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Natalia Ilyniak
University of Manitoba

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“To rob the world of a people”: Language Removal as an Instance of Colonial Genocide in the Fort Alexander Indian Residential School

Natalia Ilyniak

University of Manitoba
Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada

***Abstract:** This paper demonstrates, through Sagkeeng First Nation narratives, how the Fort Alexander Indian Residential School (FAIRS) is a micro-instance of genocide in the context of language. An understanding is offered from the perspective of a settler colonial academic, in consideration of decolonizing principles. Using relational theory, namely Actor-Network Theory, this paper discusses how FAIRS’s practices were designed and operated to disrupt relations between children and their community by removing Anishinaabe language, and the ways children and their families negotiated and undermined these practices. Data was collected through critical narrative analysis and sociohistoric inquiry to identify and unpack the practice of language removal in FAIRS, as identified in Survivors’ testimonies, interviews, stories, and memoir.*

***Keywords:** colonialist, genocide, Fort Alexander Indian Residential School, Canada*

Introduction

Increasingly, we are hearing the word genocide being applied to Indigenous experiences with residential schools and colonialism in Canada. In May 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) officially titled the Residential School System as cultural genocide.¹ Phil Fontaine, a residential school Survivor and former National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, has repeatedly called on the Federal Government to acknowledge that the Residential School System was an act of genocide.² In 2013, the Canadian Museum of Human Rights rejected the use of the term “settler colonial genocide,” sparking debate in the media on the importance of the term.³ Colonial genocide has become a prominent topic within the academic field of genocide studies.⁴ Indigenous leaders, such as Justice Murray Sinclair of the TRC⁵ and Judy da Silva, Anishinaabe Elder and activist from Grassy Narrows First Nation,⁶ have also adopted the term. These discussions and debates are already happening. It is necessary for settlers to take responsibility for their role in the colonial process and participate and be accountable within these conversations.

Residential schools were established as part of Canada’s assimilative policy to eliminate Aboriginal Peoples, including their government, rights, and Treaties.⁷ Initially, many communities were hopeful about the schools, presuming they would provide an opportunity for children to participate in European settler education and, in turn, settler employment. Indigenous parents could not have known this system, while operating under the guise of education, would attempt to replace Indigeneity with capitalist, religious, racialized and so-called civilized ideologies. These institutions carried out assimilation in a violent manner, severing relationships between children, their families, and cultural identities in brutal ways. Today, the removal of Indigenous language, culture, land, spirituality, ceremony, and familial ties through the residential school system, as well as broader policies aimed at eliminating Aboriginal Peoples, has been framed as genocide by many Indigenous communities.⁸

This article offers an understanding of one micro-level instance of genocide in Canada from the perspective of a settler colonial academic. Specifically, my analysis draws upon local narratives to unpack the micro-level relational processes of colonial encroachment through language suppression in the Fort Alexander Indian Residential School (FAIRS) in Sagkeeng First Nation, Manitoba, 1940-1970.⁹ Relational theory allows one to explore how FAIRS was designed and operated to disrupt relational processes integral to creating and sustaining this Anishinaabe¹⁰ community. Despite these aims, Sagkeeng First Nation’s culture was not lost. Learning from local narratives allows the voices of resiliency and fortitude to be heard and acknowledged by settler communities. Stressing agency and resistance avoids essentialist idea about who people are. Importantly, the fact that resistance continues to be needed demonstrates that oppressive colonial practices continue to be perpetrated against Indigenous peoples in Canada.

This paper begins with a brief historical overview of colonial encroachment in Canada and Sagkeeng First Nation. This section also offers a look at some existing colonial genocide literature, focusing on several drawbacks of earlier approaches that rely on the United Nations Convention of the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide, and discussing how a relational approach to genocide can address these issues. The following section explains how Relational Theory and Actor Network Theory are used to trace the relational network within FAIRS. This section also outlines methodology, involving critical narrative analysis of local Anishinaabe sources and sociohistoric inquiry of broader colonial process that influence behaviour within FAIRS. The article touches on how practices in translation and reflexivity can be used to look at issues of power and privilege throughout the research process.

Following is an analysis of Anishinaabe language removal in FAIRS, unpacking relations between micro-level actors, mediated by teachings. This demonstrates the ways school authorities attempted to assimilate Anishinaabe children, and the children's responses to these attempts, through language. The links between teachings, language, and culture are highlighted to demonstrate how nuns and priests forced European teaching approaches onto children while forbidding Anishinaabe ones. This was to sever children's ties to their families, community, and cultural understanding. European teachings were used to shame children for speaking their language while instilling settler language and worldviews. Finally, specific relational moments through which nuns, priests, and other micro-level actors worked to remove Indigenous language are discussed. Inconsistencies in these attempts, as reported by the students and the different ways children negotiated relations with school staff, are considered. The article concludes that a relational perspective on genocide allows for a local understanding of FAIRS; when unpacked, the actions of FAIRS can be considered genocidal because they functioned to destroy communal relationality sustained through language. Also, the importance of highlighting Indigenous agency and resistance within the school is stressed.

Relational theory used in this article draws on Actor Network Theory - mainly a combination of Michel Callon¹¹ and Bruno Latour¹² - to stress the local-level agency of actors in the conflict. These prominent ANT theorists see society existing as ongoing processes of relationships.¹³ Identifying and analyzing networks of relations is useful for explaining social change, defining positions, and stabilizing actors, objects, and institutions in society so they can be explained.¹⁴ ANT offers a flexible, localized approach to understand group life. Data was collected through a critical narrative analysis and sociohistoric inquiry to address the central argument of this paper: to demonstrate through Sagkeeng First Nation narratives how the Fort Alexander Indian Residential School's removal of Anishinaabe language is an instance of genocide at the micro level. To this end, the focus here is on language as presented in Anishinaabe Survivors'¹⁵ narratives through testimonies made at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission public event in Sagkeeng First Nation, Manitoba, on October 2nd and 3rd, 2012. Fifteen testimonies were consulted and ten of these are cited here. The analysis also draws on four narratives published as interviews in Craig Charbonneau Fontaine's edited book *Speaking of Sagkeeng*,¹⁶ through stories offered in Craig Charbonneau Fontaine's book of his grandfather's stories, *Sagkeeng Legends Sagkeeng Aadizookaanag: John C. Courchene's Stories*,¹⁷ and through Theodore Fontaine's memoir *Broken Circle: The Dark Legacy of Indian Residential Schools*.¹⁸ In total, fifteen Anishinaabe narratives from Sagkeeng First Nation - twelve men and three women - are drawn upon. Narratives specifically addressing issues surrounding language were focused on in this article.

