact local parents were threatening legal action against the school if nutritional needs were not met. Norman Rusaw, Letter to J. Florence Lang, November 19, 1945, File 5, Box 7, 1988-7004, WMS, PCCA.

new provisions, intermixed with the implementation of the full day system and the concomitant loss of student labour, threatened the very existence of many residential schools.¹⁴ Principal T.C. Ross of Cecilia Jeffrey was a vehement critic of the WMS for which he worked writing in his first letter to them, “we are too much inclined to think of the Indian as being someone entirely different. I feel that such a frame of mind is a hinderance to us... we often fail to remember that there is much that the white can learn from the Indian.”¹⁵ Ross’s willingness to criticize the system continued over his tenure as he became a forceful advocate for his students.¹⁶ On one occasion, Ross requested to hire a graduate of the school. After the WMS responded negatively, Ross wrote a damning letter in which he said, “In writing to your office I stressed the fact that, until we are ready to offer our ex-pupils employment, we can scarcely expect others to do so.”¹⁷ The failure of the IRSS to provide proper education to Indigenous children was far from a new problem, but by the late 1940s residential school staff became some of its foremost critics.

One of the first major attempts by the IAB to reshape Indian education was through the implementation of day schools. The day school system was encouraged due to financial pragmatism as they did not require the expenses needed by the IRSS such as fulltime staff, food, and sports equipment. The creation of day schools marked a major attendance shift for each of the three schools in this study.¹⁸ These schools, which were built on reserves, can be

¹⁴ Milloy, *A National Crime*, 103.

¹⁵ T.C. Ross, Letter to Frieda Matthews, January 5, 1949, File 8, Box 14, 1988-7004, WMS, PCCA.

¹⁶ There are numerous letters in the WMS fonds written by Ross that criticize the IRSS and the WMS’ mission including T.C. Ross, Letter to Frieda Matthews, March 1, 1950, File 9, Box 14, 1988-7004, WMS, PCCA; T.C. Ross, Letter to Frieda Matthews, March 28, 1950, File 9, Box 14, 1988-7004, WMS, PCCA.

¹⁷ T.C. Ross, Letter to Frieda Matthews, July 26, 1950, File 10, Box 14, 1988-7004, WMS, PCCA.

¹⁸ While the attendance remained generally the same over the course of the 1950s, with even some increase, the day schools were part of policy implementations that sought the closure of the IRSS. Each of the three schools in this study did not feel the effects of the schools until the late 1950s, almost a decade after they were

traced to back to the earliest government experiments with Indian education during the 1880s. After World War Two, they re-emerged as an alternative to residential schools. Day schools operated much like provincially mandated and funded public schools but with a more specialized curriculum which satisfied both parents and IAB officials.¹⁹ Indigenous parents near Birtle made it known that they were unhappy with the residential school because their children were, “away from home all but about six weeks in each year,” and were often dangerously unsupervised.²⁰ This caused them to “clamour” for day schools according to Indian Agent A.G. Smith, an advocate for forceful removal of Indigenous children from their homes.²¹ A day school built in the Kenora Agency in the 1950s threatened the continuation of Cecilia Jeffrey and Sioux Lookout Indian Residential Schools. Principal Ivan Robson of Cecilia Jeffrey wrote to the WMS in 1956 that attendance issues were dire but, “we think we have problems, but they are trivial compared to his [Principal Barrington’s of Sioux Lookout],” evidently low attendance at Sioux Lookout was placing a large amount of stress on Barrington along with threatening the existence of the school.²² The settler colonial mesh experienced a time of experimentation and transition as the IAB began to reshape Indian education policies by the end of the 1940s in response to Indigenous concerns and staff complaints.

encouraged in earnest, their compliments may not be directly related to day schools even if they thought so themselves. Milloy ‘*A National Crime*,’ 207.

¹⁹ A major reason for the shift towards day school was the compliments filed by Indigenous parents who desired to have their children closer to home, but federal financial reasons were also part of this shift. Milloy, ‘*A National Crime*,’ 190.

²⁰ Parents specifically discussed how their children were often allowed to play outside without proper winter clothing or supervision around the school. W.C. Richardson, Quotation from letter received from W.C. Richardson L.L.S. Barrister Etc. of Elphinstone, Manitoba, no date, File 7, Box 8, 1988-7004, WMS, PCCA.

²¹ A.G.Smith, Quarterly Report Ending September 30, 1945 on Birtle Agency, September 30, 1945, Part 7, File 575-5, Vol. 6253, RG 10, Indian Affairs Branch, Library Archives Canada, Ottawa, Ontario (hereafter LAC).

²² Ivan Robson, Letter to Frieda Matthews, September 19, 1956, File 6, Box 16, 1988-7004, WMS, PCCA.

By the end of the 1940s, residential school staff were forced to react to these circumstances and improve Indian education and, therefore, protect their employment. Many schools turned to public events during this period to promote the mission of the IRSS to Canadian society in hopes of getting more support (See Chapter 2). Along with these publicity experiments, they also started testing integrated educational programs for high school aged Indigenous children as early as 1944.²³ For example, several students at Birtle and Cecilia Jeffrey attended classes at the local high school throughout the 1940s. The decision to send them to high school stemmed, in part, from the inability of the residential schools to provide them with proper secondary education. This led to some of the students that were deemed to be the smartest by residential school staff to be test-subjects for integration.²⁴ Three boys from Cecilia Jeffrey passed their high school entrance exam in 1946 and became the first integrated students at Jaffrey Melick High School in Kenora. Principal Douglas Pitts wrote to Frieda Matthews regarding these boys who were “fairly good pupils and both good in athletics. The High School Staff and our own Staff are quite interested in these boys and are very anxious to help them succeed.”²⁵ The integration of Indigenous students into the provincial school system, mirrored the decision to undertake the full-day system at the schools: it was an action originally taken at the microlevel of the settler colonial mesh to improve both Indian education and the future of the IRSS.

