

**A Curious Case of “Integrating” the Integrated:
Government Education Policy and the School at Telegraph Creek,
British Columbia, 1906–1951**

by

Eve Chapple
B.F.A., University of Victoria, 2002
B.A., University of Victoria, 2008

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of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Supervisory Committee

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Supervisory Committee

Dr. Helen Raptis (Department of Curriculum and Instruction)
Supervisor

Dr. Jason Price (Department of Curriculum and Instruction)
Departmental Member

Dr. Graham McDonough (Department of Curriculum and Instruction)
Departmental Member

Abstract

Supervisory Committee

Supervisor

Dr. Helen Raptis (Department of Curriculum and Instruction)

Departmental Member

Dr. Jason Price (Department of Curriculum and Instruction)

Departmental Member

Dr. Graham McDonough (Department of Curriculum and Instruction)

This thesis explores the unique circumstances surrounding the provincial school at Telegraph Creek in northwestern British Columbia. Initially conceived as a school for the children of white settlers, local trustees permitted the attendance of Tahltan children year after year to maintain the minimum enrollment requirement to receive provincial funding. Combined with an annual tuition grant from the Department of Indian Affairs for the schooling of status Indian children, the Telegraph Creek public school functioned as an integrated school until provincial, federal, and missionary authorities interfered in the 1940s. The research demonstrates how decisions made by both provincial and Indian Affairs education officials leading up to the 1949 cost-sharing agreement to build a new school at Telegraph Creek, were far from benign. Indigenous children in northwest British Columbia became the objects of a post-war educational policy, which promoted integrated schooling and ironically, facilitated segregated schooling.

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I send my sincere thanks to the archivists and archival assistants at the British Columbia Archives for their helpful advice in my search for relevant evidence. I would also like to thank my sister Daintry in Whitehorse for her assistance locating important documents held at the Yukon Archives. To Lona McRae whose superior editing and formatting skills saved me from several hours of frustration, a heartfelt thank you.

This thesis is dedicated to my son Alan who shares my love of learning and passion for all forms of creative expression.

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School, Telegraph Creek 1952, courtesy BC Archives collections, I-31887

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

No more 'second-class citizens' in British Columbia

In September 1950, an article in British Columbia's *Daily Colonist* newspaper praised provincial education authorities for opening public school doors to Indian children living on reserves. "Action to give native Indian children full educational equality with white children is well underway in British Columbia," the reporter said and went on to give particular credit to British Columbia's Education Minister, W.T. Straith,

for his efforts to remove “the allegation that there are any ‘second-class citizens’ in British Columbia.” Agreements had been concluded between the federal government and the Campbell River and Terrace school districts that would “permit Indian children to attend elementary and high schools with white children.” According to the reporter, similar agreements were being negotiated with school districts in Ashcroft, Telegraph Creek and Prince Rupert. Most likely to please provincial tax-payers, the reporter was careful to mention the cost-saving advantages of the government’s initiative: “In addition to giving equality to Indian children” the new plan was intended to be economical by eliminating “duplication of school buildings and teaching staffs.”¹

Bearing in mind the reporter’s bias, the self-congratulatory sentiments expressed by the Minister of Education in 1950 did little to explain the provincial government’s socio-political motives to integrate Indian children into the public school system after the Second World War. Until 1949, when British Columbia amended the *Public School Act* to legalize cost-sharing agreements with Indian Affairs, provincial education authorities showed no inclination to alter the two systems of education that “officially” functioned in the province—a federal system which consigned Indian children to denominational residential and day schools and a provincial system of public schools “conducted under strictly non-sectarian principles” and in theory, open to all children.²

The two parts of this “dual” school system effectively worked in tandem to alienate Indigenous children from mainstream society in British Columbia for more than

¹ *Daily Colonist*, 13 September, 1950.

² British Columbia’s *An Act Respecting Public Schools* (1872) stated: “All Public Schools established under the provisions of this Act, shall be conducted upon strictly non-sectarian principles. The highest morality shall be inculcated, but no religious dogmas or creed shall be taught. All Judges, Clergymen, Members of the Legislature, and others interested in education, shall be school visitors.” See full text at *Homeroom*, www.viu.ca/homeroom.

a century. However, scholars have largely focused attention on the historical church-state partnership, which controlled and administered the segregated residential schools.³ These studies have made a vital contribution to our understanding of how Indian Affairs policy encouraged the coercive and ultimately destructive ways and means of educating Indigenous children.⁴ Yet, the intense focus (which continues to this day) on the legacy of residential schooling has led to the assumption that most Indigenous children in Canada attended these schools until the revised *Indian Act* of 1951 legalized their entry into provincial public schools. In addition, the emphasis on the failings of federal policy has glossed-over the role of provincial policy-makers whose actions (or inactions) also contributed to an education system which in the post-war era never fully integrated Indigenous children into the public schools nor safeguarded them from the abuses the segregated system itself perpetuated.

Indian Affairs annual reports for the period of 1900 to 1945 reveal that the dual system of schooling in British Columbia, seemingly embodied in government policy, was in practice not applied consistently to all regions of the province by either federal or provincial authorities. While 3,650 status Indian children were enrolled in 55 Indian day

³ Sheila Carr-Stewart and Larry Steeves, "First Nations Educational Governance: A Fractured Mirror," *Canadian Journal of Educational Administration and Policy*, Issue #97 (December 10, 2009), 1-2. Carr-Stewart and Steeves use the term, "dual" to describe the provincial authority and federal responsibility which, under the *Constitution Act* of 1867, allowed the Canadian government to implement an educational policy of 'aggressive assimilation' to the exclusion of First Nation communities.