This project is warranted by the need for settler communities to relate to specific community experiences with colonialism. In order to understand if these relations are being disrupted in a way that could destroy the group through genocide, it is important to delve into the complex relational dynamics that reproduce and maintain a group.¹⁹ Once settlers understand something about a group's culturally-based relationality, we can discuss whether these relations are being threatened.

As I carried out my research, I remained reflexive about how colonial genocide can be studied by a settler colonial researcher working from within the academy. In particular, I considered Eurocentric assumptions within the Sociology and history of genocide, as well as my own European and colonial-based assumptions. My target audience is primarily the settler academic community. This discussion is important to have amongst both Indigenous and non-Indigenous

society to unsettle the founding white myth amongst settler communities of Canadian nation-building being a peaceful process.²⁰ This work can compel a shift in thinking within settlers about nation-building of Canada by drawing on Anishinaabe conversations about their experiences and highlighting where resilient practices were instrumental. This approach complicates some of earlier approaches to genocide that tend to overlook victim's agency in macro-level processes of colonialism.

Literature Review and Historical Context

Often, concepts of genocide are approached through a Eurocentric lens. Namely, drawing on the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1948, hereafter UNGC) to discuss colonial genocide in Canada.²¹ According to the UNGC, the only groups that can be targeted by genocide are "national, ethnical, racial or religious groups."²² This forces the complex dynamics of Indigenous group formation into European-derived "restrictive social categories."²³ These categories neglect of the unique positioning and experiences of Indigenous Peoples within settler colonialism. Rather than recognizing Indigenous groups as nations experiencing colonization, they are considered ethnic or racial groups suffering discrimination.²⁴ These groupings have parallel characteristics to Benedict Anderson's understanding of nations. They are Eurocentric imagined communities, existing to secure political and economic ends. People are defined by these categories and hold steadfast to their belonging, despite the "actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each [group]."²⁵ They are imagined, according to Benedict Anderson, because they believe in their belonging, often without meeting the majority of others belonging to that group.²⁶ The dimensions of Indigenous group boundary formation are fluid and complex, involving "a combination of self-definitions, externally imposed categories, historical precedent, and biological and cultural lines of descent."²⁷ Sidestepping these processes denies Indigenous communities their sovereignty to define their experiences with colonialism and genocide.²⁸ As well, it traps Indigenous Peoples in ongoing debates about identity politics; the struggle becomes less about decolonization and more about recognition amongst other racial minorities.²⁹

Authors drawing on the UNGC tend to categorize various destructive colonial policies and practices under each condition in Article II of the UNGC. This article defines genocide as:

[A]ny of the following acts committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial, or religious group, as such

- a) Killing members of that group;
- b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of that group;
- c) Deliberately inflicting on the group the conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group

This approach impedes understanding of Indigenous experiences because it glosses over unique local experiences and creates a tendency for only physical elements of genocide to be considered. The effects of land dispossession, spiritual subjugation, and cultural and linguistic assimilation on relational interactions within Indigenous group life are overlooked. This definition does not leave room for Indigenous groups to define themselves according to their own worldviews, undermining self-determination.³⁰ The current UNGC encourages a cut and paste approach of plugging examples of destructive colonial practices and policies into the categories of Article II.³¹ The logic is excessively selective and reductive.³² Indigenous methodologies and teachings involving ceremony and storytelling, which are central to moving forward Indigenous ways of knowing,³³ are difficult to fit into a reductive framework. The 1947 draft of the Convention might be more applicable to residential school experiences because it contains cultural and linguistic elements of genocide, however still does not leave room for Indigenous worldviews that consider group life to include non-human actors such as territory, environment including plants and

animals,³⁴ and spiritual practices. Customs and ceremonies are central for maintaining a cohesive and healthy community.³⁵

This cut and paste approach also overlooks the role residential schools played in broader colonial processes, eliminating "any sense of the historical trajectory of these developments, including their unintended consequences and elliptical dimensions."³⁶ It is important to recognize individual acts of genocide, such as the forcible transfer of children or causing deaths by disease and starvation. However, it is equally important to recognize how these acts fit into broader colonial processes of assimilation and destruction. Consideration of the obscured roles residential schools played in attempt to pacify communities to secure their land, resources, and labour for capitalist and colonial expansion is overlooked.³⁷ The obscure roles the schools played in pacifying a population in order to access their land and resources are overlooked using this model. Totalizing categorization leads to an over-generalization of specific group experiences and denies local groups their right to self-determination.

This paper utilizes a relational approach to genocide. Recent sociological and historical approaches to genocide define it as the violent interruption or destruction of the relations that create and sustain a group; that is, the relations that allow the group to maintain a collective identity.³⁸ Groups exist as ongoing culturally-specific processes of relations fundamental to building and preserving group life. These processes require protecting³⁹ – an ongoing need since, as Woolford points out, "Group life is not simply about the lives of the group members. Group life is about the continuous creation of groups."⁴⁰ Group relations braid together macro-, meso-, and micro-levels of the social world, and cannot be understood as separate from broader historical processes that span across space and time. Societies exist as "tangled network[s] of relationships," which includes processes of "interactions, interdependencies, balances of power, all in a constant state of flux."⁴¹ These are essential for sustaining group life; the destruction of such processes can be detrimental to the collective's continued existence.⁴²

A relational approach's flexibility allows the inclusion of local Anishinaabe knowledges based on their unique experiences with group destruction through the residential school system. The relations can be followed as they are described in the narratives of community members. As a result, generalizations made about Indigenous People's experiences with colonialism - a colonial practice which homogenizes diverse groups and cultures into one that is more easily controlled and dominated - can be challenged. This theory can be used to highlight both human and non-human actors, as identified in Anishinaabe narratives. This approach also recognizes that residential schools are instances of genocide amongst a broader colonial network that spans time and space, and links individuals, institutions and social structures. Unpacking the various ways that a residential school destroyed a particular group acknowledges that group's unique suffering.