²³ Douglas Pitts, Letter to Frieda Matthews, December 14, 1944, File 6, Box 14, 1988-7004, WMS, PCCA.

²⁴ Before this time, racist assumptions concerning Indigenous intelligence prevent the IAB from pursuing secondary education for residential school graduates, but the social environment of post-war Canada mixed with the desire of Indigenous parents for proper education encouraged these new programs. Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision*, 378.

²⁵ Douglas Pitts, Re: High School Pupils, September 5, 1947, File 6, Box 14, 1988-7004, WMS, PCCA.

In 1951, the IAB and the federal government mandated integrated education as part of the restructuring the Indian Act. This policy change officially marked the beginning of the slow unwinding of the IRSS. The first stage of dismantling the IRSS officially began with the revision of the Indian Act in 1951. This revision contained no major changes instead merely restated the purposes and policies of the past in modern language.²⁶ However, one of the few areas of change was Indian education. Parliament and the IAB were in complete agreement that the IRSS should be phased out in place of integrated schooling.²⁷ The Joint Committee tasked with revising the Indian Act believed that immediate steps should be taken to place Indian education entirely under the authority of the DIA. Furthermore, they encouraged the gradual transition of Indigenous peoples from wardship to citizenship in hopes that Indigenous peoples would take more responsibility for their own assimilation.²⁸ As Milloy writes, this change in administrative policy was “inspired by financial rather than philosophic first principles.”²⁹ Assimilation was still the primary goal of Indian education, but integrated classrooms would release the IAB from the financial burden of the IRSS. However, some government and school officials believed placing Indigenous students in the same classroom with Euro-Canadian students during their most formative years was an especially effective means to promote assimilation and move toward liberal ideas of racial equality. Indeed, the experiments in integration in the 1940s had suggested as much.³⁰ Indian education changed its

²⁶ Milloy, *'A National Crime,'* 189.

²⁷ This policy change was triggered by numerous external variables including financial concerns, complaints from Indigenous parents, and a rethinking of the treatment of Indigenous peoples in the Canadian consciousness. John Leslie and Ron Maguire, *The Historical Development of the Indian Act* (Ottawa: Treaties and Historical Research Centre—Indian and Northern Affairs, 1978), 132.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 142.

²⁹ Milloy, *'A National Crime,'* 189.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

methods in 1951 as a response to microlevel problems and experiments with a continued goal of assimilation.

This shift in mid-level government policy was quickly felt at the Birtle school when the public high school in Birtle was chosen as the Secondary School for Advanced Education for Indian Children in Manitoba for the fall of 1951.³¹ This designation made Birtle High School the official school of secondary education for Indigenous students in Manitoba. A handful of high-school aged students from the residential school had been attending the local high school since at least 1947, but in September 1951 sixty-two new Indigenous students arrived at the residential school from across Manitoba to board there while they attended classes at Birtle High School.³² There were so many students that the high school was unable to accept them all due to fears of overcrowding. It was decided that the integrated grade nine classes would be hosted at the residential school.³³ The Indigenous students that attended integrated classes were noted by the teachers to be “of a higher mental standing than the white in the class but of course they are the brighter ones from two provinces.”³⁴ However, many of the Indigenous students disliked this program. Although the problems experienced by students in Birtle were not specified in the documents, Milloy highlights how many integrated Indigenous students were unprepared for the academic and social environment of provincial high schools. According to Milloy, “they dropped out of school in alarming numbers,” and made a mockery of the DIA’s claim of the benefits of integrated education.³⁵ Only a few years

³¹ Norman Rusaw, Letter to Frieda Matthews, September 13, 1951, File 3, Box 12, 1988-7004, WMS, PCCA.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ The education these students received at residential before was inadequate and students often were overwhelmed by the curriculum of public schools, furthermore many faced racism from both their teachers and students. Milloy, *A National Crime*, 224.

after the integration program in Birtle began many of students requested to be educated at the residential school.³⁶ This distressed the high school staff because Indigenous students made up the majority of the senior classes and were the best-behaved students.³⁷ The experience many Indigenous students had in integrated schools was not an improvement over what they endured in residential school.

Hockey programs at both Birtle and Cecilia Jeffrey were flourishing during this period and school staff believed these programs could be an important part of this larger push towards integration. By the end of the 1940s, many residential school hockey teams were heavily involved in local communities. Residential school teams often played in leagues and tournaments while hockey players from residential schools also played on local town teams at all skill levels. Observers such as Frieda Matthews saw the value in these interactions. After the Birtle residential school boys' hockey team travelled to play in a Winnipeg tournament, she remarked: "I was very happy to know about the honours won by the hockey team and a splendid thing it is to encourage the boys in this very worth-while sport. I think it is a good idea to have them meet other teams. It all helps them in their way of approach to those of other backgrounds."³⁸ The WMS evidently saw benefits in the hockey program beyond entertainment and discipline. Hockey offered a cultural connection between Indigenous and Euro-Canadian children, as well as a chance for them to engage in meaningful interaction with one another.

³⁶ Norman Rusaw, Letter to Frieda Matthews, March 13, 1953, File 5, Box 12, 1988-7004, WMS, PCCA.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ J. Florence Lang, Letter to Douglas Pitts, April 2, 1945, File 6, Box 14, 1988-7004, WMS, PCCA.

Student experience playing the sport seemed to reflect this idea. In Birtle, an Indigenous student who played goalie for the local town team in the early 1950s had his forehead split open during a game and required stitches. After the event he was regarded as, “the hero of the school and of the town boys as well.”³⁹ Rusaw also recalled how the boy “gave them quite a scare with the amount of bleeding. However, it has wakened him up a lot so that he is just twice as alert as he was.”⁴⁰ Through hockey Indigenous boys were able to interact with their peers in a special way on the hockey rink that created mutual understanding and respect.

