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May 2021

## Agents of Reconciliation

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### Recommended Citation

Lowenstein, Anna Lisa (2021) "Agents of Reconciliation," *Penn History Review*. Vol. 27 : Iss. 2 , Article 4.  
Available at: <https://repository.upenn.edu/phr/vol27/iss2/4>

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AGENTS OF RECONCILIATION  
IN A CHANGING CANADIAN NARRATIVE

*Anna Lisa Lowenstein*

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Note on Terminology

There is no nation-wide consensus on the term most appropriate to describe the first peoples of Canada. This paper will employ “indigenous” as a descriptor, except when in quotation of a source that uses alternative wording. This chosen term reflects the change made by the federal government in 2015 in calling the department that has constitutional responsibility for indigenous peoples Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC). This department was previously called Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, and before that, The Indian Affairs Branch, the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, and various other titles.<sup>1</sup> Some consider “indigenous” to be the most inclusive term. The term’s primary limitation is that its definition is contingent on the group’s relation to colonizers.<sup>2</sup>

It is similarly difficult to find a term to describe the rest of Canada’s multi-ethnic population. In light of the conditions in which the residential school system was adopted, this paper will refer to the latter group as both “settlers” and “white,” and use Euro-Christian and Western as descriptors for the mentalities and objectives of this group.

Part I: An Examination of National Change

From the 1880s to the 1990s, the Canadian government sought to systematically destroy indigenous culture and assimilate indigenous people into the southern settler population through the residential school system. The longevity of the

system is reprehensible, because of its purpose, and perplexingly, because of its inability to achieve that purpose. From 1986 to 2015, various apologies from institutions and civilians sought to begin a reconciliatory process, seeking to mend relationships between indigenous and non-indigenous Canadians. The core agents in the institutional, top-down approach toward reconciliation were the churches, the government, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The commission was established by the government's compensation package in the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement, which concluded the class-action lawsuit between over 85,000 indigenous people and the Canadian government. In the public approach toward reconciliation, Canada's most read newspaper, *The Globe and Mail*, emerged as a central figure.<sup>3</sup> Between the period of 1986 to 2015, reconciliatory actions reshaped the Canadian narrative surrounding residential schools. Both top-down and bottom-up approaches showed progress toward more desirable and effective reconciliatory efforts. *The Globe and Mail* emerged as a more powerful agent for change because of the paper's usage of powerful language such as "cultural genocide," interrogation of the meaning of reconciliation the nature of apology, and the outlining of concrete criteria for which to gauge the achievement of reconciliation, as well as its ability to reach a wider audience.

This paper will first provide historical background to the residential school system to illustrate the entrenched social cleavages the system created and thus evidence the challenge and necessity of reconciliation. Second, it will provide an examination of the church apologies in the 1990s, Prime Minister Stephen Harper's apology in 2008, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report of 2015 will reveal institutional reconciliation. Third, using five to eight articles on each aforementioned event, this paper will demonstrate *The Globe and Mail's* role in shaping the public's interpretation of institutional reconciliation and the newspaper's demands for improvement.

Fourth, this paper will compare the institutional approach with the newspaper approach. Fifth, this paper will conclude by summarizing the strengths of *The Globe and Mail* in achieving reconciliation and noting how it can further progress. The latter four sections will illuminate how both institutions and *The Globe and Mail* improved in seeking reconciliation over the studied 25-year period. It will become evident that *The Globe and Mail* improved more than the institutions; the former thereby emerging as the more powerful agent of reconciliation in influencing the Canadian public.

### Part II: The Residential School System

While Canadian residential schools had the ostensible objective of fostering education, vocational skills, and productive lifestyles for indigenous children, they more often became hubs of abuse and neglect that increased the likelihood of mental illness and incarceration in students' adult lives. The paternalistic belief that a Euro-Christian lifestyle was superior and preferable to indigenous culture formed the foundation of the residential school system. The government sought to weaken children's cultural and familial ties in order to absorb them into the body politic.<sup>4</sup> Students were thus forbidden from speaking their languages or practicing their culture.

The government, channeling a colonial white-saviour mentality, claimed good intentions behind the system in rescuing children from what they thought to be a futile lifestyle. In retrospect, it is clear that this conceived purpose was racist and that the means for achieving the goal were harmful and ineffective. Residential school student George Manuel captured the intensity with which indigenous children were forced to reject their culture, and subsequently, themselves: "[in residential schools you learned] to see and hear only what priests and brothers wanted you to see and hear...even the people we loved

came to look ugly.”<sup>5</sup> The system that sought to enlighten children instead broke their spirits and inflicted irrevocable harm.

The conception of residential schools predated the 1867 Confederation of Canada. Superintendent of Upper Canadian schools Edgerton Ryerson recommended the establishment of residential schools in 1847, in which indigenous children would study Christianity and morals, among arithmetic, geometry, writing, music, and other conventional school subjects. Formal federal government involvement in the residential school system began in the 1880s, after Rupert’s Land Order of 1870 greatly expanded the nation territorially, thus encompassing many more indigenous people under governmental jurisdiction. The schools were government-owned, but operated by Christian churches, with a strong missionary component. The system remained relatively intact until the 1970s and ended with the last school closure in 1997.<sup>6</sup>

The first regulations surrounding attendance at residential schools arose in 1894. Enrollment remained voluntary for most, but the government could mandate attendance if it thought a child was not being taken care of at home. Furthermore, no child could be discharged from a school without departmental approval. In 1920, the Indian Act was amended to allow the government to force attendance upon any indigenous child. The sentiment behind residential schools was captured in the words of Canada’s first Prime Minister, John A. MacDonal, when he stated that “Indian children should be withdrawn as much as possible from parental influence.”<sup>7</sup> While some indigenous children prospered in the system, the overwhelming majority suffered.

