Telling Secrets

Sex, Power and Narratives in

BY DIAN MILLION

Over 100 years after the full implementation of residential schooling, its administrators found their moral and civil guardianship a matter for public shame.

L'auteure démontre comment les autochtones du Canada ont été assignés au 19e siècle dans des niches sociales qui les excluaient de la construction de l'État-nation. Elle ajoute que les pensionnats où les jeunes indiens étaient éduqués étaient le symbole des pouvoirs de l'État et de l'Eglise qui ont dicté l'assimilation.

> The role of Indians themselves, in the storytelling of Indian [Canada] is as much a matter of "jurisdiction" as is anything else in Indian Country; economics, the law, control of resources, property rights. It goes without saying that it reflects our struggle with the colonial experience of our concomitant histories. If that sounds benign, it is anything but that. On the contrary, how the Indian narrative is told, how it is nourished, who tells it, who nourishes it, and the consequences of its telling are among the most fascinating—and, at the same time, chilling—stories of our time.
>
> —Elizabeth Cook-Lynn

> Our Sto:lo life was stolen away. Our children were removed by priests, social workers and police to residential schools, foster care and jail. My own family was at the eye of the hurricane, and we are only now beginning to regain our bearings. All over North American, the experiences of other First Nations families parallel my families trials and triumphs.
>
> —Ernie Crey

On January 7, 1998, the federal government of Canada announced the creation of a 350-million-dollar Healing Fund "designed to support Canadian First Nation communities in redressing the effects of the residential school system."[1] This promise of funds was also accompanied by a statement that acknowledged the Canadian government's historic role in "the development and administration of these schools." But the Canadian government was not alone. Four Christian denominations (various orders of the Roman Catholic Church, the Anglican Church, as well as United and Presbyterian churches) joined in this apology to Canadian Aboriginal peoples for their part in residential school administration. These unprecedented apologies were prompted by the recent public revelation of a seemingly endless array of sexual, physical, and mental abuse, that First Nations children endured across several generations at the hands of their guardians. Thus, a little over 100 years after the full implementation of residential schooling in Canada and 15 years after the last residential school closed in Tofino, B.C., its authors and administrators found their *in loco parentis* moral and civil guardianship in public disarray, a matter for public shame. Perhaps no other public discourse could have put the Canadian participation in colonization up to so much scrutiny. And because so much of the abuse had been sexual it hit a particular chord that resonated with Canadian fears about failing social welfare programs and perhaps, institutionalized religions inability to locate itself as a moral force. Neither the State nor the Church could be represented as "for the public good" in any simple form again. The residential school narratives began to enter the realm of published literature during the late 1980s, wherein individual Native peoples across Canada began to (tell or) articulate their experiences, joining them to wider conversations forming then about Native self-determination. It is my argument that such revelations did not become valued "naturally" or "just because" but that they became public and controversial at the time they did because they were implicated in a larger complex economy of knowledge production. Such revelations came into being through many negotiated levels of narrative capable of positioning and producing a certain kind of "truth" within a historical moment. I join many other researchers, across disciplines, now engaged in interrogating narratives for their power to create socially constructed categories such as ethnicity, race, gender and sexuality. As an Athabascan, a Native woman, I am interested in understanding how narratives composed in different knowledges and cultures interact, adapt, and use each other. Articulating cultural differences at this historical juncture is to be inextricably implicated in strategies of survival, dominance, and adaptation. Though we now live in a time late in the twentieth century where nation-state cultural identities busily articulate multiculturalism, a managed multiplicity, in these waning years, immigration and Aboriginal cultures (those that predate the state) have problematized simple national

cultural identification. Nation-states like Canada and the United States were formed within nineteenth-century projects of cultural assimilation. Those fierce material and discursive projects to erase indigenous and immigrant complexity by assimilation into new normalized, racialized, and gendered hierarchies articulated through culture still speak to our own generation—even if they have been revised. The outcomes of those prior negotiations live within the present as individuals and groups position and are positioned in struggles for the resources to live.

In *Immigrant Acts*, Lisa Lowe argues, that cultures are multiplex sites where oppressed minority subjects can disrupt assimilation discourses underwriting modern national subjectivities by narrating and performing them differently. She posits that a human subject is formed in culture first, into some articulation of cultural location. It is always by way of culture that humans enter the social field:

> It is in ... this terrain of culture that the subject is immersed in the repertoire of American memories, events, and narratives and comes to articulate itself in the domain of language, social hierarchy, law and ultimately political representation ... .[i]t is through culture that the subject becomes, acts and speaks itself "American." It is likewise in culture that individuals and collectivities struggle and remember ... imagine and practice both subject[ivity] and community differently. (3)

And if we do have the power to "imagine and practice" both subjectivity and community differently, then it becomes imperative that we become conscious of the narrative processes that we are formed in. Cultures are socially organized by the strategies that individuals take collectively to position and make meaning of differences—both "inside" and "outside" the boundaries they construct. The historical organization of narratives, the play and differences in power to narrate and act from subject positions formed by notions of race, gender, and sexuality in different generations are central to the theses of this paper. It is also a premise of this paper that narratives work at different levels of discourse and differently across cultures.

As Julie Cruikshank acknowledges in *The Social Life of Stories: Narrative and Knowledge in the Yukon Territory*, a twenty-year acquaintance with Tagish- and Tlingit-speaking elders taught her that oral narratives work differently than her own academically trained expectation. She could not understand her informants narratives until she understood not only the epistemological base they were a part of, the larger web of stories that informed them but how those narratives worked among those who spoke and used them to make meaning. Cruikshank, after much study, began to understand how these "local knowledges" (working in a specific geographical location) could and did work to enlarge and rearticulate outsider's more global abstract conceptual narrative. Yukon Athabascan and Tlingit speaking peoples could use their different locus of interest in historical events to create an added layer of meaning that often repositioned western versions. Although in the scope of this paper I do not examine her larger question about the ethics of universalist knowledge bases and technologies and their acquisition of local knowledges, I think that it is a question that deeply resonates with my own query.