The evolution of integration policies in the IRSS is a complex history that has roots at the microlevel level. The demands of Indigenous parents, financial constraints, and staff dissatisfaction all encouraged the IAB to seek an alternative solution to Indian education and eventually led to changes in the IRSS. This history and development of policy illustrates the chaotic yet holistic nature of the IRSS as school staff influenced the highest levels of government and vice versa in their attempts to fix Indian education policy. However, as Woolford writes, the intent always remained the same: “This complexity prevents us from drawing a simplistic straight line from intention, to action, to outcome, though it does not prevent us from identifying a generalized intent within the collective action frame of the Indian Problem.”⁴¹ The settler colonial mesh was reshaped during this period as the genocidal intent of the Canadian government remained consistent, even as it moved from within the walls of residential schools to the hallways and classrooms of provincial schools. While the changing

³⁹ Norman Rusaw, Letter to Frieda Matthews, March 13, 1950, File 2, Box 12, 1988-7004, WMS, PCCA.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Woolford, *This Benevolent Experiment*, 95.

nature of the school system altered the experience of many students, but those changes were not necessarily for their benefit. As will be shown, many struggled to integrate into provincial classrooms and Canadian society more broadly.

Integrated Classrooms and Student Experience, 1951 – 1969

The prevalence of integration policies greatly increased over the 1950s and 1960s at both Birtle and Cecilia Jeffrey. The number of students at the Birtle residential school who attended the local high school remained a significant portion of the school's population throughout the 1950s—sometimes up to 25% of the residential school's population.⁴² This often large percentage of students that were boarding at the school, but did not attend classes there, affected school life as classroom sizes became smaller, staff was cut, and enrollment in sports generally dropped. Rusaw came to rely on many of these integrated students for help around the school with the younger children as his staff became limited, imagining himself as a replacement father-figure. His own son, Norman Jr., developed a “Mutt and Jeff” relationship with one of the older students as they walked to school together every morning.⁴³ In 1956, there was some discussion at Cecilia Jeffrey of enrolling the grade seven and eight students at the public school in Kenora but there were fears of overcrowding the public school in which high-school aged Indigenous students were already a significant proportion of the student body.⁴⁴ Cecilia Jeffrey built a four-room school building on the school grounds in 1960 to house integrated classes for grades four through eight due to continued fears of overcrowding

⁴² Norman Rusaw, Annual Report for Birtle 1956, January 11, 1956, File 1, Box 10, 1988-7004, WMS, PCCA.

⁴³ Mutt and Jeff was a long running newspaper cartoon in the twenty-first century which chronicled the relationship between two “mismatched tin horns,” one tall and one short. Norman Rusaw, Letter to Frieda Matthews, October 5, 1959, File 3, Box 13, 1988-7004, WMS, PCCA.

⁴⁴ Ivan Robson, Letter to Norman Paterson, Superintendent of Kenora Agency, February 29, 1956, File 3, Box 16, 1988-7004, WMS, PCCA.

Kenora public schools.⁴⁵ At the time, Principal Stephen Robinson reported that there were only about thirty students from Cecilia Jeffrey going into the local public school while eighty Euro-Canadian students came onto the school grounds who, “assisted very much in getting the children, teachers, and parents into a good start in this new experience.”⁴⁶ Residential schools gradually adopted integration programs throughout the 1950s as Indian education shifted its focus from segregated assimilation to integrated education, for better or for worse.

As the number of integrated classrooms grew exponentially, the experience of Indigenous students in these integrated classrooms began to worsen. From the earliest attempts at integration Indigenous students faced severe racism and struggled to integrate. These students were surely used to being subjected to racism at residential school, but the experience of racism was of a different sort as they were forced into Euro-Canadian schools. Milloy notes how these integrated students that were boarding at residential schools suffered a terrible experience as they, “were caught between the past and the present, the old policy and the new. Separated from their parents and communities, they were then immersed daily into the demoralizing atmosphere of a non-Aboriginal school.”⁴⁷ This notion played out on the local and regional levels as Birtle accepted several students from the Brandon Indian Residential School for secondary education. These students informed Rusaw that they refused to ever go back to Brandon to be educated at the public Collegiate there because of their experiences with racism. According to the students, Indigenous students at the Collegiate were, “looked down upon by the majority of students.” They also reported that “the girls were easy targets for the

⁴⁵ Stephen Robinson, Annual Report 1960, January 2, 1961, File 9, Box 2, 1988-7004, WMS, PCCA.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Milloy, *A National Crime*, 224.

men of the forces, particularly the Army at Philo near Brandon.”⁴⁸ Issues with racism in the community were also present in Kenora where integration policies were continually questioned by locals and even principals of Cecilia Jeffrey. Principal Robinson doubted the effectiveness of integration policy in northwestern Ontario because he had little faith in the Indigenous population there. He believed it would be better for Indigenous students to be housed by local families than live together at the residential school. Furthermore, he thought that integration would be a major problem for his students. “As a final word of caution I foresee a serious truancy problem when a policy of integration is attempted here with the type of Indian that we are working with,” Robinson warned.⁴⁹ Robinson believed that any type of freedom awarded to the students would lead to abuses. Indeed, Indigenous students experienced new types of racism as they entered local Euro-Canadian communities and schools.

With the advent of integration programs many residential schools became centres for problem children, orphans, and any other Indigenous children that the IAB thought to be neglected. These issues were caused in part by lower enrollments but also an increased focus on integration by the DIA. In 1957, the IAB implemented regulations on student enrollment which focused residential schooling towards “neglected” children.⁵⁰ Milloy describes how this trend changed the nature of residential schools from educational centres to foster homes.⁵¹ As

⁴⁸ Norman Rusaw, Letter to Frieda Matthews, January 20, 1954, File 6, Box 12, 1988-7004, WMS, PCCA.

⁴⁹ Ivan Robson, Letter to Norman Paterson, Superintendent of Kenora Agency, February 29, 1956, File 3, Box 16, 1988-7004, WMS, PCCA. Runaways and truants were considered a major issue during this period because of the new freedoms given to Indigenous parents and the social effects of integration on students. Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Volume One: The History, Part 2, 1939-2000* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2015), 335 – 367.