Enrollment in residential schools peaked at 11,539 students in the 1956-67 school year. At that point in time, there were 90 schools across the country. Over the course of the 110 years of the system’s existence, the federal government estimated that over 150,000 students attended the schools.<sup>8</sup> Almost all

the institutions were co-educational, though curricula differed for girls and boys. Students were permitted to travel home for holidays and summers at most, but not all, schools. The facilities were purposefully located off of reserves to limit interaction between students and parents.

The rise of awareness on racism and oppression after World War II resulted in a heightened Canadian consciousness and public interest in the residential school system. This led to the 1946 creation of the Special Joint Committee on the Indian Act, in which Indigenous people recommended that the residential school system be abolished.<sup>9</sup> This suggestion was ardently rejected, illustrating how entrenched the system was in the country. The impact of the system is still felt today. As historian Paulette Regan asserted, “In the seismic wake of destruction left by the public policy experiment that was the Indian residential schools, Indigenous communities struggle with poverty, poor health and education outcomes, economic disadvantage, domestic violence, abuse, addiction, and high rates of youth suicide.”<sup>10</sup> Disparities in social indicators between indigenous and non-indigenous Canadians remain striking.

Survivors of the system described the schools as a “loveless place” where sexual and physical abuse was frequent.<sup>11</sup> The Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report Summary called the system “institutionalized child neglect.”<sup>12</sup> The government did not allocate adequate funds to residential schools; in fact, to keep schools operative, students were required “to raise or grow and prepare most of the food they ate, to make and repair much of their clothing, and to maintain the schools.”<sup>13</sup> Malnutrition and poor health standards led to endemic sickness.

Recounting and repairing the damage of the residential school system proved challenging to Canadian institutions and the public. The struggle for Canadian awareness and accurate depiction of residential schools involved newspapers, historically significant mediums both for indigenous-non-indigenous rela-

tions and popular education in Canada. Originally named *The Globe*, *The Globe and Mail* newspaper was established by George Brown in 1844.<sup>14</sup> Brown was a politician affiliated with today's Liberal party of Canada. Press was highly partisan in Canada's early days, and *The Globe* was no exception. Yet, though policy preferences differed, all major papers "agreed heartily that Canada ought to develop itself in ways commensurate with its colonial heritage."<sup>15</sup> This meant a commitment to perpetuating Euro-Christian ideals and anti-indigenous sentiment.

Three articles from *The Globe and Mail* establish the early tenor of reportage on residential schools. First, an article printed in 1887 titled "The Primitive Indians" illustrated clear paternalism. This article only referred to indigenous people in biting slurs. Aggressive diction such as "heathen" and "vice barbarism" set a harsh tone. Acknowledgment of the emerging indigenous stereotype, and its affirmation, was present in the statement that "the Indian leads the listless, lazy, objectless existence which we have almost come to regard as his race characteristic." The article commended the residential schools, then in their infancy, and implored the government to continue their proliferation: "It is one of the wonders of American history and of Christian missionary enterprise that so little effort has been put forth to civilise and Christianise the Indian."<sup>16</sup> Racism and belief of Euro-Christian superiority were present.

In contrast to the highly subjective and emotionally charged nature of "The Primitive Indians," two articles published in 1937 discussing residential schools were terse and matter of fact. Both articles reported on the tragic death of four boys who ran away from Lejac Residential School in British Columbia, freezing to death before they made it back to their reserve. The first piece relayed the facts of the event and recommendations from the coroner's jury such as that "excessive corporal discipline if practiced [...] should be limited," and that "more definite action by school authorities might or should

have been taken the night upon which the disappearance (of the boys from the school) took place.”<sup>17</sup> The second article elaborated on the controversy over the coroner’s jury verdict. The article noted that there was no evidence linking the runaway to corporal punishment. Moreover, it stated that the Lejac Residential School principal “testified that runaways occurred more frequently lately due to the fact corporal punishment was being discouraged by higher authorities.”<sup>18</sup> The article did not challenge the support of corporal punishment.

In comparison to “The Primitive Indians,” the latter two articles were short in length and absent of editorial opinion. This may reflect different journalistic standards of the articles’ era. Yet, some themes carried through these three articles, revealing *The Globe and Mail’s* early acceptance of residential schools. For instance, all three articles used “Indian” to describe indigenous people. Author Daniel Francis of *The Imaginary Indian* discussed the use of this term in Canadian press, emphasizing its implicated power imbalance between settlers and indigenous people: “The Indian began as a White man’s mistake.”<sup>19</sup> The term, coined during colonial conquest, perpetuated a misunderstanding of indigenous culture.

All three articles furthermore lacked the voice of indigenous individuals, as well as a broader contextual narrative or investigative questioning behind the suffering of indigenous people. This contributed to the image of the indigenous Canadians as a lesser, helpless population that required the intervention of white settlers. This underlying pejorative sentiment toward indigenous people illustrated discriminatory views and the attempt to eradicate indigenous culture through residential schools, in addition to the general drowning of indigenous voices in Canadian public discourse. An examination of *The Globe and Mail* articles from later decades revealed a significant alteration in reporting style, derivative of changing public attitudes and awareness toward reconciliation with indigenous



people and the residential school system.