⁴ Studies with a focus on Indian Affairs policy and residential schooling include: J.R. Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision: A History of Native Residential Schools* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996); John Milloy, *A National Crime: The Canadian Government and the Residential School System, 1879-1986* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1999); and Brian Titley, *A Narrow Vision: Duncan Campbell Scott and the Administration of Indian Affairs in Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1986). The experiences of former residential school students are discussed in collaborative publications such as: Celia Haig-Brown, and the Secwepemc Cultural Education Society, *Resistance and Renewal* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 1988); Elizabeth Furniss, *Victims of Benevolence: The Dark legacy of the Williams Lake Residential School* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 1992). Terry Glavin, and Former Students of St. Mary's, *Amongst God's Own: The Enduring Legacy of St. Mary's Mission* (Mission: Longhouse Publishing, 2002).

schools and 13 residential schools by 1945, Indian Affairs also paid tuition to the province for status Indian children who attended public schools.⁵ Tuition grants were also provided for pupils enrolled in schools Indian Affairs referred to as “Combined White and Indian Schools.” In the Indian Affairs annual report of 1933, a total of nine “combined” schools were listed with five in Ontario, two in Manitoba, and one in each of Saskatchewan and British Columbia.⁶

No study has yet addressed the contradictory aspects of provincial-federal policy that allowed the existence of a small number of “combined” schools across the country that may have integrated settler and Indigenous children decades before the push to officially integrate the public schools and wind down segregated schooling in the post-war era.

Provincial education authorities appeared to embrace the federal policy shift from segregated-to-integrated Indigenous schooling by the late 1940s yet, an overview of the government communication pertaining specifically to the school at Telegraph Creek, in northwest British Columbia, reveals a counter narrative. In 1950, the Minister of Education was either unaware of the particular circumstances at Telegraph Creek or had considered the matter to be of no consequence in the state’s overarching agenda to integrate the public schools.

⁵ Department of Mines and Resources, Indian Affairs Branch, “School Statement for Fiscal Year Ended March 31, 1945,” 190. In 1933, British Columbia and the DIA negotiated a tuition fee of \$20 per Indian child attending a public school, which increased to \$35 per capita in 1944. See Helen Raptis, “Implementing Integrated Education Policy for On-Reserve Aboriginal Children in British Columbia, 1951-1981,” *Historical Studies in Education/Revue d’histoire de l’éducation* 20 (Spring 2008), 120.

⁶ Department of Mines and Resources, Indian Affairs Branch, “School Statement for Fiscal Year Ended March 31, 1933,” 50-51.

The historical record shows that the provincial Department of Education did indeed negotiate an agreement to share costs with the federal government to build a new and larger school for the children residing in Telegraph Creek; however, the official political rhetoric to offer Indian children “educational equality” belied the province’s simultaneous complicity with an agreement made between Indian Affairs and the Catholic Diocese of the Yukon and Prince Rupert to build a new residential school at Lower Post, just south of the Yukon border. Funded by the federal government and administered by the Catholic order, the Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI), Tahltan Catholic children were transferred from the public school at Telegraph Creek to the Lower Post residential school when it opened in the autumn of 1951.

This thesis aims to provide an explanation for the formulation and implementation of educational policy in a region of the province that has been given little scholarly attention. The research findings unsettle the common perception that the shift from segregated-to-integrated schooling in the post-war years was a straight forward process, which in turn was uniformly implemented across Canada.

Purpose of study

This study is the first to explore the unique circumstances surrounding one “combined” school in British Columbia’s remote northwest region wherein settler and Indigenous children learned together for almost a half-century before federal and provincial governments intervened in the immediate post-war years. This thesis demonstrates how British Columbia’s education authorities in cooperation with Indian Affairs “officially” segregated a school that had functioned “unofficially” as an integrated school since its inception in 1906. Furthermore, I show how in 1949 the

federal government and church authorities divided the previously integrated Tahltan children by religious affiliation and consigned the Catholic school-aged portion of the population to segregated schooling for another two decades.

To determine the contributing factors that shaped the unique outcome of a provincial-federal agreement intended to bring about educational parity for Indigenous children in northwest British Columbia, my research is guided by the following questions:

- Prior to the 1949 provincial-federal negotiations to integrate the Telegraph Creek school, to what extent did education authorities demonstrate any knowledge or understanding of the special circumstances at Telegraph Creek?
- If segregated-to-integrated schooling was the intended goal of Indian Affairs education policy after World War II (WWII), why did politicians not see the school at Telegraph Creek as a “model” for integrated public schooling?
- How did the Catholic Diocese of Yukon and Prince Rupert influence the outcome for the Catholic children in the northwest region?
- Did the province, which supported non-sectarian public schooling, show any opposition to the separation of the Catholic Indian children and their later transfer to Lower Post?
- Is there any evidence to suggest that members of the Tahltan community had a voice in the 1949 federal-provincial negotiations to build new schools at Telegraph Creek and Lower Post?

Significance of study

Utilizing a historical case study approach, this thesis represents a critical inquiry into the specific social, cultural, and economic factors, which generated a particular policy outcome for a particular community in British Columbia. As a micro-history, this study reveals another dimension to the story of Indigenous schooling; and, when combined with other micro-histories expands our limited understanding of how

provincial and federal education policies of the pre- and post-war era impacted Indigenous communities.

Method of research

This research was conducted using the traditional historical research method of document analysis. My analysis is centered on a microfilm of government correspondence pertaining specifically to the school at Telegraph Creek, which under scrutiny discloses the critical evidence from which this study originates. Loaned from Library and Archives Canada (LAC), the microfilm documents the written communication between Indian Agents, provincial school trustees, teachers, missionaries, and Indian Affairs superintendents, administrators, and school inspectors. Some one-hundred pages of letters, memos, and official directives trace the school's development from its establishment in 1906 by a Presbyterian missionary to the final agreement made between provincial and federal authorities to build a new school in 1949.

While this body of communication provides an essential chronology of key events leading to the outcome this thesis explores, it does not, on its own, constitute a complete narrative. This principal evidence actually raises far more questions than it answers. The challenge for this researcher, in pursuing a unique topic, is to locate other sources that corroborate the core evidence and contextualize the time, place, and actions of historical participants. As Alan Munslow reminds us, "History is not, as a result, just a recapturing of the empirical reality of the past, but it is about how the facts are derived and presented in order to give them a meaning."⁷

⁷ Alan Munslow, *The New History*, (Harlow, England: Pearson Education Limited, 2003), 13.

The responsibility of the historical researcher is to make sense of, what can oftentimes be, an overwhelming amount of disconnected data which may or may not result in the most plausible explanation for given action(s) within a given time period; or what one historian refers to as an illumination of the paths taken and the paths not taken.⁸ Aware of the inherent biases attached to any given evidence, the researcher attempts to see critical interconnections most pertinent to the study by cross validating the primary and secondary source material.