⁵⁰ Milloy, ‘*A National Crime*,’ 212.

⁵¹ This makes an important shift for the continued state of Indigenous education and child welfare in this country as the IAB enforced a paternalistic policy that focused on a relative definition of “neglect” as an excuse to remove Indigenous children from their parents and communities. *Ibid.*, 215. Also see TRC, *The History, Part 2*, 147 – 175.

early as 1957 Principal Robson of Cecilia Jeffrey wrote that the school was being forced to accept students from greater distances and from numerous Protestant denominations in order to fill the school's quota. This widened catchment area, along with day schools and integration programs which allowed parents to keep their children at home, Robson believed, were to blame for the social and disciplinary problems at Cecilia Jeffrey. He wrote that, "even in these places, day schools are being built, and children sent out are usually the unmanageable ones and those from broken homes... There is a definite tendency for the Residential School to become the asylum for the problem children of the Indian communities."⁵² This trend was especially felt at Birtle where violent outbursts by students became a common occurrence in the 1950s and 1960s. On one occasion, in December 1955, Principal Rusaw was forced to expel a senior student who assaulted another student in the dinner line and threatened to kill him with a knife.⁵³

Indigenous students also faced academic problems alongside these social issues. The education these students received at residential school was far below standards set by the province and unfortunately, the education they received in integrated settings was not much of an improvement. This may be due in part to a variety of reasons including decreased academic expectations of Indigenous children, lower funding than public schools, and less training for residential school teachers. The transition towards integration was quick and somewhat careless leaving provincial teachers and curriculum unprepared for the influx of Indigenous

⁵² The language surrounding residential schools changed around this time as noted by Milloy; education was replaced with welfare and much of the staff at residential schools were unequipped to deal with these new challenges including the social problems faced by many of the new generation of students. Significantly, many of these "problem" children were the very product of Indigenous peoples attending the schools fracturing family and community life. Milloy, *'A National Crime,'* *ibid.*; Ivan Robson, Annual Report for Cecilia Jeffrey 1956, no date, File 1, Box 10, 1988-7004, WMS, PCCA.

⁵³ Norman Rusaw, Letter to Frieda Matthews, December 25, 1955, File 7, Box 12, 1988-7004, WMS, PCCA.

students.⁵⁴ In 1961, Principal Rusaw noted that the final examination results of the integrated high school students were “very disappointing.”⁵⁵ At first, he blamed the staff of the high school, but he soon learned that the Euro-Canadian students were more successful than their Indigenous counterparts. Ultimately, Rusaw blamed the students’ lack of dedication in their academics but many integrated students had little free time in this new system along with significant social issues with integrating into provincial classrooms.⁵⁶ Students also confronted racism from their teachers like that they received from their classmates. For example, in 1966 the Birtle Consolidated School Board undertook negotiations with the residential school to limit the number of Indigenous students in their classrooms due to the “slower pace” of these students.⁵⁷ Indigenous students were seen to be bad influences on Euro-Canadian students who would appropriate mannerisms and tendencies of Indigenous students including whispering during class and refusing to read out loud. One teacher said in response, ““Give me either Indian or white but not a mixed group where there is a majority of Indian students.””⁵⁸ Indigenous students continued to face racism from their public school teachers much like they did at residential school, except now they were racial outsiders whose race was understood as the primary deterrent to themselves and the classroom.

⁵⁴ Milloy describes the curriculum in one integrated Manitoba school as “cookie cutter” that was entirely inadequate for Indigenous students coming from residential school. Furthermore, notions of “Indianness” were often associated with poverty and other negative stereotypes which made integration hard for many students. Milloy, *A National Crime*, 223.

⁵⁵ Norman Rusaw, Annual Report for Birtle 1961, December 15, 1961, File 5, Box 10, 1988-7004, WMS, PCCA.

⁵⁶ Stephen Robinson, Annual Report for Cecilia Jeffrey 1961, January 1, 1962, File 1, Box 3, 1988-7004, WMS, PCCA.

⁵⁷ Norman Rusaw, Annual Report for Birtle 1966, January 6, 1967, File 2, Box 11, 1988-7004, WMS, PCCA.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

However, the experience of integrated Indigenous students varied. Hockey players, who were able to use their skills on the hockey rink to become popular among their classmates and within local communities, seem to have navigated the experience of integration differently. For instance, Nelson, an integrated high school student at Birtle and an excellent hockey player, was noted by Rusaw as being “very popular” among the students at public school while doing moderately well in academics.⁵⁹ His popularity spread into the local hockey community after he was chosen as a member of the Birtle Jr. Bs, the town’s most popular local team, over several other Euro-Canadian players. Similarly, Rusaw often gave special treatment to Nelson and other older integrated students who excelled at both hockey and academics. These students were allowed a later bedtime and were sometimes exempt from some of the work around the school.⁶⁰ Nelson became a success story of the school and continued his relationship with students there long after his graduation as the first Indigenous person from Birtle High School. In a letter to his fellow students, published in the *Wigwam News* and edited by a student at the school, Nelson recounted his recent success playing hockey in Winnipeg and even included a joke about his absence from the penalty box that season.⁶¹ Rusaw spoke highly of Nelson and his accomplishments to other students, often subtly indicating Nelson’s ability on the hockey rink and his determination in academics as key aspects of his individual success.

⁵⁹ Norman Rusaw, Letter to Frieda Matthews, February 18, 1951, File 3, Box 12, 1988-7004, WMS, PCCA.

⁶⁰ Nelson was allowed to sleep in later than the other children when he traveled for hockey games the night before. Norman Rusaw, Letter to Frieda Matthews, February 25, 1949, File 2, Box 12, 1988-7004, WMS, PCCA; Nelson was also given a lighter punishment when he was caught joyriding trains with other students, Norman Rusaw, Letter to Frieda Matthews, February 18, 1951, File 3, Box 12, 1988-7004, WMS, PCCA; Rusaw would take his favorite students on retreats to Winnipeg. Norman Rusaw, Letter to Frieda Matthews, March 22, 1951, File 3, Box 12, WMS, PCCA.