### Part III: Canada Confronts the System

In 1986, a United Church of Canada minister apologized for the church's role in the residential school system. This event ushered in a wave of apologies from various churches across the country. Next came the Catholic Oblate Conference of Canada in 1991, followed by the Anglican Church in 1993, the Presbyterian Church in 1994, and a second United Church apology in 1998.<sup>20</sup> In general, these church apologies failed to encompass the true scope of the damage wrought by residential schools and their continuing legacy. Still, their admissions of regret provided a necessary catalyst for acknowledgement of the wrongs of the past. Intense emotion and frustration came to a head, forcing institutional acknowledgment of an omnipresent tension between indigenous and non-indigenous Canadians.

Christianity lay at the core of the curriculum and forced lifestyle at residential schools. In 1879, politician Nicholas Davin recommended that Canada's burgeoning residential school system be centred around the Christian religion: "Since all civilizations were based on religion, it would be inexcusable, he thought, to do away with Aboriginal faith 'without supplying a better [one].'"<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, the missionary tradition of Christianity made hopeful the system's founders, who sought fervent educators for work that they believed required "not only the energy but the patience of an enthusiast."<sup>22</sup> Many school personnel were indeed enthusiasts, even idealists, yet the unhappiness of students and parents and the lack of funds troubled them. Subsequently, church officials found it easier to blame indigenous people for the system's deficiencies rather than the system itself.<sup>23</sup> The disconnect between the churches' operative function and the government's authority over and financing of the schools fueled church disillusionment within just a few

decades of the system's birth.

The first apology from the United Church was made at the request of the Native Council branch within the United Church of Canada. The apology was short and steeped in keen affirmation of the benefits of Christianity, asking for forgiveness so that indigenous people and Christians may “walk together [...] in the Spirit of Christ.” [source?] The apology addressed some of the limitations of evangelization, but was in no way specific to the residential school system or detailed in why the system merited regret.<sup>24</sup> It was a shallow apology. Residential school survivors and indigenous leaders received but did not accept the 1986 statement.<sup>25</sup> Acceptance, to them, could only come after action, change, and the church's deeper understanding and acknowledgment of the system's impacts.<sup>26</sup> In general, the church apologies that followed involved similar limitations and received similar dismissive reactions from indigenous people.

The church apologies, while substantively inadequate to many, effectively roused national consciousness on the lacking understanding and accountability on the issue of residential schools. In 1998, Indian Affairs Minister Jane Stewart delivered a “Statement of Reconciliation,” the government's first attempt at apology. Indigenous leaders “resoundingly condemned” Stewart's words.<sup>27</sup> The statement was a quasi-apology due to its failure to holistically acknowledge the purpose of the residential school system. Instead, Stewart lamented the physical and sexual abuse that had occurred and did not discuss the system's structural deficiencies or ongoing effects.<sup>28</sup> Increased resentment of the insufficient government approach toward apology led to a surge of action by indigenous people. By October 2001, over 8,500 school survivors filed lawsuits against various actors who perpetrated the residential school system. The 2006 Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement promised each survivor \$10,000 for the first year of enrolment at a residential school

and \$3,000 for each additional year, among other elements of compensation.<sup>29</sup> This pushed the country into the reconciliatory process.

In 2008, Prime Minister Harper came forward with an official government apology. This second event's stark contrast with the church apologies exhibited a changing national narrative surrounding residential schools. This apology signaled the transition between searching for solutions to the problems caused by residential schools to taking action. One key aspect of the apology was the relaying of a newly established historical consensus on the schools. Harper addressed the system's goal to "kill the Indian in the child" and the underlying assumptions of this objective.<sup>30</sup> The 2008 apology was a significant departure from the church apologies and Stewart's 1998 statement in tone, scope, and authenticity. Harper presented in the House of Commons and was broadcast live on national television. His statement was followed by apologies from the other national party leaders and responses from indigenous leaders and survivors.

At points during the apology, Harper's voice trembled, indicating the intensity of the moment and the charged emotion behind the overdue occasion. Harper explicitly mentioned the lasting impacts of the residential school system. Furthermore, he recognized the negative effect of the absence of government apology until that moment, signalling a shift toward reconciliation. Harper referenced the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement in order to highlight the financial compensation to survivors and to point out the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, a cornerstone of the settlement agreement.<sup>31</sup> These references demonstrated a commitment to action and a scope of apology beyond mere regret.

Responses to the apology were mixed. Some indigenous people referred to the address as an "intensive, sacred experience," while others asked, "what took them so long?"<sup>32</sup> Overall,

the action was received positively, particularly because of its strength in contrast to the deficient 1998 statement and the inadequate 1990s church apologies. At the time of the 2008 apology, a survey found that only half of Canadians had “read or heard something about the schools,” indicating the need for increased public awareness.<sup>33</sup> The apology, while long delayed, initiated a productive conversation that was continued by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

The third significant event in attempts at top-down narrative adjustment regarding residential schools was the creation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The commission’s report culminated six years of gathering testimonies, conducting research, and writing. The press played an integral role in publicizing the proceedings of the commission, including thousands of heartfelt testimonies from survivors. Many Canadians learned about the brutality of the residential school system for the first time through reportage on the commission.