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In this analysis, I actually differentiate some levels present in a western epistemological base,[2] different narrative strategies that produce knowledge in specific ways, in order to ask how it is that western narratives negotiate other cultural narratives. A good conceptual articulation of some different narrative organizations active in western epistemologies is Somer and Gibson's differentiation between ontological narratives, public narratives, conceptual narratives, and metanarrativity. I will use these categories as narration devices rather than fixed categories, not only to illustrate that there are different levels of narrative, but to show how these narratives work together and against each other in the real flux of their articulation. I will develop their meaning and their implications as they emerge in this discussion.

In the first section of my paper, I discuss individual narratives and the relations of power inherent in them, and explore the socially positioned power of the individual to narrate. By introducing the metaphor of space, it is

possible to discuss different evocations of personal memory and the historical narratives that are a part of their formation. In the late nineteenth century, the State and Church attempted to position Aboriginal peoples within emotionally-charged raced, sexualized and gendered narratives that created and informed residential school space. The individual and social outcomes of these narratives and the social acts that were formed within them were cross-generational. Canadian national and Aboriginal cultural societies entered into relationships inextricably formed by these old social narratives.

Residential schools were quintessential carceral spaces since they were organized to discipline both bodies and minds with the order socially invested in them.

In the second section, I explore the construction of public narrative and the strategies Aboriginal peoples took to reposition themselves as modern sovereign entities in the late twentieth century. In doing so, Native women found it necessary to reconstruct their own positions inside their communities, challenging Church narratives, the federal Indian Act, and the masculinist assumptions of their own sovereign discourses. From a newly-articulated "private" sphere, First Nations peoples, many who were residential school survivors, joined across their own considerable cultural differences and across time and space to interrupt an old discourse. By rearticulating these personal experiences and positioning them within new social science discourses, Native peoples repositioned the Canadian state and themselves, implicated the moral reputation of the Christian churches, and began to live with the continuing material and discursive consequences of their actions.

The personal: ontological narrative

> *I am willing to relate all I can remember, but I wish it clearly understood that it must be in my own way, and at my own time. I will not be hurried or dictated to. It is my history and not yours I propose to tell.*[3]

Ontological narratives are the "stories that social actors use to make sense," a necessity for any action we take in our lives. Our actions of course will produce subsequent conditions that we will have to make sense of, and renarrate. We use values, that we have both been taught and interpreted, to "...orient ourselves to the good, and thus determine our place relative to it... [and so] we must inescapably understand our lives in narrative form...." (Charles Taylor qtd. in Somers and Gibson 61) This "meaning making" is never fixed, it is articulated and positioned, some poles in the narration remaining relatively stable, some changing dramatically over the period of one's life, a point I will continue to clarify. In this way, each individual, originally from a Native community, who spent a number of years living in a residential school during a particular time, with a particular set of cohorts, in a particular geography, interpellated by a specific religious teaching, had their own individual interpretation of what that experience meant to them.

Where you *were* mattered, since memory and place have a rich relationship. Places, sites, school buildings evoke different memories. In her recent MA thesis on Coqualeetza, a prominent residential school in the lower Fraser Valley, Jody Woods drew important attention to the power of place. Such mnemonic relations are a complex constructed space, since how the school was designed to work, its power to organize the individual's experience, and whatever emotional resonance such sites had to evoke was often intense.[4]

The residential schools were sites at the intersection and articulation of many powerful public metanarratives (Catholicism, Anglicanism, Canadian nationalism,[5] etc.) embedded in a set of spatial relationships and practices that Foucault, in his early work *Discipline and Punishment*, called "carceral space." Carceral space defined by Foucault is social power invested into spaces designed to form individuals deemed outside a particular social order by surveillance and practice, like schools, the military, prisons, and mental hospitals. Residential schools were quintessential carceral spaces since they were organized to discipline both bodies and minds with the order socially invested in them. In applying this concept to her field work on Coqualeetza, Woods demonstrated that in residential school space, nuns, priests, social workers, and Native peoples attempted to articulate, negotiate, and enforce certain valued constructions of gender, class, and race, sexuality, and spirituality within a group of children. But, even within this order, alternative narratives and acts always existed. As children, and most certainly as adults, these individuals continued to articulate that they belonged to different cultures—ones that had historically challenged, produced, and continued to produce knowledge that countered and interrupted the whole process that residential education was supposed to ensure.

Still, the personal narrative that each adult constructed about their life was articulated and rearticulated by that person over their lifetime. Remembering the residential schools, as Jody Wood understood, drew on a relationship connecting physical and social space. The rooms and halls that organized a childhood experience of school also had an uneven power to evoke and emotionally engage that adult in the process of remembering. These adults had various responses, since their remembered "experiences and memories [were] heterogeneous, diverse and very personal" (Woods Abstract). The surviving individuals who were called upon to relate or narrate their residential school experiences to a professional interviewer did not all interpret their participation in this "educational" experi-

ment with any kind of unanimous meaning, or even necessarily with negativity. This, it seems, cannot be altogether surprising since, as humans grow, the "story" and memory of "what happened" can be interpreted and positioned by that individual in many ways for different reasons. The contingent circumstances as well as choices that individuals make have great force in people's lives. Cumulative age and experience give us different interpretations of what our childhood experiences mean. Sometimes, a person will buffer themselves from a particularly painful childhood by positioning themselves to their experiences in certain ways in order to claim the power to survive. Across cultures, individuals can position their memories to different narrative structures whose meaning may not be readily available to outsiders. There are mixed outcomes.

The idea that children could perform their own interruptions to their "education" was itself a revelation emerging from the conceptual work that has produced notions such as "agency." Leaving behind the earlier perceptions of social change that left social actors with no role in their own lives or immersed within social forces that could completely determine a person's or a group's actions, more recent social theorizations see the contingency of social structures, narratives and peoples' actions. The children often chose to disregard or act against the intentions of their guardians. The larger project that was supposed to have a certain uniformity, the planned performance of the metanarrative of "western civilization," was never fully accomplished and had unsuspected outcomes as well as predictable ones.