Engaging descriptive analysis and the imagination to interpret facets the archive does not reveal given the constraints of the evidence, this study draws a representation of what is reasonably probable. It is by no means a definitive study but rather, one that inspires further scholarly investigation.

Probing the British Columbia Archives (BCA), a number of primary sources concerning the Department of Education were investigated. Permission was granted to search the restricted files of the *School Inspector Reports* and the *Teachers' Survey Reports* (once held by the Office of Public Instruction) for any references to the teachers and pupils of the school at Telegraph Creek. *Indian Affairs Annual Reports* and *Reports of the Public Schools* were reviewed from copies held by the University of Victoria and the provincial Legislative Library. Newspaper articles published between 1900 and 1955, also housed in the University of Victoria's microfilm department, were searched to find political comment on segregated and integrated schooling and any corresponding comments from Indigenous leadership. My search also extended to a handful of audio

⁸ John Lewis Gaddis, *The Landscape of History: How Historians Map the Past*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 141.

interviews of Tahltan elders conducted and recorded by Georgiana Ball in the 1970s. Focused primarily on the history of the Tahltan people prior to the Cassiar and Yukon gold rushes, Ball did not ask questions about their schooling experiences in the 1900s nor did any of the Tahltan informants raise the subject. Only one interview with a former resident, a woman of mixed heritage, shed some light on the socio-economic conditions of the Telegraph Creek community prior to the onset of WWII. The provincial archive also offers a rich collection of historic photographs depicting the geographic setting of the town of Telegraph Creek, the public schools before and after 1949, and images of early settlers and the Tahltan people. To shed light on the Anglican missionaries who were active in the vicinity before World War I (WWI), copies of the *North British Columbia News* published by the Church Missionary Society (CMS) were retrieved from the Yukon Archives in Whitehorse.

Secondary sources reviewed for this study include published books and articles on the broader subject of the history of Indigenous-settler relations, and a number of policy studies addressing Indian Affairs policy in the post-war era. Anthropological studies which directly involved Tahltan cultural histories were also consulted.

This research is limited to the accessible archival and library sources. Records of the Catholic order the Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI), housed at LAC and BCA, are inaccessible due to legal restrictions. The Telegraph Creek school board minutes, from the time-period concerned, were stored at the offices of the Fort Nelson school district and destroyed by fire in 1979.

An oral history component is not included due to the scope of this project. My research is primarily concerned with analysis of the motives of non-Indigenous

government authorities and the historical factors that shaped resulting policy decisions; as such, it relies heavily on written documents. An extended research project would seek the permission and collaboration of the Tahltan people who were directly and indirectly affected by government educational policy, particularly in the post-war period. Such a collaborative study would benefit from participant interviews describing the experiences of adults who as children attended the public school at Telegraph Creek and/or the residential school at Lower Post.

Chapter outline

Chapter Two, Historical perspectives: federal and provincial education policy, reviews the secondary literature most relevant to this study. The selected studies taken together provide an historical overview of federal and provincial educational policy developments and the consequences for Indigenous families in the pre-and post-war eras.

Scholars addressing the history of residential schooling have demonstrated how the assimilationist policies of Indian Affairs in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century were shaped by missionary objectives to Christianize and civilize Indians. With little or no input from Indigenous peoples, politicians and church authorities insisted that segregated denominational schooling was in the best interests of Indian families.

Studies examining the post-war period and the shift in federal policy from segregated-to-integrated schooling reveal that nineteenth-century racist notions of white superiority and Indian inferiority continued to inform Indian Affairs education policy. The final report of the *Special Joint Committee* after the hearings in 1946-48 which recommended the integration of Indian children into the “White school system” reflected

the views of the government officials in spite of Indigenous demands for qualified teachers and day schools on reserves.

Within a regional context, a few scholars have investigated the provincial/territorial implementation of federal integration policy and the impacts to particular communities in the post-war era. In British Columbia, Department of Education officials, anxious to improve the rural public schools after the war, were quick to see the economic advantages of sharing the costs of Indian schooling with the federal government. Both federal and provincial education authorities in the post-war era saw no immediate reason to change the provincial curriculum to accommodate Indian cultural differences. Schooling remained the best instrument to repress Indigenous beliefs and inculcate youth with the Anglo-Canadian liberal values of individualism, private property ownership, labour, and scientific progress.

Chapter Three, *Telegraph Creek from Integration to Segregation*, is organized under four sub-themes. “Telegraph Creek: Background” introduces the geographic setting and historical background of Tahltan territory and the socio-economic factors that contributed to the Anglo and Tahltan settlement in the town of Telegraph Creek. “Early missionary activity, settlement and schooling” looks at the missionary activities, which established the provincial school at Telegraph Creek in 1906 and an Indian day school at Tahltan village in 1910. After 1916, when the Anglican Mission day school closed and many Tahltan moved closer to Telegraph Creek, the Presbyterian-established provincial school continued to enroll settler and Tahltan children. “The push for residential schooling” section traces the increasingly crowded conditions in the Telegraph Creek school and the involvement of Catholic missionaries in the seasonal schooling of Tahltan

children in the Stikine Agency. Sourced from the extensive Indian Affairs school files, the correspondence between Indian Agents, teachers, trustees, and Indian Affairs administrators illustrates how state-church interference upset the balance of settler-Tahltan social integration in Telegraph Creek. Finally, the section “From integration to segregation” describes how Indigenous children in the northwest became the objects of a post-war educational policy, which promoted integrated schooling and ironically, facilitated segregated schooling.

Chapter Four, Conclusions, provides a summary of the research findings and suggestions for further research.

Nomenclature

With no disrespect to persons who presently identify as ‘First Nation’, this thesis uses the term ‘Indian’ reflecting the historic period under study. Wherever applicable I refer to the specific name of the Indigenous peoples concerned in this study—primarily the Tahltan whose traditional territories and lifeways in northwest British Columbia were disrupted by gold seekers, settlers, and missionaries in the nineteenth century and government officials in the twentieth century.