Language carries unique culture and tradition; removing it undermines a group's ability to articulate and pass on culturally-specific worldviews and ways of life.⁴³ Raphael Lemkin, who coined the term genocide, argued genocide is "a coordinated plan of different actions aiming at the destruction of essential foundations of the life of national groups," including language.⁴⁴ Removing language was a genocidal practice meant to disrupt the relational processes that create and maintain communities. Language is also targeted by colonizers in residential schools to prevent cohesion and resistance to colonial encroachment.⁴⁵

Genocide is the second leading factor in language removal in Canada, according to the *Cambridge Handbook of Endangered Languages*.⁴⁶ *Many Indigenous cultures, languages, and peoples in Canada have been victimized by genocide by the suppression of language through the residential school system. In fact, according to UNESCO, Cree, Inuktitut, and Ojibway are the last lived languages, meaning they are passed on intergenerationally through the home.*⁴⁷ However, they are not far from becoming learned languages, which are no longer spoken at home, and have to be sought out and learned from classes or school.

Mi'kmaq, an Indigenous language spoken on the East Coast of Canada, is considered vulnerable- a legacy of residential schools.⁴⁸ The language is primarily learned, no longer passed along in the home. Georgina Doucette of Eskasoni, a Mi'kmaq residential school survivor, explained how language removal alienated her from her family:

Coming back into my community ... I felt as if I didn't belong. Even my grandmother said of my brother and I when we went to stay with her, she told her friends, you know these children who come out of that school, they're not right in the head. Those were words from my own grandmother. We no longer spoke the language, we no longer had that connection with family because we separated for so long. We didn't belong in the White world, and we didn't belong in our community.⁴⁹

In Quebec's Mohawk communities, the language is also disappearing as a result of residential schools and colonialism.⁵⁰ Parents can send their kids to Mohawk immersion schools; however, they usually chose to have their children educated in French or English.⁵¹ Mohawk is considered Definitely Endangered, according to UNESCO.⁵² The school denied children of learning Anishinaabe knowledge, beliefs, and teachings through oral history and story-telling.

Residential School History in Canada: A Brief Historical Background

Indigenous and non-Indigenous contact began in what is now known as Canada with missionaries in the eleventh century. The fur trade began informally in the sixteenth century.⁵³ After the seventeenth century, Europeans began developing military partnerships.⁵⁴ The Royal Proclamation, implemented in 1763 by the British Crown, regulated settlement so land would remain undisturbed for hunting space.⁵⁵ Shifting to agricultural and resource development throughout the nineteenth century increased Canadian settlers' dependence on natural resources for economic prosperity.⁵⁶

One solution to securing land was land surrender treaties, implemented in several parts of Canada by 1870. The Government initially tried to buy land in exchange for one-time cash payments, but as settlement grew, this became too costly.⁵⁷ Instead, smaller payments were made in perpetuity. Governments "favour[ed] narrow, literal interpretations of the obligations outlined in the treaties."⁵⁸ First Nations communities described them as living documents,⁵⁹ meant to secure First Nations' traditional territories, self-government, and self-determination,⁶⁰ rather than simply being a land purchase.

The reserve system, introduced in the late-nineteenth century, parcelled Indigenous communities onto small pockets of land, giving Indian Agents control over First Nations Peoples' land and mobility.⁶¹ Much of the remaining land was expropriated by capitalist and industrial expansion and settlement.⁶² Now, the Federal Government, along with churches and corporations, needed to address the issue of First Nation Peoples' lifestyles; traditional skills were useful within the fur trade, but not in capitalist industries and agriculture.

Mission schools were introduced in Eastern Canada in the 1840's, as an "age-specific resocialization [strategy]."⁶³ Industrial schools and the residential school system were implemented in 1879, following Nicholas Flood Davin's investigation of mission schools in the United States.⁶⁴ Initially, communities, as part of the treaties, requested having schools built on their reserves to give their children European education and, presumably, European success.⁶⁵ Instead, they became a gross violation of treaty agreements.⁶⁶ As Judy da Silva explains, within these schools...

... people did not receive the values of the Anishinaabek. Instead, they inherited the feeling of loss and doom carried by our parents and grandparents due to the genocidal tactics they have had to live through. The genocidal tactics I mean are the direct attack on the strength of the Anishinaabek: our children. The major weapon the government used was the residential school system.⁶⁷

The government, along with Christian missionaries, used the schools to push capitalist ideals of productivity and consumerism, and religious conversion through education.⁶⁸ Recruitment was low in the 1880's and 1890's, causing the government and churches to encourage enrolment through coercive practices and policies.⁶⁹

The *Indian Act* (1876)—a devastating piece of Federal colonial legislation—defined and categorized who was and was not an Indian,⁷⁰ and granted or denied rights.⁷¹ In the 1920's and 1930's, the *Indian Act* was amended, making it mandatory for all First Nations Children between ages of seven to sixteen to attend residential schools.⁷² In the 1930's, almost 75 percent of Indigenous

Children in Canada between the ages of seven and fifteen attended, including First Nations, Metis, and Inuit.⁷³

The government systematically removed First Nations children from their communities and placed them almost year-round in a setting allowing minimal to no contact with their previous lifestyles and families.⁷⁴ Destruction happened on many levels – cultural, physical, emotional, and sexual. The degrees of abuse and application of assimilative policy varied between schools and communities,⁷⁵ as did the number of children attending them.⁷⁶ Communities report varying degrees of language and cultural removal. Some remember positive aspects of the schools, although almost everyone experienced an attack on their traditional identities through attempted assimilation.

Colonial History and the Residential School System: Sagkeeng First Nation

This article focuses on the Fort Alexander Indian Residential School in Sagkeeng First Nation, populated by an Anishinaabe community. Sagkeeng First Nation reserve was created in 1876.⁷⁷ The territory lies 90 miles northeast of Winnipeg, Manitoba, on Treaty 1 territory. This Treaty was signed in 1871, at Fort Garry, by Chief KaKaKepehnaise or William Mann I—the first Chief of the Fort Alexander Band.⁷⁸ The treaty agreement was made “with crooks ... [whereby land was] stolen, resources taken, environment destroyed, [without any] compensation.”⁷⁹ Anishinaabe ancestors believed they were securing land for future generations.⁸⁰ Instead, the government assumed a Eurocentric, static perspective on the Treaty, using it as means to secure Indigenous land. For example, Treaty 1 promised 160 acres to each family in Sagkeeng, which was never provided.⁸¹

FAIRS was established as a part of the Treaty 1 Agreement. The school opened in 1905 and was run by the Oblates of Mary Immaculate and the Roman Catholic Church.⁸² The first Catholic Church opened in 1880. Theodore Fontaine, FAIRS Survivor and former Chief of Sagkeeng, says the Church did not have control over the community right away; families still raised and provided for their children.⁸³ The church’s control tightened drastically over the next twenty years.⁸⁴ Some Survivors recall their parents wanting an education for them, which was their reason for sending their children to school.⁸⁵ This was also the reason for signing the Treaty and wanting a school implemented in the first place.⁸⁶ The agreement was signed, giving the state control over the education of Indigenous Peoples upon Treaty 1 territory.