What survives, beyond the power of physical artifact (buildings, photographs) to evoke the varied emotional response to place, is another kind of artifact: the remnant of the power relations that changed over time but survive in repositioned personal narratives. These remnants of historic narratives still surface in surprising ways to affect individuals. This is a good place to remind ourselves that residential schools were built within a set of discursive and material projects in a particular time and place, and to remember what these were. At the end of the nineteenth century, univocal national narratives went hand in hand with racial categorization and cultural assimilation to underwrite economic and social hegemony. Cultural assimilation was measured by the successful adoption of several factors, most notably the abandonment of tribal communal lifestyles, including the communal ownership of land and resources. Assimilation was measured by the amount of individualization achieved, "in line with the changing economic and intellectual atmosphere in the last decades of the nineteenth century," (170) as American historian Robert Berkhofer observed.

That intellectual atmosphere can be contextualized in Canada and the United States within an unrestrained capital growth as each attempted to consolidate national land bases. Both the United States and Canada were engaged in a state building process that had a symbiotic relationship with commercial enterprise, although their national trajectories were and are quite different. State building in the late nineteenth century was about negotiating and extending jurisdiction. It is problematic to reify the state as a "thing" here, as only a geographical body established by bounded space, ignoring the permeating network of power relations negotiated to maintain such a space or its boundaries. Indian policies at the end of the nineteenth century sought to rationalize Indians by quantifying their connection to land. Socialization in the schools represented the necessity to position "Indians" within these expanding social spaces, created by the consolidation of the Canadian (and simultaneously the U.S.) land base, in particular ways. Within Canada, three material/discursive positions were involved in creating residential school space: the state and its responsibility to "citizens," the Church and its necessity to form moral beings, and the Native peoples, themselves a multiplicity who were attempting survival and to escape being reduced to a monologue.

A struggle was played out for control over the minds and bodies of Aboriginal children to socialize them both as "citizens" and in Canada as "colonial subjects."

The socialization attempted within these state-sanctioned spaces was never neutral, since the law is never neutral and is in fact a site of contestation. As such, all social relations are negotiated within this space. The relation between law and the notion of public/private space is a gendered and racialized one. Feminist legal theorist Catherine MacKinnon has articulated the state as embodied in law, existing throughout society as patriarchal power definitively public, as white male heterosexual space differentiated from a domestic private sphere. This public sphere where the "[l]aw, as words in power, writes society in state form and writes the state onto society..." ultimately contradicts "the liberal state as a neutral arbiter among conflicting interests," (159) since the state is always a gendered entity. Law is the discursive act of state.

Residential schools during the nineteenth century can be seen as embodied spaces empowered with both state/social sanction, located and articulated through the discourse of gendered "domesticity," and as microcosms of an intense conflict within expanding North American nation-states. U.S.-Canadian social sanctions were at this historic moment transforming military control into a compassionate reformism. A struggle was played out for control over the minds and bodies of Aboriginal children to socialize them both as "citizens" and in Canada as "colonial subjects." The imagined internal space of the nation, no longer threatened by a free Aboriginal majority in most places, was now a "domestic" affair, replacing

earlier conceptions of Aboriginals as "foreign" entities. This national domestic space was mirrored in the "home," a gendered social "sphere" where a bourgeois domesticity and gentility was supposedly juxtaposed against fierce free market activity. Late nineteenth-century Canadian men who imagined themselves as citizens and subjects of a British empire could look fondly toward "home," both to a nation and to a domicile. In contrast, the relations inside residential schools were a strange mixture of competing social narratives. The mix of military style socialization (dormitories, confinement, rigid physical discipline, for instance) with middle-class domestic norms often produced ironies. Charged with bringing "Aboriginals" into "civilized" normal domesticity, Canadian churches designed most residential schools to also be working farms. Canadian residential schools did little to formally educate children, because the churches, always ill-funded for their assigned task, used the children's labour to support the institutions that were supposed to school them. Inside the separation of male and female spaces in this late nineteenth century society, girls were marked for a particular inscription. As Tsianina Lomawaima writes of Chilocco Indian school, a residential school in Nebraska,

> domestic training for girls was even less attuned to reality than its agricultural/vocational training for boys ... Indian women's place reflected the double burden of gender and race ... [f]ederal policies of domestic education and federal practices of intense surveillance, control, regimentation, and restriction of Indian girls in these schools ... makes clear the underlying federal agenda, which is to train Indian girls in subservience and submission to authority. (81)[6]

A particular consequence of domestic education for Indian girls was the practice of "outing" or employing them as domestic help in white women's homes during summer months and after they completed their schooling. This custom, while common to both Canada and the United States, negotiates a specific difference between policy in the two nations. "Outing" and the Canadian *Indian Act* could be analyzed as part of a larger picture of gender-specific law as it was aimed at Native gender and sexual roles. White social observers and the new science of anthropology perceived gender relations among tribal people as "primitive" and Indian women were often portrayed as drudges. This construction of the Native woman as a beast of burden neatly anchored a countering image of white women as liberated within the domestic freedom of their homes. Domestic racialized and classed labour underpinned this freedom (see Nakano Glenn). Trained for and used as domestic labour during summer "outings" and after residential school, Indian women often entered circumscribed relationships with white women as low-paid drudges. Many Native women, and specifically Northwest coastal women had no equivalent role historically except for slave. Since a strong narrative for the cult of domesticity demanded upper class white women's fragility, someone needed to be strong enough to work and "her squaw sister endured effort, exposure and hardship which would kill the white woman."[7] Many of these women, removed from their Native communities for years, were adopted or married out to white husbands and never went home.

Across the roughly 80 years that residential schools existed in some form in Canada, these base articulations of gendered and classed labour remained constant to a degree, despite variation in personal experiences and individual interruptions. Personal narratives as well as the protests of Indian families and their spokespeople were silenced in public at the end of the nineteenth century and for the first few decades of the twentieth, deeply hidden outside of dominant Canadian public discourse. Individual articulations did exist, permeating older local knowledges, as well as negotiating non-Native narratives and practices, syncretizing them into their own and into their families. Native narratives, having little outlet before 1960, informed the local knowledges of Indian and aboriginal communities. While I posit a profound public silence in one generation, it is also to acknowledge that these experiences as articulations informed families across generations negotiating, if not sometimes retranslating, state and church narration. Some individual children grew up to be personal "successes" (a value judgement in itself) and individual administrators, such as George Raley, a progressive and benevolent Anglican administrator, could fight the state and make some improvements for children incarcerated in institutional space (Raibmon). However, the force of these institutional narratives remained in place late into the twentieth century, even if in fragments, to inform the individual narratives of all who were shaped within. But this was not the only discourse involved. The Church, unlike the State, was charged with making Indians into "moral beings."