⁶¹ Calvin Chaske, “Junior Hockey Team”, *Wigwam News*, 1954, File 6, Box 12, 1988 – 7004, WMS, PCCA.

Nelson's experience marked the beginning of a trend whereby popular hockey players from Birtle found acceptance among their Euro-Canadian peers. Rusaw reflected that hockey was "doing a good work for the lads, they love it, they get out and mix and it would surprise you just how popular our lads are with the white boys, and with people in the town and district."⁶² Birtle became a hockey academy of sorts as players from the school were scattered among teams across western Manitoba. These players became so popular in the hockey community that coaches and scouts began approaching Rusaw and offering contracts for them. Rusaw was forced to act as a kind of agent as he worked to find the best situation for "his boys," often opting for teams which, he believed, promoted proper Canadian characteristics such as toughness, discipline, and teamwork.⁶³ Involvement in these teams also provided the players with opportunities for personal advancement and enjoyment as they traveled across Manitoba with their respective teams. Many enjoyed weekends in Winnipeg and evenings in other towns. Hockey provided enjoyment for Indigenous students as they socialized with their Euro-Canadian peers and traveled across the province. Hockey players from residential schools were accepted as star athletes by Euro-Canadians while many of their peers struggled to find their place in provincial schools and integrated classrooms.

Communities arose around the hockey teams on which Indigenous children played. Youths that played on the same teams often went to the same school and spent time together in town. Rusaw found himself amid one of these communities in the lead up to the 1952 hockey season. As in years past, local team officials flocked to the residential school to recruit Indigenous hockey players for their team. For a while, it looked as though Birtle Town would

⁶² Norman Rusaw, Letter to Frieda Matthews, February 19, 1951, File 3, Box 12, 1988-7004, WMS, PCCA.

⁶³ Norman Rusaw, Letter to Frieda Matthews, December 27, 1950, File 3, Box 12, 1988-7004, WMS, PCCA.

not have a team that year so Rusaw signed some Indigenous students up for the Foxwarren and New Binscarth teams.⁶⁴ However, when the Birtle Town team finally formed and came to the school to sign Indigenous players Rusaw was forced to send them away as many hockey players at the school were already signed to other teams. A few days later, students arrived back at the residential school from town with news that the boys there were, “quite provoked” at Rusaw for not letting Indigenous boys play for Birtle Town.⁶⁵ Interestingly, the acceptance and desire for these Indigenous children occurred during an era of tense race-relations in the area. Only a year earlier, in 1952, several of the fathers of the same Indigenous children who were being celebrated in town as hockey players had been involved in a fight in Birtle. One of them was stabbed in the incident while another was arrested and sent to the local prison.⁶⁶ Rusaw, scared of the tense environment in town and of the influence of alcohol in inflaming these tensions, wrote to Matthews saying, “I have at last gotten my lads satisfied in coming directly home from a hockey game etc. instead of hanging in town.”⁶⁷ While Indigenous students excelled on the hockey rink and formed small communities with their peers, Indigenous peoples and Euro-Canadians were quite literally fighting in the streets due to racial tensions in the region.

At the same time, however, a contact zone was created through hockey where Indigenous and Euro-Canadian hockey players interacted in ways that were unique to the sport. The hockey rink became a contact zone “of surprising possibilities, of mutual enjoyment, of

⁶⁴ Norman Rusaw, Letter to Frieda Matthews, January 21, 1952, File 4, Box 12, 1988-7004, WMS, PCCA

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Norma Rusaw, Letter to Frieda Matthews, February 19, 1951, File 3, Box 12, 1988-7004, WMS, PCCA.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

confrontation, of dismaying discrimination, and of embodied display.”⁶⁸ Indigenous hockey players experienced acceptance and even celebration from the same communities that, in other contexts, opposed integration and engaged in racist rhetoric. Hockey blurred the racial boundaries that were imposed from the macrolevel of the settler colonial mesh denying the colonial script concerning the way people *were supposed* to act towards Indigenous peoples.⁶⁹ Of course, as Deloria writes, this affection may not have been completely genuine as, “spectators might at once value athletic skill and reject the special privileges that accrued to players. And, if Indian identity led to catcalls and racist nicknames, it also called forth real—if often condescending—forms of affection.”⁷⁰ Nonetheless, the lengths to which coaches and players went to recruit these Indigenous athletes reveals a deep respect for their abilities and a challenge to racial hierarchical boundaries.

The shift towards integrated classrooms created new opportunities for Indigenous children to interact with society outside the school, but that society was not always welcoming. The mandate of Indian education remained focused on the assimilation of Indigenous peoples into the Canadian state and the erasure of their culture. The decisions that guided integration were primarily driven by financial motives, and not by student needs. Indigenous children at residential school experienced new opportunities as the settler colonial mesh changed, loosening for some, and tightening for others. Many officials, including those at the highest levels who revised the Indian Act, saw integration as a more beneficial and benevolent means

⁶⁸ Kelm, *A Wilder West*, 228.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 231.

⁷⁰ Philip Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 120.

of Indian education, but the 1960s would prove that these policies were still detrimental to Indigenous students.

The Legacy of Integration and the Dismantlement of the IRSS, 1960-1970

The effects of integration programs on the IRSS were felt mostly through the drops in school enrollment in the 1960s. In the 1965 Annual Report for Birtle, Principal Rusaw noted that attendance for the year dropped by almost thirty students from 160 to 130, the greatest decrease the school had ever experienced.⁷¹ He blamed the integration program for this decrease. Many Indigenous parents preferred to keep their children at home and have them attend local public schools, Rusaw reported.⁷² The IAB arranged for buses to pick students up from the reserve in the morning and to drop them off in the evening. This new accessibility to integrated education also caused the closure of many day schools as government officials committed more fully to integrated education during the 1960s.⁷³ At Cecilia Jeffrey, school enrollment also declined over the course of the 1960s. Almost half of the student body at the school was attending classes in Kenora while boarding at Cecilia Jeffrey.⁷⁴ With lower enrollment and a new focus on integration, residential schools received less money and therefore hired fewer staff. Principals at both Birtle and Cecilia Jeffrey feared that their schools would fall into disrepair because of the lack of staff.⁷⁵ Integration programs caused a dramatic

⁷¹ Norman Rusaw, Annual Report for 1963, January 1964, File 7, Box 10, 1988-7004, WMS, PCCA.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ The late 1950s and early 1960s was truly the beginning of the end of the IRSS as government officials doubled-down on their commitment to integrated classes with the ending of the per-capita grant system, the closing of day schools, and the priority of integration by government officials. Ibid.