The commission had seven key goals, including promoting “awareness and public education” of residential schools, creating “as complete an historical record as possible,” and supporting commemoration of former residential school students and their families.<sup>34</sup> The commission sought to start reconciliation, and did not claim to be an end in itself. The commissioners leading the mission were Murray Sinclair (Chair), Chief Wilton Littlechild, and Marie Wilson, three indigenous individuals. Before serving on the commission, Sinclair was a judge on Manitoba’s Supreme Court, Wilson a journalist and staunch advocate for increased coverage of indigenous issues, and Littlechild a lawyer and Member of Federal Parliament.<sup>35</sup> The commission’s report summary detailed the history of the system and its legacy, as well as the challenge of reconciliation and the 94 calls to action addressed to various different individuals and institutions.

The Truth and Reconciliation Report Summary care-

fully defined reconciliation: “To the Commission, reconciliation is about establishing and maintaining a mutually respectful relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples.” The emphasis on the joint responsibility is salient, as it necessitated cross-cultural understanding and ongoing collaboration. The commission further stated that both victims and perpetrators of the system required healing.<sup>36</sup> The report’s calls to action were specific, yet their feasibility ranged greatly. The report did not provide a specific end-goal for reconciliation, perhaps because that end-goal is subjective. Yet, this hinders the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report Summary. Canadians are left without a concrete metric to recognize reconciliation or a specific goal for which to strive.

Achievement of a satisfactory relationship between indigenous and non-indigenous Canadians may never be achieved in the eyes of some. In defining the goals of reconciliation, historian Pablo de Greiff suggested that reconciliation “encapsulates a primordial need for wholeness and suggests that social alienation leads to incomplete inhumanity.” He furthermore stated that an “unreconciled” society “would be one in which resentment characterizes the relations between citizens and between citizens and their institutions.”<sup>37</sup> These definitions of reconciliation and “unreconciliation” provide a useful dichotomy for recognizing change, which the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report Summary lacked.

An examination of the similarities and differences between the church apologies, Harper’s 2008 apology, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report Summary provides an evolution of approaches toward coping with residential schools and their legacy. As time passed, each event worked to avoid the shortcomings of the one prior. For Harper, this meant emphasizing the officiality of his apology as a formal acknowledgment, recognizing the effects of residential schools across time, and taking responsibility not only for the results of the

system but also its creation. For the commission, this involved incorporating as many different testimonies as possible. Yet, these events were not always accessible or digestible for all Canadians. Furthermore, their nature as top-down approaches toward reconciliation limited their impact because of the potential ulterior motives such as pleasing the electorate. Finally, the three events may have been born out of guilt and the desire to look progressive to the Canadian public, or a mandated remedy following a lawsuit in the case of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, rather than a genuine concern for reconciliation. Of the three events, the commission presented the best approach toward reconciliation, however, its idealistic nature, lack of accountability mechanisms, and often impractical recommendations did not provide the Canadian public with clear instructions or attainable goals in the process of reconciliation.

It should be noted that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report Summary has immense value in its detailed historical recollection. The commission's attempt to reach a single truth through thousands of testimonies may seem paradoxical to some. Yet, through compilation of perspectives, the commission strikes a balance between a singular, positivist truth and a postmodernist view that history does not exist outside of individual conceptions. Postmodernism, as described by Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt, and Margaret Jacob in "A New Republic of Learning," represents the fusion of these two polarities. Applying the words of these historians, the commission report summary reconstructed a past pieced together from records, and "should not be dismissed as a mere discourse on other discourses."<sup>38</sup> The challenge of testimonial collection was worth the effort for the commissioners, who found value rather than confusion in a diverse array of perspectives.

Newspaper articles effectively publicized these events to the public and held institutions accountable for reconciliation. In examining *The Globe and Mail* articles, the success of the

bottom-up approach toward reconciliation becomes clear. By comparing *The Globe and Mail's* journey in demanding reconciliation with the institutional attempt, it is evident that *The Globe and Mail* went farther in terms of asking difficult questions and demanding answers in order to achieve real reconciliation.

#### Part IV: Reportage That Shaped a National Narrative

In a contemporary context, it is clear that *The Globe and Mail's* early reportage of indigenous issues and residential schools, such as the “The Primitive Indians” article and the pieces on student runaways at Lejac Residential School, was pejorative, racist, and paternalistic. Throughout the twentieth century, reportage continued to portray the residential school system as an imperfect but necessary solution to a dire problem. This began to change in the 1960s, alongside growing global consciousness of racism and discrimination. Canadian Challenge for Change/Société nouvelle exemplified the evolving attitude toward uncovering truths about indigenous groups. From 1967 to 1980, this initiative, occurring from 1967 to 1980, entailed the production of nearly 250 films by the National Film Board of Canada, a publicly-funded national endowment for film-making. The initiative sought to confront “a wide spectrum of issues, from poverty to sexism to marginalization, with the intention of developing community and political awareness, as well as empowering Canadians.”<sup>39</sup> The images below display posters for Challenge for Change. They demonstrate the provocative and important questions posed by these films, helping instigate an entirely new perspective in Canada.

## Agents of Reconciliation



Photographs of Canadian National Film Board Posters, 1967, UCC Board of Home Missions, Series II, Section 3, Fonds 509, Box 143, File 12, United Church of Canada Archives, Toronto.