CHAPTER TWO

Historical Perspectives — Federal and Provincial Education Policy

Federal policy

Under the terms of Confederation in 1867, the British North America Act assigned the responsibility for “Indians and the land reserved for Indians” to the federal government. The first *Indian Act* in 1876 defined who was an “Indian” and described in broad terms the jurisdictional authority of the federal government. The *Indian Act* also provided the legal framework from which the Department of Indian Affairs (est. 1880) exercised authority over all aspects of Indian life, including schooling for children.⁹ Provincial governments were given the legal authority to provide a public schooling system for residents excepting “status” Indians.¹⁰

The annual report for the Department of Indian Affairs (DIA) in 1876 claimed education to be, “the primary vehicle in the civilization and advancement of the Indian race.”¹¹ Under the Conservative government of John A. Macdonald, off-reserve industrial

⁹ The Department of Indian Affairs (DIA) was established in 1880 but in 1936 became a branch under the Ministry of Mines and Resources. In 1951, Indian Affairs (IA) was moved to the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration.

¹⁰ Megan Furi and Jill Wherrett, “Indian Status and Band Membership Issues,” (Ottawa: Parliament of Canada, 2003) See <http://www.parl.gc.ca>. The authors explain “status” Indian as determined by the *Indian Act*: “The definition of Indian in the 1876 Act emphasized male lineage. An Indian was defined as any male person of Indian blood reputed to belong to a particular band; any child of such a person; and any woman lawfully married to such a person. If an Indian woman married a non-Indian, she lost her status. ... Amendments to the Indian Act in 1951 established a centralized register of all people registered under the Act. Indians were also generally band members with rights under the *Indian Act* to live on reserve, vote for band council and chief, share in band moneys, and own and inherit property on reserve.”

¹¹ Jean Barman, Yvonne Hébert, and Don McCaskill, eds. *Indian Education in Canada Volume 1: The Legacy* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1986), 5.

schools were thought to be the solution for “civilizing” Indian children.¹² In the prairie provinces, the industrial boarding schools were located long distances from a child’s home community. Removed from the cultural influence of the home, the industrial school aimed to aggressively assimilate the Indian child into the ways of white society. Male and female students who attended the schools were taught basic academic skills and trained to work as tradesmen or domestic servants.

Indian Affairs did not build industrial schools in British Columbia, but funded on a per capita basis, the Indian boarding and day schools established by denominational groups in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Day schools were located in Catholic and Protestant missions on or near reserves and proved the least expensive for denominational organizations to support without the additional food, clothing, and transportation costs that boarding facilities entailed. In the 1880s and 1890s, the frustration for missionaries was how to keep the schools functioning when pupil attendance was erratic at best. In remote regions, where Indian parents depended on their children’s participation in seasonal food gathering activities, school attendance was a low priority. Without a steady supply of pupils, missionaries had difficulty attracting donations from missionary societies; and, because DIA policy subsidized Indian schools

¹² Richard A. Enns, “‘But What Is The Object of Educating These Children, If It Costs Their Lives to Educate Them?’: Federal Indian Education Policy in Western Canada in the Late 1800s,” *Journal of Canadian Studies/ Revue d’études canadiennes* Volume 43, No. 3, (Automne 2009 Fall), 117-118. Enns provides a useful discussion of the Conservative and Liberal approaches to Indian education policy in the late 1800s. John A. Macdonald’s Conservative government (1878-1891) adopted the recommendations of the 1879 Davin Report, wherein the American model of “aggressive civilization” inspired by Grant’s Peace Policy in 1869, promoted segregated industrial schools for Indian youth. In 1896, the Liberals would find the costs of industrial schools too high and would not expand the program in western Canada though they continued to subsidize smaller boarding schools and Indian day schools. According to Enns, “The Liberals saw little evidence of rapid assimilation and believed it made no sense to train students to compete for jobs against White settlers moving west, or to hold out hope for opportunities that were unlikely to be realized. As a consequence, Liberal policy supported the physical segregation and economic marginalization of graduates on their allotted reserve lands.”

on a per capita basis, the day schools struggled to provide even rudimentary education.¹³ As such, Indian Affairs officials in the 1880s viewed day schools as inferior to the more “useful education” the boarding and industrial schools intended, wherein pupil attendance was enforced and a consistent program of Christian morality and work ethic instilled.¹⁴ Yet, the DIA did not build more boarding schools; instead they continued to rely on the missionaries’ efforts to school Indian children in day and boarding schools.

In southern British Columbia the Catholic order, the Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI) was particularly successful in establishing and maintaining large boarding schools for Indian children.¹⁵ In the aftermath of the Fraser River Gold Rush, the OMI built its first boarding facility for boys at St. Mary’s Mission (New Westminster) in 1861. A second building was added in 1868 to provide schooling for girls under the direction of the Sisters of St. Ann. By 1896 the Oblates were operating boarding schools at New Westminster, Williams Lake, Kamloops, and Cranbrook.¹⁶ These schools followed the same structure and curriculum established at St. Mary’s—a combination of elementary education (standards 1-6) and practical skills training for Indian youth (age 14-18) in

¹³ Helen Raptis, “Exploring the Factors Prompting British Columbia’s First Integration Initiative: The Case of Port Essington Indian Day School”, 521-523. Raptis notes that between 1891 and 1951, more Indian children attended day schools (58%) than those attending residential schools (42%). See note 26, 525.

¹⁴ Ken Coates, “A Very Imperfect Means of Education: Indian Day Schools in the Yukon Territory, 1890-1955,” in *Indian Education in Canada, Volume 1: The Legacy*, eds. Jean Barman, Yvonne Hebert, Don McCaskill, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1986), 134. Coates notes that by 1892, the DIA supported 200 day schools and 30 boarding/industrial schools across Canada.

¹⁵ Grant, John Webster. *Moon of Wintertime: Missionaries and the Indians of Canada in Encounter Since 1534* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 228-229. Grant argues that pioneering Roman Catholic missionaries were successful because they, “showed considerable tolerance for native ways, which they did not expect to be outgrown suddenly, but expected to retain complete control over the pedagogical process. Protestants, professing a theology that stressed a complete and preferably sudden change of heart, saw the Indians as essentially sinners to be wretched out of heathen darkness in to the light of the gospel.”