Students did not receive a useful European, capitalist-based education, or the opportunity to flourish with their land-based ways of life. Instead, children experienced an assault on their culture and community life through violent processes of assimilation.⁸⁷ They were denied the right to speak their own language and confined inside the school and away from their families.⁸⁸ Students were abused for demonstrating any connection to their Anishinaabe ways of knowing.⁸⁹ Unlike some of the larger industrial residential schools located far away, FAIRS was located directly on the reserve. This made the school’s task of alienating children from their community more challenging. To sever communal ties, FAIRS had to operate on emotional, symbolic, and cultural levels, since the school did not have the benefit of physical distance for interrupting relationships for those whose families lived in Sagkeeng.

Parents could not have foreseen the residential school system would be the outcome of the Treaty 1 agreement.⁹⁰ As in most other schools, Sagkeeng children experienced an assault on their culture and community life through violent processes of assimilation.

Theory and Methodology

Relational Theory and Actor Network Theory

This project utilizes Relational Theory and Actor Network Theory (ANT) to carry out a narrative analysis and sociohistoric inquiry to map out networks of relations within FAIRS. Recent sociological approaches to genocide adopt a relational approach, defining it as the violent interruption or destruction of the relations that create and sustain a group; that is, the relations allowing the group to maintain a collective identity.⁹¹ Societies exist as “tangled network[s] of relationships,” which includes processes of “interactions, interdependencies, balances of power, all in a constant state of flux.”⁹² These are essential for sustaining group life, and the destruction of such processes can be detrimental to the collective’s continued existence.⁹³

Survivors speak to the importance of language in creating and sustaining culture and group

life. A FAIRS Survivor and Elder describes language as being the greatest connection to her culture she ever lost.⁹⁴ She explains with “knowledge comes with language... Knowledge of culture and stories... pass[es] along knowledge of past generations and ‘reconcile with the next generation’.”⁹⁵ Chris, another Survivor, explains that, in the face of losing many cultural ties, preserving his language was the only way he could conceive of staying connected with his history: “I didn’t want to forget my language. Through all of that, through all those hardships, I never wanted to forget my language. At least I could start somewhere if I had to start over. I always said to myself, I’ve got to start somewhere. I don’t know where, I don’t know how.”⁹⁶ Theodore Fontaine also speaks to the importance of language, stating Anishinaabe languages unique to Canada “are the main means by which culture, identity and spirituality are articulated, shared and passed on to successive generations.”⁹⁷ Language, and the meanings it carries, is a source of strength and connectedness for cultural groups.

Drawing upon Actor-Network theory, a partial mapping of the network of relations within FAIRS is offered. ANT uses a networked approach to understand societies as ongoing processes of relationships.⁹⁸ Identifying and analyzing networks of relations is useful for explaining social change, defining positions, and stabilizing actors, objects, and institutions in society so they can be explained.⁹⁹ ANT stresses individual agency as the main factor for understanding social change. According to Buzelin, “... the motto is follow the actors—which means observe the network as it builds, consolidates and transforms itself through the production process.”¹⁰⁰

ANT’s focus on the local is useful for avoiding essentialist ideas about who people are or the idea that any one person or group is at all times oppressive or oppressed. Instead, the emphasis is on how individuals are situated within shifting positions of power and privilege depending on time and context.¹⁰¹ Agency and resistance are important points of focus in decolonizing research. Presenting Indigenous groups as passive victims is a subjugating process that subdues rather than empowers. ANT can be inclusive of local Indigenous knowledges regarding unique experiences with group destruction. This article concentrates on micro-interactions, grounding the research in local narratives, and then tracing networked relations outwards to also recognize the structural aspects of colonial practices within the school.

This article unpacks relations between micro-level actors, mediated by teachings, to demonstrate the ways that school authorities attempted to assimilate Anishinaabe children, and the children’s responses to these attempts, through language. The links between teachings, language, and culture are discussed to demonstrate how nuns and priests forced European teaching approaches onto children while forbidding Anishinaabe ones. This was to sever children’s ties to their families, community, and cultural understanding. Specific relational moments through which nuns, priests, and other micro-level actants worked to remove Indigenous language are highlighted. Also, inconsistencies in these attempts are highlighted, as reported by the students, focusing on different ways children responded to the school staff. Not all Survivors lost their language, but many did.¹⁰² Several people identify language loss as the greatest source of disconnection to their culture. And those who did not lose their language speak to how lucky they feel they are.¹⁰³

Critical Narrative Analysis and Sociohistoric Inquiry

A combination of critical narrative analysis and sociohistorical inquiry is used to identify micro-level actors and the semiotic influences that mediate their interactions. Semiotic influences are concepts that mediate and influence actors.¹⁰⁴ Teaching and learning from narratives stems from Anishinaabe practices of storytelling and oral history. Data is collected from various resources containing first-hand accounts from Anishinaabe Survivors of FAIRS. These include the Truth and Reconciliation Commission event in Sagkeeng, interviews with Anishinaabe Survivors from Sagkeeng compiled by Craig Charbonneau Fontaine in the book *Speaking of Sagkeeng*, John C. Courchene’s stories published by Craig Charbonneau Fontaine in *Sagkeeng Legends*, Theodore Fontaine’s memoir *Broken Circle: The Dark Legacy of the Indian Residential School System*, and public statements made by Phil Fontaine about his experiences at the FAIRS.

Critical narrative analysis is used to identify and organize themes, patterns, inconsistencies, and contradictions in the testimony and literature. Critical personal narratives “disrupt and disturb discourse by exposing complexities and contradictions that exist under official history.”¹⁰⁵ Narrative

analysis is organized into the theme of language. Following, actors that interacted through FAIRS within the context of language are pinpointed, as well as the semiotic mediators that influenced their relations. The different ways children and other community actors questioned, negotiated, undermined, and resisted FAIRS are discussed.