The religious institutions involved also had complex narratives, both about the "heathen" and the necessity to save Indians from lives of "sin." The construction of Native women and men as "sexually depraved" or carnal irrational sexual beings puts these peoples in a position to be the objects of a moral injunction, an ancient project between "civilized" western societies and their nemeses all over the world. A full analysis of the implications of the moral responsibility that informed individual church actions across the different denominations is beyond the scope of this paper. For my purposes, I would point out that the physical arrangement inside state-sanctioned spaces was always a reflection of gendered narratives in western Christianity. In Catholic schools and their Protestant counterparts as well as public schools of the time, the segregated space between men and women reflected the arrangements that then permeated Western society,

the male priests and ministers as Christ's representatives and the female nuns and lay personnel as "handmaidens," physically removed to different quarters as well as carrying out different roles. Native children were caught between the stated moral intentions of the church as their "in loco parentis" guardian and the prevalent public narratives about their sexual "nature."

Michel Foucault made such sexual narratives key to an analysis of power. In *The History of Sexuality*, he provides a more complex theory of social power that shifts his earlier emphasis on carceral space (*Discipline and Punishment*) as a means of social control and which I have used to frame the earlier part of this essay. The sexual narratives present in the residential schools at the dawn of the twentieth century can better be characterized through a paradigm that Foucault calls "biopower." In this analysis, power is never solely repressive and sexual narratives, far from repressing sex, are part of the productive powers of a society, an extension of the political into the biological both as a "technique" for the "optimization of a population" and "the regulation of the social body."

In this case, as Canada first began to articulate itself as a nation, it also began to produce narratives about "hygienic" sex, about what was proper and productive sex, allowed in heterosexual relationships and in marriages that would produce a stronger domestic "health" for the nation. Hygienic sexual relations were necessarily racialized (Stoler). Church "fathers" and their congregations, who were themselves models of this middle-class domestic bliss, were torn between their responsibility to be models of their class and race and hiding their own desires. A desire for what is both forbidden and created by distinction—children, the vulnerable, the raced, the blind, the ward and the "other." The prescription to reproduce middle-class sexual mores in Native children ran against an alternative narrative about the debased available nature of Native sexuality. This narrative supported a society where Anglo-Canadian men had always had liaisons with Native women and where a hybrid and mixed race society already existed as its proof. But, the injunction in residential schools to repress "sex" always ran counter to a prevalent knowledge of Native children as "sexual" and "available bodies." Within this sphere is the nature of sexual relations as power, since most clandestine relations between Native children and their guardians were about coercion, not about the sex act in itself. Foucault's analysis of sex as power parallels a thread of contemporary feminist scholarship that conceptualizes acts of sexual coercion "not as acts of individual pathology but rather [as] expressions of ... asymmetrical relations of power between men and women" (Dubinsky 163), and I would add, between children and adults, and "raced" individuals. [8]

As Karen Dubinsky points out in *Improper Advances: Rape and Heterosexual Conflict in Ontario 1880-1929*, beliefs about sexuality, internalized sexual narratives which position men and women, sometimes emerge oddly unscathed across generations. A case in point was Judge Michael Bourassa's juxtaposition between the illegality of raping a "dainty coed" and a "pair of hips" (143). The "pair of hips" he referred to represented Native women, who still bore a stigma of raced sexuality in his court. Even if, in 1989, such a comment evoked public censure, it was not an unthinkable comparison to make, even for a public servant, a judge. Although interrupted by newer interpretations, sexual narratives of another generation could find an enduring resonance as "truth." Once upon a time, a new Canadian state could draw on such a narrative to position "Anglo-Saxon" women as the producers of both civilization and the "race" against their "depraved Native" and "loosely moraled" immigrant counterparts to produce the desirable composition of an ordered, gendered, raced, and classed society. While Anglo-Canadian women also had children and marriages across these lines, it was always at the loss of her status and protection. It is exactly this silenced sexual space, that can, 100 years later, be narrated, creating a certain vulnerability in the Christian Churches uninterrupted ability to position themselves as "protectors" over the assimilation process carried out in residential schools (or as protectors of the vulnerable, i.e. orphans, mentally retarded, delinquents, and other classes of segregated children). Nevertheless, this "segregation within a segregation," produced its own narratives, those of heightened sexuality among children and their individual creativity in evading a "sexless" space. If "sex" could not speak its name in this space, it wasn't because sex did not exist. That is, if sexuality could not be spoken of in these spaces, it is not because sex acts between children and between guardians and children did not occur, or a narrative about the nature of these sexualities wasn't present. Silence, or the suppression of these narratives required by church moral narratives, became key to the articulation of another set of relationships enhanced by this silence.

"Silence" specifically left the performance of sex unnarrated, as it left the sexual nature of priests, ministers, nuns, teachers, and administrators in a void that always held the possibility for abuse. This silence may have enabled predatory sexual behavior—since everyone became implicated in the protection of that silence. How was it that these moral guardians of male and female Native children could also be their corrupter? Perhaps because they could not speak the possibility of adult/child sexuality, they could not guard against it. However, any simple supposed autonomy in individual voice contradicts itself when individual narrative negotiates publicly sanctioned narratives. But what does it mean to be silent, to not be able to speak?

Sarah Carter, in *Capturing Women*, analyzed that Anglo-Saxon women, had been less capable historically in inventing or positioning themselves "just as they would like" than even their aboriginal counterparts. The mobile gendered public narratives, the "stereotypes" of the time,

often coercively positioned them because of their centrality to the national narratives. Canadian society had "numerous restraints ... governed by literary conventions, by the type of language [that could be used]" (112-113). The individual residential school narratives always resonated with other stories of institutional abuse, in particular sexual abuse, revealed by other groups of traumatized adults in a particular place and time (the eighth decade of the twentieth century) and that this was not a coincidence.[9] An academic production like Celia Haig-Brown's *Resistance and Renewal: Surviving the Indian Residential School* that featured eleven individual Indian narratives, decontextualized and constructed for analysis was an event of sorts. What could make these individual institutional narratives possible then and not before? What were the implications of revealing personal stories, narratives that were buried in "silent" spaces far out of public discourse in prior generations? What would be the new and different possibilities of their articulation?