¹⁶ See Vincent McNally, “The Residential Schools,” Chapter 10 in *The Lord’s Distant Vineyard: A History of the Oblates and Catholic Community in British Columbia* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2000) 141-167.

shoemaking, carpentry, farm work, gardening, and sewing to prepare them for eventual employment in the surrounding non-Indigenous communities.¹⁷ There was little difference in the half-day program of academic and labour training supported by the DIA in the federal industrial schools built across the prairies in the 1880s.

By the late 1890s, however, Indian Affairs officials began to question the efficacy of schooling children in the industrial schools which had proved costly to administer and ineffective in “rapidly” assimilating Indian pupils.¹⁸ By the time students left school at the age of 16 or 18, few were able to find employment opportunities in surrounding white communities. The influx of immigrants to the west after the completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway in 1885, assured no labour shortage for settler society. Indian workers were the last to be hired, if at all. “Indians were becoming irrelevant. Their proportion of the total population dropped to just 1.5 percent by 1911 and most were tucked away on reserves, no longer a threat to White settlement.”¹⁹

Duncan Campbell Scott, an accountant for Indian Affairs since 1879, was named Deputy Superintendent of Education in 1909 and Deputy Superintendent General in 1913. Scott, the “penny-pinching bookkeeper” as historian Brian Titley describes him, would adjust cost expenditures by closing some industrial schools and encouraging the building of more on-reserve boarding and day schools where the “gradual assimilation”

¹⁷ Jacqueline Gresko, “Creating Little Dominions Within the Dominion: Early Catholic Indian Schools in Saskatchewan and British Columbia,” in *Indian Education in Canada, Volume 1: The Legacy*, eds. Jean Barman, Yvonne Hebert, Don McCaskill (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1986), 96.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Barman, Hebert, and McCaskill, *Indian Education in Canada*, 4.

of Indian children could proceed with less expense to the federal government.²⁰ In 1923, industrial and boarding schools were consolidated as “residential” schools. Scott increased the annual per capita funding from \$72 to \$100 for the residential schools. Grants for teacher salaries at day schools were kept well below the wages earned by public school teachers.²¹

For the duration of the WWI (1914-1918), the Department of Indian Affairs operated with a reduced budget. As Titley argues, while the per capita grants were still paid to the residential and day schools there was “no money for repairs, improvements or the replacement of worn-out equipment. To make matters worse, rampant inflation whittled away at the purchasing power of the already inadequate grants.”²²

When Scott retired in 1932 he left a highly centralized bureaucracy in place and an education policy shaped by paternalistic and parsimonious attitudes. Scott never questioned the core element of DIA education policy which had remained from the 1880s, “the destruction of the children’s link to their ancestral cultures and their assimilation into the dominant society.”²³ Titley claims that on the whole, Scott lacked the innovative ideas necessary to shape more constructive and far-sighted educational policies that would have improved the outcomes for generations of Indigenous children.²⁴

²⁰ Brian Titley, “Dunbow Indian Industrial School: An Oblate Experiment in Education,” in *Western Oblate Studies 2*, ed. Raymond Huel (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1992), 105-106.

²¹ Brian Titley, *A Narrow Vision: Duncan Campbell Scott and the Administration of Indian Affairs in Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1986), 90. Titley reports that in 1910 Scott raised teacher salaries from \$300 to \$400 per year to a maximum of \$500 if a teacher was certified. As a rough comparison, Putman & Weir reported annual salaries of teachers at rural public schools in British Columbia as \$900 to \$1200 annually. J.H. Putman and G.M. Weir, *Survey of the School System* (Victoria: King’s Printer, 1925), 124.

²² Titley, “Dunbow,” 108.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Titley, *A Narrow Vision*, 202.

Concentrating their analyses on the historical development of Canada's residential schooling system, the exhaustive surveys by historians J.R. Miller and John Milloy provide a long view of Indian Affairs educational policy.²⁵ Miller offers a critical analysis of the three groups involved: federal officials, the Protestant and Catholic Agencies employed to administer the schools, and the Indigenous students to which the system was directed. Miller concludes that blame for the tragic legacy of the residential school system in the twentieth century is shared between the government and the churches and, "behind both the churches and the government stood the populace, who in a democracy such as Canada ultimately are responsible."²⁶

Milloy largely condemns the federal government and the Department of Indian Affairs for a long history of parsimony and indifference to the health and social well-being of Indigenous children who attended residential schools. "Moreover, the method of funding individual schools, the intricacies of the Department-church partnership in financing and managing schools and the failure of the Department to exercise effective oversight of the schools, led directly to their rapid deterioration and overcrowding."²⁷

The extensive research done by Miller and Milloy utilizes a vast array of sources to trace the formulation and implementation of the federal policies that were intended to transform Indigenous peoples into "civilized" members of Canadian society. Though their focus is on the federal policy of segregated residential schooling, both Miller and Milloy view the 1940s and 1950s as a transitional phase wherein Indian Affairs officials

²⁵ J.R. Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision: A History of Native Residential Schools* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997). John Milloy, *A National Crime: The Canadian Government and the Residential School System, 1879 – 1976* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1999).

²⁶ Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision*, 434.

²⁷ Milloy, *National Crime*, 52.

had to grapple with a system that had mostly failed to assimilate Indians into Canadian society. Milloy argues that politicians in the late 1940s did not favour supporting the costly residential school system indefinitely and viewed integrated schooling as an economically efficient solution. However, the government's nineteenth-century vision of schooling as the primary vehicle for Indian assimilation remained the same; integration would inevitably hasten the process.²⁸

In his detailed analysis of federal Indian Affairs policy, John Leslie questions the underlying motivations of the government, which after the *Special Joint Committee* hearings of 1946-48, "recast assimilation in more enlightened terms of Indian 'integration.'"²⁹ According to Leslie, the Canadian government was "apprehensive about post-war society and the need to make a smooth transition to a peace-time economy."³⁰ He implies that Indian policy would likely have remained static if not for the government agenda for reconstructing post-war Canadian society: "A pattern common to a politically marginalized people is that their interests and issues become part of the public agenda only when related concerns of the majority come under scrutiny."³¹

In both the First and Second World Wars, high numbers of Indians had enlisted and when fighting overseas experienced the same conditions and treatment as their fellow non-Indian soldiers.³² As veterans, Indian soldiers returned home to an allegedly

²⁸ Ibid., 195.