⁷⁴ Stephen Robinson, 1962 Report to the Executive of the Women's Missionary Society (W.D.), January, 1963, File 1, Box 3, 1988-7004, WMS, PCCA; Rusaw also was forced to become heavily involved in the hockey programs due to the lack of a boys' supervisor, he complained that he could never have a regular work week and that government officials will never be able to offer the same benefits he provided the children at Birtle. Norman Rusaw. Letter to Giollo Kelly, March 18, 1969, File 7, Box 13, 1988-7004, WMS, PCCA.

⁷⁵ Stephen Robinson, Letter to R.F. Neary, Chief of Education Division, August 26, 1960, Part 1, File 487/25-13-014, Vol. 8799, RG 10, DIA, LAC.

decrease in school enrollment and therefore threatened the existence of the residential schools themselves.

Drops in enrollment led to the cancellation of many services and activities at the school and further accelerated the dismantlement of the IRSS. By 1963 the trend of declining enrollments at Birtle also began to affect the school's hockey program. Furthermore, many of the students who lived at Birtle and attended integrated classes played for town and public-school teams instead of the residential school team.⁷⁶ The same was true for all extracurricular activities. As students became integrated into local community groups, the school's cadet and scout troupes, and basketball and baseball teams went into decline.⁷⁷ The effects of this on school life were evident in the cutting of IAB funding for sports equipment in 1964. In that same year, Rusaw complained to the WMS regarding the school's inability to purchase equipment of a high enough quality for his students due to the new cuts.⁷⁸ As sports programs and other extracurricular activities started to wane at the school so did student involvement. Whereas integration had initially been only attending class at local public schools, by the early 1960s, many students also began to participate more fully in sports and other activities outside school. As a result, students gradually became less involved in the sports and other activities within residential schools.

Although the hockey program at Birtle began to wane, it still constituted an important part of school life. Now, with fewer staff at the school due to drops in enrollment and funding, more pressure was placed on Principal Rusaw. Rusaw noted that he spent almost every moment

⁷⁶ Norman Rusaw, Annual Report for Birtle 1963, January 1964, File 7, Box 10, 1988-7004, WMS, PCCA.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Giollo Kelly, Letter to Norman Rusaw, February 21, 1964, File 5, Box 13, 1988-7004, WMS, PCCA.

of free time on the hockey rink or within hockey arenas across eastern Manitoba. He also frequently complained about the workload required for the hockey team. In 1964, he unwillingly became the secretary for the Snake Creek Hockey League because had he not stepped into the role then there would have been no hockey league which he did not think would be beneficial for the boys.⁷⁹ “They need action and active games but without a gym this is impossible and when conditions remain the same for any length of time then the discipline problems come up. Active boys and girls soon tire of TV and quiet games,” Rusaw wrote. Evidently, he still believed in the necessity of hockey for the students at the school.⁸⁰ Furthermore, he voiced concerns to the WMS for his future replacement believing they would be shocked by the amount of time dedicated to maintaining the hockey program and keeping the children happy in the modern era of residential schooling.⁸¹

Drops in enrollment and new pressures faced by residential school staff were further exacerbated by the revelation of the horrific realities of residential school life to a national audience. In July 1965, *Weekend Magazine* published an article entitled “The Indians: An Abandoned and Dispossessed People,” by Kenora native Ian Adams which sparked a sharp debate in northwestern Ontario and across the country over the treatment of Indigenous peoples. According to Adams, Cecilia Jeffrey had “an atmosphere of unutterable loneliness, desolate enough to stop time in any child’s heart.”⁸² Adams’s article included an interview with Principal Robinson over accusations of abuse at the school which Robinson eventually

⁷⁹ Norman Rusaw, Annual Report for Birtle 1963, December 3, 1964, 1988-7004, Box 10, File 8, Women’s Missionary Society fonds, Presbyterian Church of Canada Archives, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

⁸⁰ Norman Rusaw, Annual Report for Birtle 1964, January 3, 1965, File 1, Box 11, 1988-7004, WMS, PCCA.

⁸¹ Norman Rusaw, Letter to Giorle Kelly, March 31, 1969, File 7, Box 13, 1988-7004, WMS, PCCA.

⁸² Ian Adams, “The Indians: An Abandoned and Dispossessed People: Rejected and discriminated against, they look upon white society with hate and bitter hostility,” *Weekend Magazine*, 1965, File 3, Box 17, 1988-7004, WMS, PCCA.

conceded were true.⁸³ In the aftermath of its publication, members of the WMS and the IAB wrote a flurry of letters as they sought to lessen the damage to their reputation caused by the article. Giolle Kelly, the Director of National Missions for the WMS at the time, claimed that Adams had a “personal grudge” with the Presbyterian church which influenced his article. The WMS sent formal protest to *Weekend Magazine* soon after the article’s publication. The article was not “a factual statement,” the WMS claimed, adding that “people and groups should not be discredited in such a manner by writers for their paper.”⁸⁴ The WMS worked tirelessly to remove any tarnish the article had on their reputation, a mission they continued until the end of their involvement in Indian education in 1969.