In the wake of increasing public awareness for indigenous issues, *The Globe and Mail* began to change its reporting style and increase content on indigenous issues. Over the course of the 25-year period studied in this paper, *The Globe and Mail* improved immensely in challenging institutional narratives in



reconciliation and provoking readers to think deeper about the issues at hand. Emily Gillespie and Rosemary Nagy, in their review and synthesis of truth and reconciliation literature in Canada, proposed a framing mechanism to categorize representations of these issues. In this framework, articles with a “reductive frame” draw upon sexual and physical abuse of individuals, rhetoric on past mistakes, encouragement of moving on, and individual healing through Western therapy. In contrast, articles with an “expansive frame” use the language of colonization and decolonization, genocide, continuing legacy and explicit links to contemporary structural violence, structural change, and holistic healing that emphasizes Indigenous methods.<sup>40</sup> These frames provide useful lenses through which to examine changes in coverage over time. The studied reportage from *The Globe and Mail* clearly demonstrates a transition from reductive framing to expansive framing.

Articles from *The Globe and Mail* on the apologies of the 1990s exhibited three central themes and channeled a reductive frame. First, the articles recognized either portrayed the church incentives behind the residential schools as noble, or failed to acknowledge the scope of their negative effects. The long period of abuse and poor treatment in schools was referred to in one instance as “150 years of trying to win the souls of Canada’s native people.”<sup>41</sup> The same article stated that “the apology did not detract from the heroic works of missionaries.”<sup>42</sup> Rather than focusing on the culture and identity the schools sought to strip away, one article described the schools as “teaching the white man’s way.”<sup>43</sup> Another article stated that “although many received a good education at the schools, others suffered.”<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, when contextualizing the events that warranted the apologies, most articles cited physical and sexual abuse as the central issue, rather than suggesting any problems inherent in the residential school system as a whole. The articles’ failure to acknowledge the discriminatory sentiment that lay

behind residential schools, as well as their far-reaching impacts and residual legacies, constructed a reductive frame.

Second, the articles attempted to shift blame to the government to lessen the apparent guilt of the church. In an article titled “Sex abuse blame pinned on Ottawa,” the journalist quoted church officials stating it is “clear that we were not the primary player” of the system.<sup>45</sup> One article justified a particularly lacking apology by saying “it stopped short of an outright apology for fear it may be left holding the bag for the federal government.”<sup>46</sup> Further explanations of reluctance to apologize due to financial reasons furnished sympathy for the churches.: “even expressing repentance might lead to their insurance company cancelling coverage,” due to fear of lawsuits.<sup>47</sup> While the government indisputably played a central role in the residential school system, the articles’ emphasis on holding the government accountable eased the blame on churches, institutions that also played an integral role. The articles failed to demand more from the inadequate church apologies, sending a message to the Canadian public that these apologies sufficed. Glossing over the apology details in order to pressure the government to shoulder the responsibility is a justified cause; it was problematic in these articles, however, because it detracted from commentary on the church apologies themselves. *The Globe and Mail* failed to deliver a balanced analysis of these events, thus rendering the churches’ apologies overly positive. Again, the reductive frame emerged.

Third, the editorial content did not challenge readers to think deeper about the issue at hand. This is particularly striking in contrast with the thought-provoking editorial content and selected letters to the editor that appeared after Harper’s 2008 apology. One potential reason for the underwhelming content in the 1990s is the dispersed nature of the apologies. Spanning one decade, the church apologies were not a distinct turning point, but rather a society “trying to rouse itself from

a sleep of ignorance about one of the darkest chapters in its history.”<sup>48</sup> Yet, even after Stewart’s “Statement of Reconciliation,” an event that would have lent itself well to provocative editorial content, *The Globe and Mail* exhibited a reductive frame. The piece stated that the residential school system was “finally being brought to a close,” rather than focusing on the beginning of an ongoing journey toward reconciliation.<sup>49</sup> Furthermore, the editorial echoed the forgiving tone of the church apology articles: “It is easy for us to judge harshly today people from another time who genuinely believed that they were doing good.”<sup>50</sup> In contrast to the paper’s later outspokenness about the need for a more resounding effort from the government towards apology and reconciliation, this editorial on Stewart’s address balked by lauding the statement and failing to push the conversation further.

Subsequent reportage on Harper’s 2008 apology channeled themes that better equipped readers to analyze the event critically, thus constructing an expansive frame. The newspaper achieved this through traditional reporting, but also through editorial, provocative comment pieces, and letters to the editor. First, the 2008 articles emphasized the overdue nature of the apology. The day after the apology, the front-page story titled “We are sorry” covered the event in depth. The article referred to the occasion as “decades overdue.”<sup>51</sup> An editorial released two days after the apology referred to it as “long denied.”<sup>52</sup> Generational impacts were frequently referenced, further emphasizing the longevity of the issues discussed. This discussion of ongoing legacy constructed an expansive frame.

Second, the articles pressured the government to stay true to their apology and pursue action toward change. *The Globe and Mail* released a cautionary editorial one day prior to the apology that established several criteria with which the public could assess Harper’s words. The editorial wrote “if it is grudging, or too narrow in scope, if it is done out of duty and

not conscience, there will inevitably and justly be demand for yet another.”<sup>53</sup> These criteria provided Canadians with a critical lens through which to evaluate Harper, making the apology more productive. Moreover, the “We are sorry” article pointedly wrote that “Mr. Harper made no promises to improve aboriginal social conditions.”<sup>54</sup> It also included ten short excerpts from various indigenous individuals, demonstrating *The Globe and Mail*’s insistence on creating an open dialogue and encouraging continued conversation between indigenous civilians and the government. To the same effect, an editorial made specific calls to action for both the government and indigenous communities, highlighting the multiple actors implicated in reconciliation. This emphasis on accountability enforced the necessity of structural change and decolonization, further contributing to the expansive frame.