Next, a shift towards a broader focus involves a sociohistoric inquiry into meso- and macro-structures. Sociohistorical data collection focuses on information directly linked to local group destruction expressed in Sagkeeng narratives. Historical documents, including the Davin report,¹⁰⁶ Treaty 1, and secondary sources on residential schools are consulted. The sociohistoric data is used to connect social structures to the behaviour of actors in FAIRS to consider how national goals of settlement, governance, and nation-building influenced interpersonal relations within the school.

Power, Privilege, and Sociologists: Translation and Reflexivity

Michel Callon raises issues surrounding sociologists' power and privilege when they conduct research. He uses the concept of translation to discuss how sociologists create information about a group toward which they are outsiders, defining it as "researchers [imposing] themselves and their definition of the situation on others."¹⁰⁷ This concept means translating understanding of a phenomenon into one's own worldview. This process is especially problematic in situations where the researcher's social position historically has power over the group being studied. Translating experiences into the researcher's worldview is a form of controlling others because of the hegemony academics traditionally have over knowledge. Historically in Canada, academia was predominantly only accessible and relevant to European settler citizens.¹⁰⁸ Formal Western research has been a colonial process. Linda Tuhiwai Smith explains Western researchers and intellectuals, as they settled and named territories, presumed "to know all that is possible to know" of Indigenous groups from brief encounters.¹⁰⁹ Europeans created a system of knowledge which defined Indigenous peoples as an inferior race to justify the theft and exploitation of Indigenous peoples and their land.¹¹⁰ Canadian history has been written as fact by European settlers, giving authority to the perspective of the occupiers over the occupied.¹¹¹

Remaining reflexive of this can help begin to critically think about translation and how power imbalances can be acknowledged and addressed. Reflexivity can be seen as awareness of one's standpoint in society and how it shapes the way they perceive social phenomenon. Being reflexive considers different worldviews to try to understand the position of others in society and how their position might make them view the same social phenomenon differently.

By identifying this work as a translation of the experiences within FAIRS, the presumption to speak for or represent Indigenous communities is avoided. From the author's worldview, the experiences of colonizers and Sagkeeng community members within FAIRS were translated to be defined within the context of the sociology of genocide. This article is not a static definition or explanation of group phenomena. Translation is an ongoing process because groups exist through ongoing processes of negotiations. Reading and translating Anishinaabe narratives into academic writing is not a practice existing in a bubble, but rather within the colonial reality we live in. Issues of power and privilege come into play and need to be addressed throughout the research process. By remaining reflexive throughout the research process, acknowledging the practice of translation in this research, and utilizing particular theoretical and methodological frameworks, this research attempts to align with decolonizing epistemologies.

Analyzing the Removal of Anishinaabe Language in FAIRS

Understanding the Interconnectedness of Language and Culture

Removing language destroys an important bond with one's culture. It makes it difficult to continue to relate to one's community in culturally-specific ways and prevents people from understanding their universe through culturally-specific linguistic tools. Mary Lou Fox, an Ojibway Elder, explains: "The centre of our being is within the element of language, and it's the dimension in which our existence is most fully accomplished."¹¹² Language as the way people understand the world and themselves in culturally-specific ways.¹¹³ Using the colonizer's language immediately acknowledges the present reality of colonial dominance.¹¹⁴ Speaking one's Indigenous language exercises power through articulation of an Indigenous present. Culture and language are inextricably linked,¹¹⁵ one

cannot exist without the other and the destruction of one leads to the destruction of the other.¹¹⁶ By teaching in English and prohibiting Anishinaabe language, colonizers within FAIRS denied children access to their culture.

Leanne Simpson, a storyteller and activist of Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg ancestry, discusses Indigenous languages, saying they “carry rich meanings, theory and philosophies within their structures.”¹¹⁷ She describes how Indigenous languages “house... teachings and bring the practice of those teachings to life... The process of speaking Nishnaabemowin, then, inherently communicates certain values and philosophies that are important to Nishnaabeg being.”¹¹⁸ Storytelling is an empowering teaching method; removing it from the children’s lives also removes their ties to their families and history. Maria Campbell¹¹⁹ talks about growing up with lots of stories. She remembers, “Some were nonsensical, others were riddles. There are *ahtyokaywina*, the sacred stories, and others that were *tahp acimowina*, the family histories.”¹²⁰ Priscilla Settee adds that, “In Indigenous communities, women are the first educators of children, and they maintain this influential role throughout the child’s life. Women believe education should reflect the needs of community, preserving culture and helping young people adapt to the challenges in their lives.”¹²¹ In Anishinaabe communities, oral teachings in Anishinaabe language are traditional forms of education that reproduce culturally-based knowledge and worldviews.

Understanding where one fits into the world is empowering; the residential school attempted to break down this empowerment. Vicki Wilson¹²² teaches her children about traditional ways of life to empower them. She says, “You have to make children proud of who they are. They do [traditional ceremonies and dances] now so they’re proud of themselves, so it doesn’t hurt them when somebody calls them names and stuff.”¹²³ Simpson also explains you need language to pray, demonstrating all cultural practices tied together by language – spirituality, teachings, theory, philosophy, history, and cultural meaning.¹²⁴ Taking that connection away isolates the individual, fractures the group’s cohesiveness, and destroys many cultural ties linked together through language.

Micro-Level Relations Surrounding Language within FAIRS

Language is an important field of contested power between Anishinaabe Peoples and colonizers, which manifested within FAIRS. Language loss is one of the greatest threats in terms of connection to culture and history. More broadly, the language Anishinaabe people speak in Canada is influenced by law, economy, religion, politics, racism, white supremacy, and Eurocentric ideologies. Within the residential schools, at the macro-level, curricula, assimilative techniques, Christianity, and the Eurocentric ideologies influenced the school staff who forced Anishinaabe Children to speak English or French. At the micro-level, struggles over language occurred between individuals within the school.

Considering European and Anishinaabe Teachings

There is no strict binary between Anishinaabe and settler teachings, although there are disparities between the two. Intergenerational experiences with residential school blurred perspectives, often creating a hybridity of worldviews. For instance, by the 1940’s, some families in Sagkeeng spoke English and incorporated European ways of life into their own, such as seeking employment at the local paper mill.¹²⁵ Some Survivors say their parents believed British education was the only way to be successful in their colonial reality.¹²⁶ Many felt, in order to survive, language, livelihoods, and lifestyles had to adapt. Some parents protected their children from abuse by not letting them speak their own language. Priests had a strong community presence in Sagkeeng, instilling Catholic guilt to compel European lifestyles in Anishinaabe homes.¹²⁷

Some historical Western ways of knowing and teaching within FAIRS clashed with Anishinaabe ones. Within this school, English language was used to instill Catholic morality and Eurocentric ideals. English teachings in the school were inconsistent with how many Anishinaabe children understood the world. White education was not very relevant for Anishinaabe Peoples; students in the school were still forced to participate in it.¹²⁸ When Indigenous education began in Canada, the government and church officials’ mission was to educate the young to live in the so-called civilized world.¹²⁹ Survivors speak to how confusing and inappropriate English teachings were.