When do Indians have problems?: the public narrative

Public narratives "are those narratives attached to cultural and institutional formations larger than the single individual" (Somers and Gibson 62). While that generalization gives some abstract direction, it certainly diminishes the scope of such narration. Neither does it bring into discussion the changing relationship between a "public" and a "private" sphere, spatial representations important to narratives of nationalism and their material and discursive enactment. Increasingly, by the 1960s what was meant by the "public" and the "public arena" was expansive, filled with a cacophony of narratives all competing for attention, competing for meaning, and competing for legislation. Perhaps this cacophony had always been the case, but what had really changed was the variety of "voices" represented there.

Certainly, by 1988, the year that Celia Haig-Brown published her precedent-setting social ethnography based on the individual narratives of Shushwap, Lillooet, Thompson, and Chilcotin people who had attended residential school, she was articulated by, and influential in articulating, a significant conceptual narrative. Her work inadvertently found itself anticipating a mounting public tension around the treatment of children in institutions as much as it is a document produced by the discourse on Native education that is primary to another set of articulations. In Canada, Aboriginal parents, students, and their allies began a campaign of criticism and resistance against the residential schools. By the late 1940s, the rationale behind residential schools had eroded considerably. Policy reviews of residential schools heightened throughout the 1950s and the 1960s. This increasing and cumulative Aboriginal resistance undermined public confidence in residential schools, leading to their eventual abandonment. But Aboriginal peoples weren't simply against residential schools as much as they were for improved education. In fact, education became a primary articulation to any notion of self-determining Aboriginal communities. However, any discussion of "education" in Aboriginal communities[10] particularly those who were effected by the 1876 *Indian Act*, has several dimensions.

The restoration of Indian and Inuit parents right to educate their children was and *is* most certainly about restoring local sovereignty. Secondly, education became crucial to any conversation about restoring economically viable Aboriginal communities. However, a third dimension also began to emerge that problematized both sovereigntist and economic discussions—-that of women's issues and community health. The residential schools and their strongly western gendered organization, coupled with the *Indian Act* double standard that discriminated against aboriginal women, had reorganized indigenous communities favoring western patriarchal order. The Section 12 clause that disenfranchised Indian women who married non-Natives and barred their children from status had been especially unbearable. Thus, in the second half of the twentieth century, women began to challenge both their exclusion from the right of primogeniture to Indian identity when they married non-Aboriginal people and the uneven arrangements of power in band governments. They cited the changed gender relations in the bands as dangerous to Indian community life. Residential schools became a symbolic catalyst for representing the states intervention into Indian families and communities and the changed relations of power that were the result. The treatment that generations of Native peoples had endured in residential schools would become an important topic. Residential school discussions were as much about family, gender relations, abuse, healing, and mental health as they were about education and sovereignty.

With the passage of the C-31 clause in the *Indian Act* in 1985, Native women had signaled they did not want a sovereignty that preserved western notions of female inequality. This was a hard fought battle, not only with the Canadian government, but often with Native men, particularly band chiefs. Since the *Indian Act* had barred women from band leadership, change was a difficult proposition that split families, men and women. The Tobique Women's Action Group, whose astute organizing actually pushed the reform legislation, reported that since everything was in the men's names, women and children were being abused. Women who left their abusive husbands or who were left were without housing or social benefits, or received them at the discretion of the band leader and the Indian agent. Native men could divorce and remarry a white woman and keep the family house while his former wife and children would have to move in with relatives or leave the reserve. Native women who married "out," who lost their husbands or who desired to come home were without rights. Among the

Tobique women was Linda Sapier, a woman who had lost her status, whose test case in the United Nations induced the Canadian government to act. [11]

Prior to that, a great deal else had changed. In 1969, with Jean Chrétian's "White Paper," Canada tried unilaterally to end its treaty relationship with myriad Canadian Native peoples with a plan that would relinquish federal responsibility. This brought a storm of renewed Aboriginal political action. The silence had ended. No other peoples in Canada had been so reduced materially and discursively as Aboriginals, or so compromised politically. Thereafter, Canadian Natives began to loudly protest the national claims for their assimilation, a project they refused to accept as inevitable. The myriad bands began a struggle both among themselves and externally to reestablish their Aboriginal and treaty rights and to rearticulate their claims to land and to precious resources. They rearticulated the racialized abstract "Indian" to a positive sovereign "First Nations," where "education" became a site of contestation to "fix" the past, in order to "heal" the future.

Increasingly, Native voices were also international voices. First-person Indian monographs like Harold Cardinal's 1969 response to the White Paper, *The Unjust Society: The Tragedy of Canada's Indians* became best-sellers. Cardinal argued that the Indian Act had impoverished and reduced the very people whose rights it was supposed to protect. George Manuel's 1975 *The Fourth World*, articulated North American indigenous organizing to North and South American and aboriginal movements then emerging in both hemispheres. Although Harold Cardinal would later publish an article on the Indian Act and women, these early voices were invariably sovereigntist and male. They treated the residential schools as part of colonial efforts to extinguish Aboriginal identity, as sometimes violent, but in terms that put more emphasis on the former than the latter.

In British Columbia, a particularly strong constitution of Aboriginal voices began to form because most of the First Nations had no treaties. The push for a treaty making process saw a spectrum of political struggle and consolidation as viable political positions formed among B.C. bands. In 1982, however, Canada itself was in turmoil as the country began to repatriate or renegotiate the terms of their constitution and their relationship with Great Britain. Native peoples refused the idea that they would not have a place in the patriation. Native women shared an interest in working for the self-determination of their peoples, but they also found it necessary both to negotiate the united sovereigntist voices of men and to interrupt them. Paul Tennant, who attended the meetings of the early treaty rights organizations, such as the North American Indian Brotherhood, would say later that most early accounts of residential schooling stressed their role in establishing pan-Indian identity and that early male Indian leaders "[did] not have strongly negative memories of their schooling" (1982:24).[12] Interestingly, Tennant, a political scientist and a major interpreter of Native politics, would remain strangely mute on the causes for the 1985 C-31 amendment to the Indian Act on status, failing to note that the change was the result of a twenty-year national project by non-status Native women to end their marginalization and exile from their bands. [13]