²⁹ John F. Leslie, "Assimilation, Integration, or Termination? The Development of Canadian Indian Policy, 1943-1963" (PhD thesis, Carlton University, 1999), iv.

³⁰ Leslie, "Assimilation," 87.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Fred Gaffen. *Forgotten Soldiers* (Winnipeg: Canadian Defence Academy Press, 2008), 20. Gaffen refers to DIA records that showed 3,500 status Indians enlisted in WWI, and 3,090 for WWII. These statistics did not include Metis or non-status Indians.

“democratic” country that wouldn’t allow them to vote, buy liquor, or receive the same social security benefits as Canadian citizens. Their reserve communities had become some of the poorest in Canada, in large part because of government indifference and revenues redirected to the war effort. Indian schooling was in a “state of crisis” after years of reduced parliamentary expenditures.³³ New schools had not been built on or off reserves, and the existing day and residential schools functioned without repairs and qualified teachers.³⁴ Adding to their difficulties during the inter-war years, Indian leadership was fragmented—there was no single unified body to consistently protest Indian Affairs policy. Government officials perceived no urgent need to do more than maintain the status quo.

In 1944, Mackenzie King’s Liberal government established the *Special Parliamentary Committee on Postwar Reconstruction and Re-Establishment* to hear briefs and testimonies from “leaders of native rights associations, veterans’ organizations, and concerned citizens groups” on the socio-economic issues facing veterans and those formerly employed in war related industries.³⁵

This was the first committee to take a critical look into the work of Indian Affairs whose administration had operated independently as a separate department from 1880 until 1936 when it became a branch of the Ministry of Mines and Resources. Leslie illustrates how Indian Affairs officials maintained the control and oppression of Indigenous peoples through two World Wars and the intervening economic depression, by unilaterally proposing amendments to the *Indian Act* without Indian consultation.

³³ Leslie, “Assimilation,” 161.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid., 112.

Far removed from the central bureaucracy, regional Indian Agents were expected to enforce the laws made by policy-makers in Ottawa. Organized Indian political protest, which the government could no longer suppress after WWII, “ignited government interest in Indian administration and reserve conditions.”³⁶ The North American Indian Brotherhood (NAIB), also formed in 1944 under the direction of Andrew Paull (Squamish, BC), submitted a petition to the committee with a number of demands including:

The provision of old age pensions, family allowances, and other social security benefits that were available to whites; establishment of day schools on reserves and improved vocational training; extension of full veterans’ benefits to all Indian people; promotion of Indian art, crafts, songs, history and ethnology since ‘...the Indian stamped his identity on the very soul and history of the country...’; representation through their own members of parliament; provision of financial assistance and economic development projects to alleviate depressed reserve conditions; and, restoration of hunting, fishing and trapping rights guaranteed by the Royal Proclamation of 1763.³⁷

The Postwar Reconstruction committee found that Indians had been given ill-treatment in part, because Indian Affairs since the First World War had been severely under-funded. Rather than fight for more treasury funds, Indian Affairs administrators in Ottawa had simply cut funding to Indian welfare and education and advised regional Indian Agents to practice austerity.³⁸ Based on the committee’s recommendations, parliament established a *Special Joint Committee of the Senate and House of Commons* in

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid., 94. For a detailed explanation of the Royal Proclamation of 1763, see Paul Tennant, *Aboriginal Peoples and Politics: The Indian Land Question in British Columbia, 1849-1989* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1990), 10-12. Tennant notes that the proclamation explicitly recognized land title and “treaties made in accord with the proclamation recognized the continuity of certain aboriginal rights, especially such individual rights as to hunt, fish and gather food.” In British Columbia, the principles of the proclamation were mostly ignored. The province “ultimately came to assert that the proclamation did not apply to its territory and was never intended to.”

³⁸ Ibid., 111.

1946 to undertake a thorough review of Indian Affairs administration and the treatment of Indigenous peoples, and make recommendations for changes to the *Indian Act*.³⁹

The purpose of the *Special Joint Committee* hearings (1946-48) was to investigate the briefs and testimonies submitted in reference to the aspects of policy and administration, which pertained to the social and economic status of Indians. Reflecting some of the issues raised by the NAIB, the *Joint Committee* would also address treaty rights and obligations, enfranchisement, and the operation of Indian day and residential schools.⁴⁰

Testimony on the subject of Indian schools was heard in 1947. The expert testimony of anthropologist, Dr. Diamond Jenness was “applauded upon presentation”.⁴¹ According to Leslie, seeming to resonate with committee members was Jenness’ goal to abolish the separate political and social status of Indigenous peoples through enfranchisement to allow them the same health and welfare benefits as Canadian citizens. Jenness suggested that the integration process would proceed more rapidly by placing all Indian children into “non-denominational provincial schools” and extending vocational education to adults in remote communities.⁴²

Leslie cites a number of government officials who expressed similar sentiments to Jenness. Indian Affairs Minister J.A. Glen and Branch Director R.A. Hoey believed that broader programs of education and welfare would “equip Indians to enter into

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 114.

⁴¹ Ibid., 134. At the time of the hearings, Jenness (1886-1969) was the chief of the Inter-services topographical section of the Department of National Defense. From 1926 to 1941, he was Chief of Anthropology for the National Museum of Canada.

⁴² Ibid.

competition with non-Natives in agricultural and industrial life.”⁴³ Both Glen and Hoey believed that expanding the reserve system and preserving the Indian way of life would not advance their socio-economic position. “What is striking about the testimony of outside observers and comments made by parliamentarians is evidence of the persistence of views and attitudes towards Native people that were prevalent a century before.”⁴⁴ Leslie notes the disparaging remarks made by Thomas McIlwraith, an anthropologist at the University of Toronto who saw no future for Indians who wished to sustain their traditional ways of life:

For better or worse, the White man’s way is going to prevail and I see no way in which we can, with the atomic age coming on, have a small group of our population going on as fishermen and hunters or as peasant farmers. It is a sad thought.⁴⁵

Committee members also heard testimony from the United, Anglican, and Roman Catholic organizations. As partners in the historic agenda to Christianize and civilize Indigenous peoples, committee members realized that the “negotiated support and cooperation of the churches was essential” to drive policy goals forward.⁴⁶ Major opposition to Indian integrated schooling came from the Catholic clergy who perceived their system of residential schooling to be far superior to the Protestant-run reserve day schools. They insisted that Section 10(2) of the 1927 *Indian Act* which read that, “no Roman Catholic child shall be assigned to a Protestant school or a school conducted under Protestant auspices,” should not change.⁴⁷ Leslie argues that the briefs presented by

⁴³ Ibid., 114.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 138.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 136.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 164.