However, the bad publicity was just the start as government agencies began to criticize the IRSS from within. Two government reports published in the late 1960s, the Hawthorn Report and the Caldwell Report, revealed the continued heinous environment of residential schools across the country and encouraged integrated education. The Hawthorn Report was critical of almost every aspect of the IRSS and concluded that the existence of residential schools should cease in favor of Indian residences where Indigenous students boarded together but attended integrated classes in Euro-Canadian communities.⁸⁵ The Caldwell Report took even more of a critical approach as it found that, “the schools were highly regimented, did not provide sufficient non-academic education, prepared children poorly for adjustment to the outside world, and were inadequately funded.”⁸⁶ Catholic missionary societies in particular condemned the Caldwell Report claiming that its scope was far too small and its research

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Giolle Kelly, Letter to Alan P. Gordon, October 14, 1965, File 3, Box 17, 1988-7004, WMS, PCCA.

⁸⁵ Miller, *Shingwauk’s Vision*, 400.

⁸⁶ Ibid

methods were inadequate. These complaints went unheard as the IAB was, by the end of the 1960s, fully committed to the phasing out of residential schools due to financial and social concerns. In 1967, the IAB transformed many residential schools, including Birtle and Cecilia Jeffrey, to Indian Residences.

In that same year, a story exposed the Canadian public to the horrors of Indian education in Canada placing even more social pressure on IAB to improve Indian education and distance themselves from the IRSS. Ian Adams again acted as the catalyst as he drew attention to the desperate conditions at Cecilia Jeffrey. His article “The Lonely Death of Chanie Wenjack” returned to the dreadful conditions at Cecilia Jeffrey he touched on in his previous article. He wrote, “[locals] told me that children coming from the free and easy ways of their homes on the northern reserves—Indian children sleep when they want, eat when they’re hungry—have rebelled against the harsh discipline by running away.”⁸⁷ This topic became the central focus of “The Lonely Death of Charlie Wenjack.” The article detailed the runaway, and subsequent death, of thirteen-year-old Chanie (misprinted as Charlie in *MacLean’s Magazine*) Wenjack of Cecilia Jeffrey. Chanie’s story is emblematic of residential schooling at the time as he was taken from his home in northern Ontario a few hundred kilometres away and, as Adams wrote, “even before Charlie ran away he was already running hard just to keep pace with the bewildering white world he had suddenly been thrust into,” which included integrated classes in Kenora where Chanie struggled to fit in and succeed.⁸⁸ One October afternoon in 1966, Chanie embarked on a journey he would never return from as he ran away from school

⁸⁷ Ian Adams, “The Lonely Death of Charlie Wenjack,” *MacLean’s Magazine*, February 1, 1967, <http://www.macleans.ca/society/the-lonely-death-of-chanie-wenjack/>.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

with two other boys. On October 23, 1965 Chanie's body was found next to train tracks near Redditt, Ontario and as the supervisor of the rail line said regarding Chanie's father, "We tell this man he has to send his son to one of our schools, then we bring his boy back on a luggage car."⁸⁹

The national attention brought by Adams' article and other publications caused a panic among remaining residential school officials. A letter written by J.E.Y. Lavaque, the president of the National Association of Principals and Administrators of Indian Residences, to *MacLean's Magazine* in 1967 detailed the "factual issues" with the article beginning with,

The facts as they are set forth in your article will easily lead the uninformed person to the same conclusions that were summed up in the jury's verdict and recommendations: i.e. that there is something wrong with Indian education. I wonder if in the 'long, closely written page' of the verdict, any other recommendations were made.⁹⁰

Lavaque went on to criticize the men who took Chanie in for the night, the provincial school system, the municipal government, integration into settler homes, the local police, and finally the principal Colin Wasacase for the death of Chanie.⁹¹ He finished with an argument for the continuation of the IRSS in the face of events such as that which happened to Chanie as he believed residential schools were better suited for the handling of Indigenous children than integration programs.⁹² The fear that the Canadian public would not understand the complex nature of Indian education was felt at all levels of the IRSS as news of the abuse of students became nationally known. IRSS administrators attempted to grasp the system that was slipping

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ J.E.Y. Lavaque, Letter to the editor of *MacLean's Magazine*, no date, File 4, Box 17, WMS, PCCA.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

from their fingers as the government decided to take control of IRSS administration by the end of the 1960s.

The federal government officially took control of Indian residences across the country on April 1, 1969, including Birtle and Cecilia Jeffrey. This change was surely influenced by policy changes towards integration along with the trend to secularize education in Canada but was ultimately a legal decision of the Canadian Labour Relations Board which determined residential school employees were employees of the Canadian state.⁹³ Significantly, Principal Rusaw continued as the principal of Birtle under the federal government but lamented his new position. “I am not looking forward to the future in the work with any satisfaction. From now it will be a job as all government employment becomes,” Rusaw noted ruefully.⁹⁴ Throughout his final letter to the WMS, Rusaw made frequent references to the hockey teams at Birtle which were still thriving while the IRSS was falling apart. He reflected on hockey and that, “These are things that were once frowned on but today we find it difficult as everywhere else does to find something to occupy young people in their spare time.”⁹⁵

Conclusion

Integration policies, begun officially in the 1950s, marked the start of the dismantling of the IRSS and a reshaping of the settler colonial mesh. While some students were able to use their popularity as hockey players to cross strict racial divides, others experienced intense racism in integrated classrooms that had significant effects for many of them. The evolution of these policies began at local and regional levels as school administrators responded to specific

⁹³ Milloy, *A National Crime*, 234.

⁹⁴ Norman Rusaw, Letter to Giollo Kelley, March 31, 1969, File 7, Box 13, 1988-7004, WMS, PCCA.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

pressures including complaints of Indigenous parents, financial constraints, and dissatisfaction with the methods of the IRSS. However, the assimilatory goals of Indian education remained the same as students entered racially charged classrooms that sought their integration into Canadian society. Hockey provided a means for some students to enter these classrooms and communities as peers and even heroes while other Indigenous students struggled with racist assumptions about their nature and situation. Public scrutiny panicked residential school administrations by exposing the inefficiency and inappropriateness of Indian education and the IRSS. By 1969, the federal government took control of the IRSS beginning the next chapter of school closure.