Third, the articles questioned the value of apology in the first place, illuminating a challenging but important conversation. This was primarily accomplished through letters written to the editor and opinion columns, permitting a multiplicity of perspectives on the issue while maintaining cohesion in the editorial position of *The Globe and Mail*. The inclusion of these pieces was furthermore effective because it instigated a public conversation. *The Globe and Mail* columnist Rick Salutin pointed out the defaults in public apologies: “the real peril in public apology is that it can disempower those who get one while, in effect, adding strength to the apologizers by granting them the power to ‘heal.’” Salutin suggested that “too much apology” was possible and that it could harmfully reinforce victim and victor roles.<sup>55</sup> Moreover, a letter to the editor from University of British Columbia professor Nicholas Hudson posed similar questions. Hudson interrogated the assumptions that lay under the apology, making readers question the event’s value from a far-sighted historical perspective. He asked: “will historians of the future regard these beliefs as hopeless and naïve?”<sup>56</sup> Hud-

son told Canadians to “reflect very carefully on our own good intentions,” leaving readers to form their own conclusions on the value of apologies.<sup>57</sup> These two pieces examined not only the meaning of Harper’s words but the apology itself. Consequently, the focus on structural change and questioning of Western modes of healing further reinforced the expansive frame. These difficult questions could only be asked by a third party such as *The Globe and Mail*, and not by Harper or the Canadian government, illustrating why newspapers hold more power in pushing reconciliation than do institutions.

The use of the expansive frame in *The Globe and Mail* reportage continued after the publishing of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report in 2015. Two principal themes emerged. First, the reportage used the label of “cultural genocide” to describe the residential school system. Usage of this term in the context of residential schools was relatively uncommon before Supreme Court Justice Beverley McLachlin employed it in a 2008 lecture at the Global Centre for Pluralism. The label appeared in nearly all articles from 2015 referenced in this paper. *The Globe and Mail* referred to McLachlin’s remarks as “unparalleled” and of “symbolic importance.”<sup>58</sup> Classifying the findings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report as a history of cultural genocide increased the tone of urgency in the articles’ push for accountability and reconciliation. One statement referred to the term as “a recognition of what needs to be done to help bring about reconciliation.” The article specified that the use of this term by McLachlin ended a two-year long push from indigenous leaders and human rights experts for Canada to acknowledge the residential school system as a form of genocide.<sup>59</sup> The usage of this powerful term alongside examinations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report elevated the commission’s findings and demonstrated a journalistic commitment to taking the issue seriously. Thus, the expansive frame was continued.

Second, the articles engaged deeply with the concept of reconciliation and questioned its feasibility, thus acknowledging its difficulty rather than treating it as a buzz-word. One article was titled “Commission to chart map of rocky road to reconciliation.” The article included the National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations’ statement that “the relationship [between the government and indigenous people] has not improved to the point where we can say reconciliation has started.”<sup>60</sup> A different article included Sinclair, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s chair, stating that “mere words are no longer enough” and expressing concern over the government’s commitment to reconciliation.<sup>61</sup> The articles succeeded in both recognizing the achievements of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission while still encouraging the public to demand more reconciliatory efforts, in addition to acknowledging how far Canada must go for needed change to be realized. The articles embodied an expansive frame, demanding structural change.

The transition from reductive framing to expansive framing in *The Globe and Mail* articles demonstrated the newspaper’s changing approach toward reporting on residential schools. Through observation of articles on the church apologies, Harper’s apology, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report, it is evident that reportage became more critical, and held the government and the public more accountable for achieving reconciliation. The change exhibited in reportage on the events was more drastic than the changes exhibited between the events themselves, as proved by the adoption of new labels such as “cultural genocide” and the asking of questions that demanded both a substantive and a methodological examination of reconciliation. The institutions laid the groundwork in forming a bridge between indigenous and non-indigenous populations while *The Globe and Mail* guided the Canadian public through the process of reconciliation more intimately and reacted to events in a useful and purposeful way.

Part V: Embracing a Future of Reconciliation

The differences between the church apologies of the 1990s, Harper's apology of 2008, and the Truth and Reconciliation Report were stark. Institutional moments of acknowledgment and pushes toward reconciliation were seminal events in Canada's efforts to change the narrative surrounding a shameful history. Yet, because the institutions failed to be daring, they fall second to *The Globe in Mail* in this comparative analysis of reconciliatory approaches. The newspaper articles used in this paper employed powerful labels such "cultural genocide," asked questions about the nature of apology, and provided specific criteria for the public to seek reconciliation. For these reasons, *The Globe and Mail* emerged as a more powerful tool for guiding the public towards real reconciliation between indigenous and non-indigenous Canadians.

In addition to content of articles, the newspaper medium contributed to *The Globe and Mail's* elevated role in reconciliation. The steady stream of content emerging from *The Globe and Mail* as a daily newspaper ensured continual influence over the public readership. The agenda-setting power of *The Globe and Mail* galvanized citizens to demand reconciliation and apply pressure on institutions to expose the truth. Furthermore, *The Globe and Mail* had a greater capacity to encompass a variety of perspectives than did the government, churches, or Truth and Reconciliation Commission. This was achieved through combining journalistic content with editorials, opinion pieces, comics, letters to the editors, and comment sections. Because of these factors, *The Globe and Mail* emerged as a more powerful actor for reconciliation than the government, churches, or commission.