Indian organizations represented a divided opinion on the continued operations of denominational day and residential schools, but the majority favoured government-operated day schools on reserves.

While the *Special Joint Committee* appeared to consider Indian briefs and testimonies, their concerns were side-lined by government and church authorities that were “reluctant to give up power and criticize their own policies”; these players maintained control and, “manipulated policy deliberations, legislation and enforcement mechanisms.”⁴⁸

In 1948, the final report of the *Special Joint Committee* recommended that the *Indian Act* be revised “to encourage the integration of Indian children into the White school system.”⁴⁹ In a written response, the Indian Affairs branch agreed: “Indian children being educated in association with others wherever possible. An extensive building program is being proceeded with to increase accommodation.”⁵⁰ The recognition of Indian sovereignty rights and settlement of land claims were disregarded. Leslie makes the observation that if the government had sincerely wished to improve the well-being of Indigenous peoples, they would have understood that integration had to be “a two-way street in which both Natives and non-Natives made appropriate adjustment to accommodate the other.”⁵¹

In a recent quantitative study of the briefs and testimonies presented to the *Special Joint Committee*, the findings of Raptis and Bowker support Leslie’s view that Indians

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 180.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Leslie, “Assimilation,” 407.

were peripheral to the federal policy-making process. Raptis and Bowker report less than 10 percent of the total 139 submissions relating to the topic of Indian schools requested the integration of Indigenous children into provincial public schools.⁵² The principal demand was to build and maintain day schools on reserves and staff them with good teachers.⁵³ Only 23 percent of the briefs submitted by Indians, wished to retain religious instruction in their children's schooling and most were dissatisfied with the half-day residential schooling system that split the time between academic classes and daily chores.⁵⁴

Raptis and Bowker conclude that the *Special Joint Committee* hearings served to maintain the "illusion of democracy" but the final recommendations were "shaped more by the recommendations of the government's bureaucrats and consultants than by the voices of Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals who presented briefs and testimonies."⁵⁵

A revised *Indian Act* was passed by parliament in September, 1951. The minor changes to the "Schools" section reflected the state's intention to shift the responsibility of implementing integrated schooling to the provinces and territories whilst conceding to the demands of Protestant and Catholic authorities to maintain denominational schools for Indian children.⁵⁶

⁵² Helen Raptis and Sam Bowker, "Maintaining the Illusion of Democracy: Policy-Making and Aboriginal Education in Canada, 1946-1984," *Canadian Journal of Educational Administration and Policy*, Issue #102, (March 27, 2010), 7.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 8-9.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 11-13.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁵⁶ Canada, Department of Justice. See *Indian Act* – "Schools" section 114 (1) which authorized the Minister to enter into agreements for the education of Indian children with the government of a province or territory and a public or separate school board and a religious or charitable organization. Section 118 preserves the 1927 amendment that the Catholic Church requested: "... no child whose parent is a Protestant shall be assigned to a school conducted under Roman Catholic auspices and no child whose parent is a Roman

Provincial policy

When British Columbia joined the Dominion of Canada in 1871, provincial legislators held the same objective as the federal government — to build a market economy which relied on the accessibility of vast tracts of land for capitalist exploitation of natural resources. Private property ownership, free enterprise, and individual liberty—the principles of liberal ideology—were embraced by provincial and federal politicians; Indians and their communal life ways were perceived to be the “antithesis of liberalism” by Anglo politicians and settlers alike.⁵⁷

Paul Tennant argues that Joseph Trutch, British Columbia’s first commissioner of lands and works in 1864 and his son-in-law, land surveyor Peter O’Reilly prioritized Anglo-capitalist demands for land and ignored Indian claims to traditional territories and the few treaties James Douglas had made in 1850-52 as Chief Factor of the Hudson’s Bay Company.⁵⁸ Tennant contends that while Douglas had taken a more humanitarian approach toward Indians by creating reserves on Vancouver Island and encouraging the pre-emption of land in the lower mainland, Trutch working under governors “no longer as active in policy,” used his position to “reduce or eliminate” the beneficial aspects of Douglas’s Indian policy. Tennant observes that “underlying Trutch’s revision of history was the view already well-established among white settlers that Indians were primitive

Catholic shall be assigned to a school conducted under Protestant auspices, except by written direction of the parent. <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca> (accessed 25 January, 2012).

⁵⁷ Hugh Shewell, *Enough to Keep Them Alive: Indian Welfare in Canada, 1873-1965* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 11.

⁵⁸ Tennant, *Aboriginal Peoples and Politics*, 19. Tennant states that Douglas made a total of 14 treaties on Vancouver Island from 1850 – 1852 which represented 358 square miles or 3% of Vancouver Island.

savages who were incapable of concepts of land title and who most certainly should not be perceived as land owners.”⁵⁹

Trutch would overturn Douglas’s former concessions by prohibiting Indians from pre-empting land, and reducing the size of reserves formerly surveyed. By the turn of the nineteenth-century, Trutch and O’Reilly had set aside tiny reserves based on a 10-acre per family allotment, for all but a few Indian tribes in the isolated northwest region of the province. According to Hugh Shewell, Trutch acted with the “full support of the colonial legislature” which led to “a long period of mistrust” between Indians and the provincial government.⁶⁰

Although various Indian groups throughout the province protested their ill-treatment in appeals to the British Columbia and Dominion governments in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, no efforts were made by either government to extend treaties to settle Indigenous claims to the land, with the exception of Treaty 8, negotiated by the federal government and the Beaver, Sekani, and Slave Indians in 1899.⁶¹

In response to the thousands of miners that overwhelmed their territories in 1898, the Beaver blockaded the Yukon gold rush trail at Fort St. John. The Dominion government, fearing further violence between miners and Indians, agreed to the Indians’ demands for “a treaty that would delineate their lands and provide government protection

⁵⁹ Ibid., 40. For a detailed survey of the dispossession of First Nations’ lands and their relocation to reserves in BC, see Cole Harris, *Making Native Space: Colonialism, Resistance, and Reserves in British Columbia* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2002).