Fontaine explains his "education in English was long and tedious" because it did not resonate with his worldviews.¹³⁰

Teaching styles vary based on cultural values, history, experiences, and understandings. Within FAIRS, the English language did not contain the same cultural relational understandings and values Anishinaabemowin does. For example, many European scientific traditions value universal truths, whereas "Indigenous epistemologies are narratively anchored in natural communities ... characterised by complex kinship systems of relationships among people, animals, the earth, the cosmos, etc. from which knowing originates."¹³¹ In many Indigenous communities, oral teachings are the traditional way to pass knowledge between generations. Children are taught culturally—specific morals and values through stories. Jo-Ann Archibald¹³² points out "the word 'teachings' is commonly used among Indigenous Peoples to describe Indigenous knowledge that is passed on through oral tradition."¹³³ She defines teachings as "the cultural values, beliefs, lessons and understandings that are passed from generation to generation."¹³⁴ Marcel Courchene from the Sagkeeng community says residential school teaching methods were inconsistent with Anishinaabe teachings. He explains teachings in the residential school were very direct and directive; the teachers would tell you what you needed to know rather than allowing you to figure it out for yourself. Oral teachings are, in contrast, indirect and often occur through storytelling.¹³⁵ He explains the value he received from the latter:

Some stories they would mix it up so you would come out with the answer—you. They don't tell you, it's in there, it's in the story. That's how they taught you things. You had to figure them out, like life. You had to figure out every step. What step you were going to make. That's what they did but that's gone.¹³⁶

The direct style of Western teachings did not provide such critical thinking skills.

Indigenous teachings of non-industrialized Indigenous groups often contain a holistic worldview,¹³⁷ whereas European teachings often express a worldview that is more rigid, binary,¹³⁸ and bounded.¹³⁹ Within FAIRS, harsh Catholic and Eurocentric lessons were instilled. Survivors spoke of communal values of holism,¹⁴⁰ peace, harmony, respect, and sharing.¹⁴¹ Anishinaabe Elders teach "respect for others, respect for self, respect for our mother, the earth" as central to Anishinaabe belief systems.¹⁴² These values were not encouraged by the staff in FAIRS.

English teachings within the school tended to promote individualism, exclusion, rigidity,¹⁴³ competitiveness, "self-reliance and industry,"¹⁴⁴ as well as "neatness, industry, thrift, and self-maintenance."¹⁴⁵ These characteristics "[undermine] what is at the heart of the concept of *wakohtowin*, the betterment of all our relations."¹⁴⁶ These teachings undermine notions of cohesiveness and instead value an individualistic and parcelled view of humans and society. The school instilled "a deep sense of ... one's unworthiness, causing hate, despair, skepticism and cynicism."¹⁴⁷ Fontaine explains the individualism and competitiveness of the Western teachings he received in the school taught students to be "deceitful and untrusting," as well as imposed loneliness and sadness upon the children.¹⁴⁸ Oral storytelling, on the other hand, strengthens intergenerational communal bonds and cultural values of sharing. Cheryl, a Survivor Elder, implores, "[Children] have to learn by the stories. The Elders have to speak to the young people in Ojibwa so they will learn how to speak their language."¹⁴⁹

Specific Moments and Encounters through which Destructive Colonizing Relations were Acted Out through Language

Tracing relational encounters mediated by teachings within the school shows how the colonial actors worked to sever ties between children, their families, and their community. Relations between micro-level actors, mediated by teachings, are unpacked to demonstrate the ways that school authorities attempted to assimilate Anishinaabe children, and the children's responses to these attempts, through language. The actors considered in this chapter include children, their families, peers, nuns, priests, and children's names. Other technologies such as the school's registration form, application form, and ledger also forced children and their families to relate to each other and school officials in English, but are not discussed in this article.

The colonial staff (mainly nuns and priests) imposed the English language on Anishinaabe children via shaming and abuse, preventing them from speaking their own language. Children responded in various ways. Some found the teachings meaningless to them and their worldviews, while others describe feeling shame and fear about speaking Anishinaabe. Some children communicated to their friends and siblings in secret and maintained their language within their own minds. The following sections discuss the role of nuns and priests in language removal and the effects this had on relations between children, their families, their community, their friends and family members who also attended the school, and concluding with a look at the significance of FAIRS removing children's Anishinaabe names and replacing them with English ones.

The Nuns' and Priests' Roles in Removing Anishinaabe Language from Sagkeeng Children

Nuns and priests interacted with the children on a daily basis within FAIRS. When children entered the schools, they often only spoke Anishinaabe. Nuns were at the forefront of forcing them to speak English. Cheryl remembers wanting to speak her own language but "was told to speak English."¹⁵⁰ Nuns abused children physically, by such methods as whipping with a strap, and emotionally, through public shaming and humiliation, conditioning them to be too afraid to speak their own language. Theodore Fontaine once accidentally spoke Ojibway and was locked in a dark closet under the stairs. This traumatic experience prevented him from sleeping without a light for years. Shirley also recalls being abused for speaking her language and how deeply it affected her: "But being hit for your language is a big thing, because that's who you are. That's part of you".¹⁵¹ Nuns washed children's mouths with soap (as noted by Brian¹⁵²), strapped them, hit them with rulers,¹⁵³ locked children in closets and removed the light bulbs,¹⁵⁴ made them write lines, and instigated hostility between children by showing favouritism to those who tattled on their peers for speaking Anishinaabe.¹⁵⁵ These teaching tactics prevented children from speaking Anishinaabe.

There were some nuns who the children did not consider to be wicked;¹⁵⁶ some tried to be supportive towards the children. Fontaine remembers receiving praise from a nun for a note he wrote to his mother in a Mother's Day card. He described this as a "rare moment of praise" he still remembers today.¹⁵⁷ Also, Fontaine remembers being comforted by a nun on his first night in the dormitory.¹⁵⁸ But, Fontaine reminds his reader that not all nuns were "kind and loving."¹⁵⁹ Tina also notes there was a mix of personality types: "I remember those nuns, there was some kind ones and then there was some mean ones."¹⁶⁰ Even the kind nuns, however, insisted on teachings and speaking in English.