Asking difficult questions and challenging institutional narratives is important but not enough. Newspapers must remember that truth does not necessarily produce reconciliation.

In order to bridge the gap between truth and reconciliation, Gillespie and Nagy suggested that newspapers adopt additional frames, including “truth-telling as therapy, the role of non-aboriginals is to witness, and public education.”<sup>62</sup> These scholars further implored the Canadian public to read more indigenous media in order to stop relying on predominantly white newspapers to lead the charge toward reconciliation.<sup>63</sup> Additional frames and widespread readership of a plurality of media outlets are laudable goals for the Canadian public in ensuring the continued pursuit of reconciliation.

It is important that newspapers utilize their agenda-setting abilities to keep indigenous issues and the legacy of residential schools at the forefront of Canadian public conversation. Canadian complacency ought to be combatted through continuing counter-hegemonic reportage that maintains focus on reconciliation after the conclusion of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. It must be acknowledged that there are many more actors involved in instigating reconciliation than those examined in this paper. Indigenous people themselves should be at the centre of this conversation. Established newspapers such as *The Globe and Mail* must work harder to include the voices of indigenous people. The newspaper should also use their public status to elevate indigenous media outlets. A diversity of opinion used to construct institutional and public approaches to reconciliation will produce the best outcomes for the future of relationships between indigenous and non-indigenous groups relationships Canada-wide.



Notes

<sup>1</sup> James Rodger Miller, *Residential Schools and Reconciliation: Canada Confronts its History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017), p. xiii.

<sup>2</sup> “Aboriginal Identity & Terminology” University of British Columbia Indigenous Foundation, [https://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/aboriginal\\_identity\\_\\_terminology/](https://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/aboriginal_identity__terminology/) (accessed April 20, 2019).

<sup>3</sup> Graeme Roy, “Globe readership grows, most read in Canada,” *The Globe and Mail* (January 25, 2018), <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/globe-readership-grows-most-read-in-canada/article37729895/> (accessed April 30, 2019).

<sup>4</sup> Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, “Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future” (2015), [http://nctr.ca/assets/reports/Final%20Reports/Executive\\_Summary\\_English\\_Web.pdf](http://nctr.ca/assets/reports/Final%20Reports/Executive_Summary_English_Web.pdf), p. 3.

<sup>5</sup> Paulette Regan, *Unsettling the Settler Within: Indian Residential Schools, Truth Telling, and Reconciliation in Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010), p. 115.

<sup>6</sup> Commission, “Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future,” p. 69.

<sup>7</sup> Commission, “Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future,” p. 2.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Miller, *Residential Schools and Reconciliation*, p. 20.

<sup>10</sup> Regan, *Unsettling the Settler Within*, p. 10-11.

<sup>11</sup> Commission, “Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future,” p. 42.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 77.

<sup>14</sup> Mark Cronlund Anderson and Carmen L. Robertson, *Seeing Red: A History of Natives in Canadian Newspapers* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2011), p. 21.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> Anonymous, “The Primitive Indians: Misdirected Effort to Promote Their Civilisation,” *The Globe* (November 11, 1887), ProQuest Historical Newspapers, <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.torontopubliclibrary.ca/docview/1537465803/936A7E4F6D8948EEPQ/57?accountid=14369>.

<sup>17</sup> Anonymous, “Four Boys Die; Find Discipline Is Too Severe,” *The Globe and Mail* (January 6, 1937), ProQuest Historical Newspapers, <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.torontopubliclibrary.ca/>

docview/1350907689/FF81CAEB03AE43C0PQ/52?accountid=14369.

<sup>18</sup> Anonymous, "Jury Would Stop School Beatings: Suggestion Sequels Death of Indian Boys," *The Globe and Mail* (January 7, 1937), ProQuest Historical Newspapers. <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.torontopubliclibrary.ca/docview/1350908341/pageviewPDF/FF81CAEB03AE43C0PQ/53?accountid=14369>.

<sup>19</sup> Daniel Francis, *The Imaginary Indian: The Image of the Indian in Canadian Culture*, (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 1992), p. 5.

<sup>20</sup> Commission, "Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future," p. 378-384.

<sup>21</sup> Footnote 109, cited in Commission, "Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future," p. 55.

<sup>22</sup> Miller, *Residential Schools and Reconciliation*, p. 13.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, p. 23.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, p. 34.

<sup>25</sup> Commission, "Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future," p. 223.

<sup>26</sup> Miller, *Residential Schools and Reconciliation*, p. 40.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, p. 77.

<sup>28</sup> Matt James, "Wrestling with the Past: Apologies, Quasi-Apologies, and Non-Apologies in Canada," in *The Age of Apology: Facing Up to the Past*, edited by Mark Gibney, Rhoda E. Howard-Hassmann, Jean-Marc Coicaud, and Niklaus Steiner, 137–153, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), p. 141.

<sup>29</sup> Commission, "Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future," p. 130.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Commission, "Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future," p. 371.

<sup>32</sup> Miller, *Residential Schools and Reconciliation*, p. 195.

<sup>33</sup> Footnote 6, cited in Emily Gillespie and Rosemary Nagy. "Representing Reconciliation: A news frame analysis of print media coverage of Indian residential schools." *Transitional Justice Review*, vol. 1 issue 3, article 2 (January 2015), <https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1039&context=tjreview>, 5.

<sup>34</sup> Commission, "Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future," p.

340.

<sup>35</sup> “Meet the Commissioners,” Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, <http://www.trc.ca/about-us/meet-the-commissioners.html>, (accessed April 23, 2019).