The story of Chanie Wenjack of Cecilia Jeffrey has since been mythologized in Canada with the publication of Gord Downie and Jeff Lemire's *Secret Path*.⁹⁶ His story is emblematic of the IRSS at the time of his death; a young Indigenous child who was taken far away from his home and forced to integrate into Canadian society with devastating results. Numerous other children suffered, and died, at residential schools across the country due to the incompetence of school administrators at every level of the settler colonial mesh. While some students were lucky enough to find an escape through sport, others were forced to endure the system and for some it was too much to bear. Integration was another advancement of settler colonial control of Indigenous peoples, cultures, and land, and unlike *Secret Path*, a story which frames these issues as a thing of the past, the policy decisions made during this period continue to damage Indigenous communities up to the present day.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ Canadian Press, "Gord Downie Remembered at Chanie Wenjack School Opening," *Huffington Post*, March 2, 2018, http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2018/03/02/gord-downie-chanie-wenjack-school-opening_a_23375722/.

⁹⁷ Gord Downie and Jeff Lemire, *Secret Path* (Toronto: Simon and Schuster, 2016), 96.

Conclusion

“‘Hockey’s grace and poetry make men beautiful. The thrill of it lifts people out of their seats. Dreams unfold right before your eyes, conjured by a stick and a puck on a hundred and eighty feet of ice. The players? The good ones? The great ones? They’re the ones who can harness that lightning. They’re the conjurers. They become one with the game and it lifts them up and out of their lives too.’”¹

The late Richard Wagamese wrote these lines in his novel *Indian Horse*, the fictional account of a residential school hockey player named Saul Indian Horse. Saul’s story is symbolic of the journey that many Indigenous children experienced at residential school. Stolen from their homes, forced to assimilate, abused by their teachers, and unable to integrate with their Euro-Canadian peers, many embraced hockey as a method to lift them up and out of their traumatic lives and to help them endure residential school. This thesis used hockey as a framework through which to view the complex nature of the settler colonial mesh embodied in the Indian Residential School System (IRSS) and the ability of Indigenous peoples to create tears within it. Indigenous hockey players appropriated what was supposed to be a method of their assimilation to negotiate with settler colonial policies and carve out spaces for personal and cultural survival. The intention behind IRSS, namely the elimination of Indigenous peoples and cultures from Canada, should never be neglected or forgotten, but neither should the lives of individuals who survived.

This thesis chronicled the evolution of hockey programs at three Protestant-run Indian residential schools during the middle of the twentieth-century beginning with the implementation of hockey as a “softer” disciplinary technique at Birtle, Cecilia Jeffrey, and

¹ Richard Wagamese, *Indian Horse* (Toronto: Douglas & McIntyre, 2012), 150.

Sioux Lookout Indian Residential Schools and continuing until the government take-over of these schools in 1969. Hockey began as an effective method for instilling discipline at each of the schools which struggled with what was perceived as the “native weakness” of their students. However, the ways in which students were able to guide policy through their desires for sport and ultimately create a space of enjoyment and survival illustrates the complex balance of discipline and desire as assimilative tools in the settler colonial mesh. Following the success of hockey at residential schools, school staff and government officials were able to use the athletic prowess of these Indigenous athletes to further public relations projects. The ways in which Indigenous children played the sport of their colonizers did however create some anxiety as they were not entirely Indigenous nor European, existing in a gap between colonial understandings of race. Finally, in the closing years of church involvement in the IRSS, hockey became an important method to promote the new brand of assimilation: integration. While integration offered Indigenous students a way to escape the horrific environment of residential schools, many faced new struggles in public schools and the limits imposed on them by settler colonial notions of race. Hockey was one of the few social spaces of acceptance for these students as it blurred racial binaries and encouraged individuals to defy settler colonial understandings of what they *ought* to do at the microlevel. The story of hockey at residential school is a complex one, seemingly full of contradictions and nuances, as it reflects both the power of settler colonialism and Indigenous strength to survive.

As Canada moves forward after the closing of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, space needs to be made in the stagnant national narrative for the strength of Indigenous communities to survive the atrocities committed against them. They were, and continue to be, the primary victims of a settler colonial state which seeks their erasure, both

physical and cultural. At the local level analysis, the strength of Indigenous people is acted out alongside the techniques of settler colonial power. Paige Raibmon encourages this kind of analysis to reveal the ways in which dispossession functions. She argues that, “we need to zoom in to map the microtechniques of dispossession on the ground, and we then need to stand back to view the constellation of these techniques as the product of colonialism.”² Significantly, hockey, the sport which is continuously celebrated in this country for its ability to unite Canadians of all backgrounds, is part of this constellation, even if the “cultural amnesia” it creates blurs this reality.³ However, accepting a single narrative of hockey as a tool of assimilation and civilization within the IRSS is over simplifying a complex story in which hockey was used by Indigenous children to survive cultural genocide and is continued to be celebrated as a site of cultural rejuvenation in First Nations communities today.⁴ Reconciliation means more than just acknowledging the dark history of the residential schools in this country, it means reflecting on Canada’s past, present, and future relationships with Indigenous peoples and working in partnership to make a change for the better. This requires understanding and reconciling with a complicated history that unfortunately does not have a single straight-forward narrative. As a nation we need to reconcile with not only the Indigenous peoples whose home we now inhabit, but also with the complicated history of our national sport.

² Paige Raibmon, “Unmaking Native Space: A Genealogy of Indian Policy, Settler Practice, and the Microtechniques of Dispossession,” in *The Power of Promises: Rethinking Indian Treaties in the Pacific Northwest*, ed. Alexandra Harmon and John Borrows (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008), 72.

³ Richard Gruneau and David Whitson, *Hockey Night in Canada: Sport, Identity and Cultural Politics* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 132.

⁴ Michael Robidoux, *Stickhandling through the Margins: First Nations Hockey in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 16.

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