Priests administered violent teachings as well. Students were sent to the principal's office – normally a priest – when the nuns felt they had especially misbehaved. Some Survivors recall a certain priest who actually spoke Anishinaabe and became a friend to some of the students. Edward Charles Bruyere remembers the priest speaking Anishinaabe "really helped [them] out" and the students were "really amazed at him because he was able to speak [their] language."¹⁶¹ Charles Courchene remembers when this particular priest started working there, "things began to change, we used to go out more. He used to take us out to other places, St. Boniface, to play hockey. He also used to take us to small towns down south.... That was a big thing for us."¹⁶² But, Courchene notes, while the priest did not abuse the children himself, he still knew about the abuse by other priests and did nothing to stop them.¹⁶³ This priest was an exception and Theodore Fontaine recalls most priests scaring children, which had negative long-lasting results.

Teaching through fear did not make the children into students who respected priests, nuns, the Catholic religion, and European cultures. Theodore Fontaine remembers a priest strapping him and making him write lines while students waited, missed playtime, and almost missed dinner: "The incident didn't teach me respect, but it did make me angry at and distrustful of the priest."¹⁶⁴ The priests' intimidating tactics caused children to feel shame about their Anishinaabe language into adulthood as a result.¹⁶⁵

The Effects of Removing Language on the Relations between Sagkeeng children and their Families

Language is an important part of family cohesiveness. Parents and grandparents taught children about their family, history, and culture through their language. These relations bonded families together. Kevin describes:

I was born March 12, 1945, in Pine Falls and I grew [sic] across the river – across the river from the residential school and from 1 to 6 years of my life is very important to me because this is a time when my grandparents were alive, my mum and dad were together, and I grew up in an environment where we spoke the language Anishinaabe-mowin.¹⁶⁶

Dan, an intergenerational Survivor, speaks to his mother's memory of having a strong community and language before residential school: "She remembers growing up, before being taken to residential school, how strong the community was together. She told me how everybody had a role. And that the language was strong, the love in the community and amongst the people was strong."¹⁶⁷ Theodore Fontaine only spoke Anishinaabe at home when he was a young boy.¹⁶⁸ Chief Albert Fontaine remembers community bonding activities, such as Treaty Days, where merchants came to trade with the community and everyone would camp in tents for a few days. These days involved celebration and dance, and importantly, opportunities for children to learn communal morals and values from the Elders. Chief Albert Fontaine explains:

There, the elders would speak to and instruct the young people. They used to tell you what's right and what's wrong. They used to try, direct and influence you on how you should live... not to hurt or harm each other, to treat your fellow humans. That is how they used to preach while the treaty days were in progress... some times for a whole week (Fontaine 2006: 31).¹⁶⁹

Theodore Fontaine also remembers Treaty Days and the important knowledge he gained from the stories told:

Usually older folks—grandparents, mothers, fathers, friends and other relatives—sat outside the tents, smoking, drinking tea and visiting. Many times they'd call for us young ones to come and sit with them beside the fire, and they'd tell us family stories about ghosts, devils and such mischief-makers in the Ojibway culture as Weendigo and Weeskayjak.... We'd listen enraptured and awestruck as the elders imparted their wisdom.¹⁷⁰

Stories like this are an important way to pass along culturally-specific values and beliefs.

While some Survivors remember the bonding experience of speaking Anishinaabe at home, others have less fond memories of life before residential school. As a result of intergenerational effects of the residential school, not everyone experienced a harmonious home-life filled with traditional teachings. Many parents had lost their language as a result of the residential school and were disconnected from their teachings and history. They were raised within an abusive environment that taught them their language and ways of life were worthless at best and evil at worst. Parents would pass this way of thinking to their children. John recalls his childhood: "Why is that? Why do we have to go through that [abuse at school and home]? Is it because of our skin colour? Of our language? When we talk about love, my mom and dad didn't show me love cause my mom was raised by the nuns and my dad was raised by United Church minister."¹⁷¹ The intergenerational effects of language removal through the school was devastating on many families.

The Effects of Language Removal and Preventing Communication on the Relations between Students within the Residential School

Students tried to communicate with each other within the school. Being caught speaking their language often meant getting strapped. To maintain ties with their siblings and friends within the school, students would sneak looks and waves at each other, often not daring to speak.¹⁷² Boys and girls were kept separated and shamed when caught communicating with each other. Grant, a Survivor, testified in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission:

Being one of the youngest and smallest of the boys, we were seated near the entrance. In the centre of the cafeteria, our backs to the youngest girls, sometimes we would get a strap if we boys were caught talking to the girls behind us. And I got my share of straps right in front of all to see.¹⁷³

Edward Charles Buyere also recalls:

Nuns would strap children for talking to their siblings. If a boy was caught talking to his sister, the nun would make him go into the girl's playroom or sleep in the girl's dorm room. Made him wear a dress. 'that's how much you want to be with the girls' they said. It wasn't that at all, all I wanted to do was talk to my sisters and see how they were doing and getting along, I used to tell them that I was getting hit and I didn't know what for.¹⁷⁴

Bullying was meant to shame children for wanting to communicate with a sibling.

Despite the efforts of the nuns, students still stole looks and glances between each other, found hiding spots to meet, catch up, gossip, and maintain connections with each other. Students found ways to resist the school's attempts to sever ties between the children, finding "hiding places where food could be stored, conversations could go unheard, plans could be made, love could blossom, or tears be shed."¹⁷⁵ When visiting Sagkeeng today, it is clear students found ways to maintain their language despite the priests' and nuns' efforts to eradicate it. The Anishinaabe language and cultural is strong amongst numerous Survivors of FAIRS.¹⁷⁶

The Disruption of Familial Ties through the Replacement of Anishinaabe Names with English Ones
Anishinaabe names were an important connection between children to their families. After a child is born, one of the most important ceremonies that take place is the naming ceremony. Elders give children their spirit names, which are "considered both sacred and significant."¹⁷⁷ Some names carry spiritual power "transmitted through dreams or visions."¹⁷⁸ According to the Ojibway in Berens River, naming a baby is crucial for "ensuring him or her a lifetime of health, wellness, success, and longevity."¹⁷⁹ Nehiyawak (Cree) also believe spirit names are a form of protection for the child. If children grew ill, some groups would ask Elders to give the child a second name for more protection. The residential school removed the protective quality of children's names by replacing them with European ones. This also severed the bond created between namers and namees (Elders and infants).