<sup>36</sup> Commission, “Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future,” p. 9.

<sup>37</sup> Pablo de Greiff, “The Role of Apologies in National Reconciliation Processes: On Making Trust-worthy Institutions Trustworthy” in *The Age of Apology: Facing Up to the Past*, edited by Mark Gibney, Rhoda E. Howard-Hassmann, Jean-Marc Coicaud, and Niklaus Steiner, 120–136 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), p. 128.

<sup>38</sup> Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt and Margaret Jacob, “A New Republic of Learning” in *Telling the Truth About History* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1995), p. 241-309, 250.

<sup>39</sup> Michael Baker, Thomas Waugh and Ezra Winton. “Challenge for Change.” National Film Board of Canada. <https://www.nfb.ca/playlists/michael-brendan-thomas-waugh-ezra-winton/challenge-for-change>, (accessed April 25, 2019).

<sup>40</sup> Gillespie and Nagy, “Representing Reconciliation,” p. 11.

<sup>41</sup> Miro Cernetig, “Oblate Brothers seek natives’ forgiveness,” *The Globe and Mail* ( July 25, 1991), ProQuest Historical Newspapers, <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.torontopubliclibrary.ca/hnpglobeandmail/docview/1143978733/D96B7B91661F41A3PQ/8?accountid=14369>.

<sup>42</sup> Cernetig, “Oblate Brothers seek natives’ forgiveness.”

<sup>43</sup> Robert Matas, “Sex abuse blame pinned on Ottawa,” *The Globe and Mail* (August 6, 1997), ProQuest Historical Newspapers, <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.torontopubliclibrary.ca/hnpglobeandmail/docview/1143644771/D96B7B91661F41A3PQ/66?accountid=14369>.

<sup>44</sup> Robert Matas, “Minister has little to offer natives who were abused,” *The Globe and Mail* (December 15, 1997). ProQuest Historical Newspapers. <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.torontopubliclibrary.ca/hnpglobeandmail/docview/1140739652/D96B7B91661F41A3PQ/75?accountid=14369>.

<sup>45</sup> Matas, “Sex abuse blame pinned on Ottawa.”

<sup>46</sup> Brian Laghi, “United Church regrets abuse of natives,” *The Globe and Mail* (August 21, 1997), ProQuest Historical Newspapers, <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.torontopubliclibrary.ca/hnpglobeandmail/docview/1143643283/D96B7B91661F41A3PQ/67?accountid=14369>.

- <sup>47</sup> Laghi, “United Church regrets abuse of natives.”
- <sup>48</sup> Miller, *Residential Schools and Reconciliation*, p. 6.
- <sup>49</sup> Editorial, “Residential schools, national scandal,” *The Globe and Mail* (January 8, 1998), ProQuest Historical Newspapers, <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.torontopubliclibrary.ca/hnpglobeandmail/docview/387360291/93C1C63F032342B4PQ/2?accountid=14369>.
- <sup>50</sup> Editorial, “Residential schools, national scandal.”
- <sup>51</sup> Bill Curry and Gloria Galloway, “We are sorry,” *The Globe and Mail* (June 12, 20018), ProQuest Historical Newspapers, <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.torontopubliclibrary.ca/hnpglobeandmail/docview/382730434/988CC3A021D40D4PQ/9?accountid=14369>.
- <sup>52</sup> Editorial, “Canada’s expression of sorrow,” *The Globe and Mail* (June 12, 2008), ProQuest Historical Newspapers, <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.torontopubliclibrary.ca/hnpglobeandmail/docview/382730825/68E25173BF6E4694PQ/1?accountid=14369>.
- <sup>53</sup> Editorial, “No routine apology will suffice,” *The Globe and Mail* (June 10, 2008), ProQuest Historical Newspapers, <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.torontopubliclibrary.ca/hnpglobeandmail/docview/382727112/AABE1E37D4245C5PQ/1?accountid=14369>.
- <sup>54</sup> Curry and Galloway, “We are sorry.”
- <sup>55</sup> Rick Salutin, “Issues of apology and power,” *The Globe and Mail* (June 13, 2008), ProQuest Historical Newspapers, <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.torontopubliclibrary.ca/hnpglobeandmail/docview/1371240127/2BC02C579CEE4F20PQ/1?accountid=14369>.
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- <sup>57</sup> Hudson, “Lest we forget.”
- <sup>58</sup> Sean Fine, “McLachlin: A history of ‘cultural genocide,’” *The Globe and Mail* (May 29, 2015), ProQuest Historical Newspapers, <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.torontopubliclibrary.ca/hnpglobeandmail/docview/2122110790/716988C287BB4563PQ/1?accountid=14369>.
- <sup>59</sup> Bill Curry and Gloria Galloway, “‘Cultural genocide’ cited as goal of residential schools,” *The Globe and Mail*, (June 2, 2015), ProQuest Historical Newspapers, <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.torontopubliclibrary.ca/hnpglobeandmail/docview/2122290629/EE1FE24A05EB47C9>

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<sup>61</sup> Bill Curry and Gloria Galloway, "Truth and Reconciliation," *The Globe and Mail* (June 3, 2015), ProQuest Historical Newspapers, <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.torontopubliclibrary.ca/hnpglobeandmail/docview/2122239451/1EA9A7144648FAPQ/2?accountid=14369>.

<sup>62</sup> Gillespie and Nagy, "Representing Reconciliation," p. 26.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid*, p. 40.