This omission, and not only on the part of Tennant, conceals a considerable tension within Native communities amidst the political organizing to represent a sovereignty and self-determination position so vital to land claims issues as well as repatriation. So much was at stake. During the two decade struggle to amend the Indian Act's blatant sexual discrimination, band leaders and other Native men would move as many times to thwart women's claims as they would to support them. Jo-Anne Fiske later noted how conversations on residential school had often focused on "the unintended development of political leadership among male graduates of mission schools" while paying "scant attention to the implications of formal schooling for women's social and economic placement in home communities...." (1991:131).[14] But, in an unprecedented move, Native women had changed the tenor of the discussions. Like indigenous men had before them, they took their issues to a larger forum by waging a vigorous national and international campaign that resulted in a successful case before the United Nations Human Rights Commission in 1981, thereby bringing additional pressure on the Canadian government.[15] Canada was forced by international opinion to amend the *Indian Act* as part of their constitutional process. Many male Native leaders saw this as an intrusion rather than an opportunity for Native determined band membership. Native women, for their part, chose strategies that distanced them from white feminism and located them within the heart of Native community.[16]

Before 1981, there had been little room for talking about a "private sphere," or the community conditions that were a daily part of women and children's survival, or the incredible chaos that had resulted as a consequence of pauperization and the forced reformation of Native family relations as kinship relationships were reorganized. Groups like the Native Women's Association of Canada cut across many differences using the position of Indian motherhood rather than women's rights as a supportable and powerful metaphor and material fact of their organization. In their narratives, Indian, Métis, and Inuit women positioned their selves as the foundation of healthy families and communities rather than as "feminists" demanding equal rights. By speaking of their own abuse, the women had opened a space to narrate abuse as an issue that would involve both genders, by articulating the Native family as a target of State and Church interventions.

"Abuse" as an issue did not inhabit the narratives written by academic scholars until Celia Haig-Brown's Masters thesis, "Resistance and Renewal: Surviving the

Indian Residential School" was written in 1987, some 20 years into a public debate in which the meaning of the "Indian" problem had been dramatically rearticulated. A "matter" that had in previous generations been left to more obscure academic and missionary reports broke into a "public" consciousness in a new way.

Haig-Brown's work was positioned as a conceptual narrative, a product of a professional research project, much like Jody Wood's on Coqualeetza. It was research undertaken to satisfy the requirements for a Masters in Education at the University of British Columbia. In preparing her thesis between December 1985 and June 1986, Celia Haig-Brown interviewed 13 people who had attended Kamloops Indian Residential School between its inception in 1893 and its closure sometime in the 1960s. What was unique about Haig-Brown's work was that it was constructed to feature Native voices, the thirteen individual narratives, and contextualize them into a larger frame of public meaning.

Haig-Brown could not have anticipated the widespread conversations sparked by her thesis, when she published her research as a book *Resistance and Renewal* in 1988. In 1993, upon its sixth printing she had cause for comment:

> For the First Nations people that attended them, residential schools have always been an issue. But back then, they weren't talking openly about what the schools meant to them. The stories often remained hidden in memories, either because they were to painful to articulate, or because of the belief that that was just the way things were. (Preface)

First Nations voices emerged amid a multiplex of voices silenced—but now polyvalent, in an arena of cohered and competing articulations. As Noel Dyck wrote in 1986,

> not all social problems become public ones ... [s]ocial issues are transformed into public problems when they become "matters of conflict or controversy in the arenas of public life." (31-32)

His argument outlined the necessity of moral response to perceived "public" issues:

> It is ... necessary to allocate political responsibility for public problems, thus different definitions of causal responsibility can lead to varying assignments of [that responsibility].(32)

Individual perceptions of "what is wrong" combine both cognitive and moral judgements. Cognitive decisions are made on perceptions about the "facticity" of a problem, but it is a perceived moral immediacy that "makes alteration or eradication desirable" (Dyck, 32). The "Indian Problem" in Canada had been "unspeakable" for most of Canada's history; that is, the complexity of the legal, political and administrative nexus involved in resolving Aboriginal claims were not known or taught to most Canadians. Therefore, they had little language to express a new position. Canadians were often confused by Native status rights since many of the public perceptions of Indians in play were metanarratives, or public narratives attached to nineteenth-century projects. What could be *said* about "Indians" needed to be rearticulated in the public consciousness in order for a reasonable "alteration." There was never any one strategy that could accomplish this aim because the extent of colonialism defied a singular causal agent. The necessity to rearticulate a "responsible party" became also the necessity to articulate a moral responsibility for First Nation grievances.

The process to renarrate meaning could be clarified here where it takes on its present discursive aspect. It comes from the basic understanding that what we "say"(representationally) forms material action. As Stuart Hall said,

> Certainly, events, relations, [and] structures do have conditions of existence ... real effects outside the sphere of the discursive, ... but, how things are represented and the "machineries" and regimes of representation in a culture do play a *constitutive* and not merely a reflexive ... role. This gives ... the scenarios of representation—subjectivity, identity, politics—*a formative, not merely an expressive, place in the constitution of social and political life* [my emphasis]. (443)

Narratives do not "reflect" action; they inform positions that form competing positions always emerging within subaltern discourses as well as hegemonic ones. The debates that occur in the mass media are ones that have already been articulated and compromised and positioned by earlier debates in communities and among individuals.