Children's Anishinaabe names were replaced with European English ones upon entering the school, as a way to remove their identities.¹⁸⁰ In some cases, children never received their Anishinaabe name before entering the school because their families lost the practice through FAIRS intervention in previous generations. Kevin remembers being baptised upon entering the school: "[I] was baptised and given a Christian name. I was 40 years old when I came to my traditional name—how I identify myself."¹⁸¹ Anishinaabe names were also an important tie to land and their removal disrupted their understanding of their place in their community. Chief Lawrence Morrisseau explains how:

All Indian people had their Indian name and all were related to some kind of animal... or something like that where the land that they came out of. I could never understand that because this is the reason we got taken into residential school and we were not allowed to learn about Indian culture and it was taken away from us... see. That doesn't coincide with the Christian religion.

Kevin recalls the day they finally received their traditional name and how useful this was in connecting with their spirituality and healing from residential school:

When I started into the traditional thing I got my name and was told, 'Come spring, go out to an open field, take your tobacco, when the Thunderbeings come.' Because I was called Rain Thunderbird... This was a realization for me that I was now praying for the first time in my life. I understood what prayer was. It was not a recital, it came from the heart and this would aid me in my journey.¹⁸²

Several Survivors reported leaving the school very disconnected from each other and isolated from the world. Sam reflects on a conversation he had with several other Survivors, many years after leaving the school:

We all asked ourselves one question: Who are we? What are we? When we came out of the residential school we were all quiet. We were all probably thinking. At the end we all agreed that we all came out of there as a mechanical robot. A mechanical robot ... Something is missing ... The emotions, the feelings. And those were all things that was taken from us, from me, and from the ones I am talking about. What is love? We all have to relearn.¹⁸³

Brian discusses relearning his culture while in Stony Mountain Correctional Facility:

My Anishinaabe name is ... Sun and Bear from a Distance. My clan name is ... The Thunderbird. I got that name when I was working in Stony Mountain. A very special dear friend ... invited me to his place so I could get my colours and my Indian name. An Elder from down south gave me that name – the Thunderbird Clan.¹⁸⁴

Replacing Anishinaabe names with English ones was a devastating practice meant to erase children's cultural ties.

Conclusion

The residential school broke down a child's connection to his or her culture by removing their ability to communicate with their families and community. Nuns and priests used fear and shame to prevent children from speaking their language. Many aspects of Eurocentric education, namely using English language and direct teachings styles clashed with the oral story-telling approaches. Replacing Anishinaabe names with English ones was also used to remove children's identity. Despite these efforts, children found ways to communicate to each other, maintain their language, and sustain relationships throughout and beyond their school experience. Language embodies a group's worldviews. Language enables a group to define themselves from their own ways of knowing – a great source of power through self-determination. Removing language from Anishinaabe Children was meant to make them submissive. Language was a means of "spiritual subjugation"¹⁸⁵—an important factor in alienating the child from the family.

From this project, the ways FAIRS worked to disrupt communal ties in Sagkeeng has been explored. One of the most devastating practices was forcibly removing the Anishinaabe language from children. Language connects individuals to their history and worldviews. Taking Anishinaabe language away isolated children and, throughout generations, fractured families. The school imposed English-language teachings while simultaneously removing Anishinaabe ones. The school denied children the opportunity to learn Anishinaabe knowledge, beliefs, and teachings through oral history and story-telling. Yet children still found ways to communicate and connect. Anishinaabe language survived through the moments children seized to sneak conversations with their relatives and friends. Language was also preserved in the minds of Survivors who found solace by reverting to memories of their home life.

To root my analysis in voices of Sagkeeng community members, the focus was at the micro level. ANT's focus on the local is useful for avoiding essentialist ideas about "who people are" or the idea that any one person or group is at all times oppressive or oppressed. Instead, the emphasis is on how individuals are situated within shifting positions of power and privilege depending on time and context.¹⁸⁶ Agency and resistance are important points of focus. As Leanne Simpson points out:

To me, this colonial shame felt like not only a tremendous burden to carry, but also felt displaced. We are not shameful people. We have done nothing wrong. I began to realize that shame can only take hold when we are disconnected from the stories of resistance within our own families and communities. I placed that shame as an insidious and infectious part of the cognitive imperialism that was aimed at convincing us that we were a weak and defeated people, and that there was no point in resisting or resurging.¹⁸⁷

Leanne Simpson demonstrates the importance of always talking about resistance when discussing colonialism. Presenting Indigenous groups as passive victims is a subjugating process that subdues rather than empowers.

The actions of the residential school could be considered genocidal because they functioned to destroy communal relationality sustained through language. Reading Sagkeeng narratives from a relational genocide framework demonstrated how FAIRS disrupted the culturally-based relational ties within Sagkeeng First Nation in ways that were meant to undermine the groups' ability to maintain and reproduce itself in Anishinaabe-relevant ways. The school violently interrupted children's links to their community by removing their language and severing relationships to their families and community. Children were alienated from each other, their families, and the broader community, fracturing and atomizing a generation of Anishinaabe Children. FAIRS worked to interrupt the community's collective identity and ways of life.

This article demonstrates how unique primary archival data on personal experiences within residential schools can be drawn upon to offer new insights on colonial processes. Local Survivors' stories complicate and disrupt problematic national rhetoric about settlement and nation building in Canada. For example, narratives from Sagkeeng taught colonial processes of nation building were not peaceful. The notion that residential schools were a good intention gone awry is still used to excuse ongoing suffering of Indigenous groups and perpetuates the myth that Survivors should just 'get over it'. Moving the perspectives of the marginalized to the forefront is an important practice in decolonizing methodologies, and mainstream knowledge more generally.

It is important to continue having critical conversations about colonialism and genocide with settlers in day-to-day, personal and professional encounters to ensure discussion around decolonization continues to happen. This project created opportunities for discussion amongst family, friends, peers, and colleagues. Many exchanges and debates blossomed from this research. These critical conversations are important for unpacking deeply entrenched colonial thinking amongst settlers. Changing attitudes and discourse within the field of sociology and in our broader communities can happen through these interpersonal dialogues.

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