Haig-Brown's thesis was firmly situated within this struggle by attempting to articulate the "real" meaning of First Nations children's education. As late as 1988, an amazing claim could be made for her work. Although many academic studies had been made of the project to "educate" Aboriginal children-none had featured First Nations peoples' accounts in their own voices articulating the meaning of residential schools. First Nations women and men had utilized their personal stories in prose, poetry and individual monograph. These important articulations in the "personal" voice were enormously influential in the Native communities in creating new Indigenous subjectivities as rallying points for action.[17] But at that historical moment, such subjective narrations were often ignored or separated from the "public" political argumentation going on in government halls and courts. There were as yet no academic conceptual productions that took the private memories of residential school alumni as a

source of knowledge on the consequences of "assimilation" schooling. There had been little academic use for first person accounts, a kind of qualitative research that was just emerging.[18] No quantitative or "objective" account would reveal the personal privatized space that such accounts would bridge. As part of a project to decolonize education, part of the "state apparatus," Haig-Brown drew heavily on radical educators like Paulo Freire to conceptualize her academic positioning of the students' stories. She positioned her analysis to support what she believed was the most coherent meaning in their narrations. She practiced a certain self-reflection by asking permission from the human subjects of her research and cleared the results with them as well. This type of reciprocity has been described by literary critic David Moore as a:

> dimension [that] ties Native texts to a vital context of both land-based and pan-tribal communities .... [t]his political linkage between text and context establishes a certain ... ethical commitment between performance and performer...." (8)

It could be that Haig-Brown's academic study gained a legitimacy among First Nations peoples that had no real precedent. Her thesis positioned residential schools as places of abuse even though she did not articulate the nature of this abuse to any wider narrative. She seemingly did not anticipate that her thesis would be interpreted as "reductionist." She inferred that the "public" had, through its institutions (of church and state), "abused" their trust responsibility. Such an argument had widespread resonance among many Aboriginal communities who recognized its "story." Because of this Native resonance, Haig-Brown's thesis carried more weight as it gained power as a causal source among many non-Natives, an illumination that could ask for moral judgement and action. As she became one of the most cited sources in a public debate on the meaning of residential schooling, Haig-Brown was also positioned by other academics as controversial and less "balanced" than other attempts to make meaning of the experience. As J. R. Miller noted in his own well-received history, the rearticulation of residential school experience:

> has attracted a considerable amount of attention in Canada during recent years. Innumerable revelations of mistreatment of students by school staff ... have brought these schools to the attention of Canadians in a peculiar and restricted manner. (introduction)

But Miller misses the point. Power is always constitutive in soliciting and interpreting another individual's narrative in the act of producing knowledge. We are always engaged in several discursive spheres that can never be simply collapsed into each other but are always complicit with each other (Foucault 1972). Jody Woods, the University of British Columbia historian whose work on Coqualeetza I drew from earlier, had joined her voice to this growing number of Canadian historians trying to find the significance of residential schools. Woods, who had positioned her reading with Miller and others who cited the irreducible individuality of residential school narratives,[19] agreed that "the monolithically negative portrayal in the media and academic literature ... does not adequately reflect the full range of experiences..." (abstract).

I would rejoin that these portrayals might belong to another sphere in discursive articulation. They represent another *kind* of effort to articulate meaning, one that valorizes similarity rather than difference for a reason.

A person's oral narrative never enters the world of textuality transparently. Speaker, interviewer, and editor are all positions inscribed with social relationships. As Ann Goldman writes in, "Is That What She Said?" an analysis of the politics of collaboration in feminist ethnographic texts,

> [u]sually there is a clear class distinction between the [interviewer], editor, a professional woman with an interest in furthering feminist work, and the speaker, a working-class woman of color recounting the story of her life... (Introduction)[20]

We always implicate ourselves as researchers since we, too, are always positioned in our narratives. Ethnography, an academic discourse, has undergone a transformation in the latter part of this century, a disciplinary shift that was undertaken to deconstruct the unconsciousness with which "stories" about others could be entered into the public narrative.

As the widening set of articulations about residential schools began to open public debate, First Nations scholars and their allies were always careful to articulate "abuse" as a generational experience related to the late nineteenth-century colonial project, thus separating the specific abuse of First Nations children from any larger less specific psychoanalytical articulations of the meaning of child abuse in Canadian society. This First Nations position utilized the psychoanalysis "therapy" discourse with caution-reserving the right to interpret and articulate an appropriately aboriginal sense of "healing" in communities that went deeper than any of the individuals affected.

Roland Crisjohn and Sherri Young's, *The Circle Game: Shadows and Substance in Indian Residential School Experience in Canada*, was a pointed report to a Royal Commission convened to assess responsibility but not revenge for sexual and mental abuse of First Nations children. In Chrisjohn and Young's conclusions, they link their findings of abuse to a clear call for a national responsibility that should not be compromised by endless public rearticulation: "Why prefigure what Canadians as a whole will be willing to do? Their international reputation, their National self image, and their Immortal Souls may be as

important to them as they say they are." Chrisjohn and Young's recommendations for a resolution were followed to a remarkable extent. The Church and the State would be made to attempt repentance for a clearly assigned moral responsibility grossly "abused," thus publicly emasculating the sexual-moral narratives of the nineteenth century that upheld residential schooling, at least for the moment.

Conclusion

In this essay, I have shown how Canadian Aboriginal peoples were positioned by late nineteenth-century discourses to occupy a particular material as well as social niche in the formation of a Canadian nation-state. The schooling of Native peoples in residential schools became symbolic to the power of the State and Church to dictate assimilation. Residential school narratives became central in bridging generations and eras. In part, I have discussed the roles that different levels of narrative occupy in the larger struggle to negotiate meaning and to enact social custom and law. Individual school narratives are caught up in complex projects to make and enforce meaning, articulated and rearticulated within different historical moments and differences in the power to narrate. By the end of nineteenth century, the roles of Aboriginal men, women, and children in their own societies were forever altered by the intrusion of a range of metanarratives and public narratives authored in part by the State and the Church. Individual Canadian citizens often acted within these narratives to rationalize their own actions within larger projects that marginalized Aboriginal peoples both socially and economically. Native peoples and their communities were reorganized by laws that enforced Western notions of gender and sexual mores. Changed gender and social relationships inside these communities have had long-range effects that remain as artifacts of old discourses still extant.

In the late twentieth century, Aboriginal peoples in Canada joined worldwide with many colonized peoples who sought to rearticulate old colonial discourses. Within the new projects to articulate Aboriginal cultural nationalist identities and positions inside the Canadian state—in fact, to constitute "Aboriginal" and Aboriginal Rights" into the reconstituted Canada, Native peoples also found the necessary to rearticulate their own community relationships, particularly those of gender. Native women, organized nationally, found it necessary to both articulate Aboriginal sovereignty and to interrupt masculinist notions of women's position in the new narratives. Native women opened the privatized domestic sphere of their families in order to show the damage done by State interventions into their lives. Using their own narratives and the public and conceptual narratives of their allies, Native women and men opened the issue of abuse as a Native sovereigntist issue. In the process, Native peoples altered the State and Church's oldest discourses as protectors of Aboriginal peoples in Canada. But, of course it was not over.

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[1]From *Residential School Update*, March 1998, published by the First Nations Health Secretariat. A copy can be obtained from the Secretariat at the Assembly of First Nations, 1 Nicholas Street, #1002, Ottawa, Ontario, K1N 7B7.

[2]I acknowledge that "western" is abstract in itself-but in this essay it will stand for a particular kind of institutionalized knowledge production that was developed in Europe after the 13th century. Also known as "scientific rationalism," it has for at least the last two hundred years, been positioned as "truth" against the claims of other knowledges, judged as "myth."

[3]Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo, 1875, quoted by Genaro Padilla in his *My History, Not Yours,* The University of Wisconsin Press, 1993

[4]I thank Jody Woods for the generous amount of time she offered to introduce me to Coqualeetza and for her invaluable insights and conversation. I cite her work as I read it in the Fall of 1998. Another extremely important work on the construction of memory and stories of place is Laura Cameron's *Openings: a Meditation on History, Method and Sumas Lake* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997).

[5]I do not believe Canadian nationalism to be a metanarrative in the sense that Catholicism or Christianity may be-because of the necessity and volume of projects it takes to articulate what that "nationalism" is every generation- I believe it is more a public narrative.

[6]In particular, Lomawaima's entire analysis of women's regimentation is especially useful for understanding the State's project and the womens' resistance. She notes that the schools were required to so closely document the students' every move "that it is remarkable the staff had any time to educate"(82). Surveillance of women was minute, reaching into every moment of their day as well as documenting and controlling supplies for menses. Literally, the girls were supposed to have no private space. All would be revealed to the State's view.

[7]Lomawaima, quoting Ehrenreich and English, notes the odd reversal that happens in the play between racial superiority and domesticity in the full quote that reads : "At war, at work or at play, the white man is superior to the savage, and his culture has continually improved his condition. But with the woman, the rule is reversed. Her squaw sister will endure effort, exposure and hardship which would kill the white woman." Barbara Ehrenreich and Deidre English, *For Her Own Good: 150 Years of the Experts Advice to Women* (New York: Anchor Press/ Doubleday, 1978: 114).

[8]Sexual activity with Indian children was never limited to heterosexual encounters. Many encounters, particularly those after WWII, seemed to be between adult men and boys. Steven Maynard remarks on this in a quote I have included in f. 9.

[9]In reference to Steven Maynard's remarks in his "'Horrible Temptations': Sex, Men and Working-Class Male Youth in Urban Ontario, 1890-1935"—where he notes the strange absence of historic work on sexual relations between men and boys, in contrast, to the size of the political—public response following the 1989 revelation of physical and sexual abuse in several custodial institutions in Canada: "Beginning with the Newfoundland Royal Commission on Mount Cashel ... government inquiries and police investigations have documented the widespread abuse of boys in custodial institutions in nearly every province. Film and television dramatizations of particularly sensational cases such as *The Boys of St. Vincent* (based on the Mt. Cashel scandal) and *The Choirmaster* (based on the case of the St. George's Anglican Church in Kingston, Ontario) have further focused public attention on the subject." in *The Canadian Historical Review* 78 (2) (June 1997):192.

[10]In Canada a distinction is made between Indians (covered by the Indian Act) and Inuit (formerly known as Eskimo) and Métis ("mixed-blood" communities with a unique French-Indian, English-Indian, or Scottish-Indian ancestry stemming from the fur trade industry)

[11]*Enough is Enough* is a tremendous testimony to the power of grass-roots organizing in Native or any other community.

[12] In a footnote (f48), Tennant qualifies his statement by adding, "at least this is true of those whom I interviewed."

[13]In Tennant's 1991 *Aboriginal Peoples and Politics: The Indian Land Question in British Columbia, 1849-1989,* he only mentions women's participation in political activity as auxiliary to men's. The Native Sisterhood and Native Women's Society of B.C. are mentioned in footnotes. He notes the 1985 amendment "which allowed non-status Indians to regain their status...." in reference to the falling membership in national organizations as opposed to local ones (210).

[14]Fiske (1991) noted that women had also gained leadership abilities from their educations and more importantly had continued to form networks that kept them influential at many levels of community affairs that positioned them as leaders after the ban on their participation was lifted in 1951.

[15]There should be more literature available on this crucial movement. Some references I could find were Jamieson and Krosenbrink-Gellissen. The struggle to abolish the sexist provision in the Indian Act is narrated in the women's own voices in *Enough is Enough: Aboriginal Women Speak Out, (as told to Jane Silman)* (The Women's Press, 1987). This last monograph also illustrates the move to situate Native people as their own interlocutors.

[16]Women's civil rights in general had become an important topic in Canada, beginning with the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in 1970 where non-status women had testified, but during these years white Canadian women's rights groups were slow to recognize the double indemnity of race and sexual discrimination-much less the necessity for solidarity with sovereigntist and self-determination positions. Jo-Ann Fiske was one feminist social historian who picked up on this complexity. See Fiske 1993 and Fiske 1994.

[17]This is the subject for another essay that I am working on that explores just these important texts and their impacts.

[18]I interviewed Jo-Anne Archibald, a member of the Sto:lo Nation who is now Director of the First Nations House of Learning at the University of British Columbia. As Chair of Haig-Brown's thesis committee, what she remembered was that Haig-Brown's project had coincided with and utilized newly introduced methods in qualitative research—methods that used first person narration—which at that point were not universally accepted in social sciences and history as an "objective methodology." But, designed to catch the nuances of human voice they were an ideal methodology for empowering native narratives.

[19]On a long drive and visit on and around the Coqualeetza grounds, Jody Woods and I had many wonderful conversations. She indicated that her initial interest in residential schools had been sparked by Paige Raibmon's "A New Understanding of Things Indian: George H. Raley's Negotiation of the Residential School Experience." Raibmon, along with J. R. Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision: A History of Native Residential Schools,* has argued that the personal narratives make for a much more ambiguous text than those who construct these schools as sites of unrelenting abuse. Jody aligned herself more nearly in agreement with this position of individualized complexity in her thesis on Coqualeetza.

[20]Also see Borland; Clifford, and Marcus.

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