⁶⁰ Shewell, *Enough to Keep Them Alive*, 29.

⁶¹ Tennant, *Aboriginal Peoples and Politics*, 65-67.

against white encroachment.”⁶² Tennant explains that British Columbia had no control over treaty negotiations or the reserve lands allotted because the lands of the “Peace River block” had been previously transferred to the Dominion government for future railway construction and agricultural development.⁶³

Discriminatory provincial government land policies, as Shewell points to were “morally justified by popular perceptions that Indians were lazy, backward, and intellectually inferior savages.” Such notions shaped a self-serving settler society that left Indians segregated and economically marginalized.⁶⁴

Just as land policy was premised on liberal assumptions of Anglo white superiority, so too was public education policy in nineteenth-century British Columbia. Unlike other provinces which had established separate public systems for Protestants and Catholics, British Columbia made “no provision whatsoever to meet Catholic objections to attending the so-called non-sectarian public schools,” according to Donald Wilson.⁶⁵ British Columbia’s first *Public School Act* in 1872, clearly stated that all public schools were to be conducted “upon strictly non-sectarian principles” and that the “highest morality shall be inculcated.”⁶⁶ Jean Barman explains that Catholic, Evangelical Protestants, and Anglican groups protested the proposed *Public School Act*, in an attempt to gain special recognition for denominational schooling, yet the Legislative Assembly

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Shewell, *Enough to Keep Them Alive*, 28.

⁶⁵ D. Donald Wilson, “The Evolving School: A Canadian Historical Perspective,” in *Teaching, Schools and Society*, eds. Evelina Orteza y, Miranda and Romulo F. Magsino (Basingstoke: The Falmer Press, 1990), 25.

⁶⁶ Jean Barman, “Transfer, Imposition or Consensus? The Emergence of Educational Structures in Nineteenth-Century British Columbia,” in *Schools in the West: Essays in Canadian Education History*, eds. N. Sheehan, J.D. Wilson, and D.C. Jones (Calgary: Detselig, 1986), 253.

either rejected or did not act upon the opposing petitions. British Columbia legislation “therefore did not even mention, much less take responsibility for, denominational or other non-public schools.”⁶⁷ The province would not officially recognize or provide funding for independent Catholic schools until one century had passed.⁶⁸ It is of interest to note that provincial policy makers in this historical period raised no objections to Indian children being schooled by the various Catholic orders operating in the province since the late 1850s.

While the *School Act* did not define who could or could not attend the public schools, Barman contends that Indian children were not excluded until the settler population rapidly increased in the 1880s and the Dominion government established more residential and day schools in the province. British Columbia’s first Superintendent of Education, John Jessop (1872-1878) encouraged and “consistently supported” the attendance of Indian children in the “common” schools.⁶⁹ She also notes that in the early 1870s the Indigenous population of 25,000 dominated the settler population of 10,500. To receive provincial funding, fledgling rural schools allowed the enrollment of local Indian children to meet the required minimum of ten children.⁷⁰

After Jessop resigned in 1878, a succession of Superintendents increasingly placated the demands of an Anglo dominated settler society. Barman contends that between 1878 and 1897 the Superintendent’s office received some 35,000 letters of

⁶⁷ Barman, “Transfer,” 253.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 258.

⁶⁹ Jean Barman, “Schooled for Inequality: The Education of British Columbia’s Aboriginal Children,” in *Children, Teachers, and Schools in the History of British Columbia*, eds. Jean Barman, Neil Sutherland, and J. Donald Wilson (Calgary, Detselig, 1995), 60.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 59.

which many were “openly discriminatory” in their complaints about the attendance of Indian and other “non-white” pupils.⁷¹ Trustees, teachers and parents were quick to blame overcrowded classrooms on the attendance of Indian children. Barman cites a ruling made by the Superintendent of Education in 1893 which stated, “if a single parent objects to the attendance of Indian pupils, they cannot be permitted to attend.”⁷² When more Indian residential and day schools were established in the province, local boards of trustees wishing to prohibit Indian enrollment in the public schools pointed to the DIA’s responsibility for the provision of schooling.

In her further analysis of residential schooling, Barman correctly points to the damages done to Indigenous children by an under-funded and poorly managed church-state system. Despite the fact that she also effectively illustrates how the actions of provincial education authorities and settlers contributed to the racial marginalization of Indian pupils, Barman places the blame squarely on Indian Affairs education policies: “federal policy deliberately bypassed the opportunity to integrate Aboriginal peoples into the larger society at their own pace, a process which had begun at least in a small way in late nineteenth-century British Columbia.”⁷³

Barman has concluded that only a few Indian children continued to attend public schools prior to the provincial-federal shift to integration:

While some Aboriginal children continued to attend individual public schools up to the time of the First World War and a few thereafter, they were the

⁷¹ Jean Barman, “Families vs. Schools: Children of Aboriginal Descent in British Columbia Classrooms of the Late Nineteenth Century,” in *Family Matters: Papers in post-Confederation Canadian Family History* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press, 1998), 85.

⁷² Barman, “Schooled for Inequality,” 61.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 75.

exceptions rather than the rule. Growing numbers of settlers meant that Aboriginal pupils were no longer essential to most schools' survival.⁷⁴

Regional studies have demonstrated that Indian children attended a variety of schools depending on available local or regional facilities.⁷⁵ In the province's more isolated northern region where Indigenous groups dominated settler populations well into the mid-twentieth century, local school trustees depended on the attendance of Indian children to meet the minimum enrollment requirement for provincial funding.

Raptis has shown that a number of Indian children attended provincial public schools in the southern Okanagan region where no residential schools were built and on-reserve day schools were few in number.⁷⁶ Her research findings reveal that the DIA paid tuition to the province for the small numbers of Indian children who attended public schools in the first half of the twentieth century. After an amendment to the *Indian Act* in 1920 legislated mandatory schooling for Indian children, Raptis notes that the DIA paid tuition fees of \$738.40 to the province for status Indian children attending public schools. By 1933, the province had negotiated a tuition fee of \$20 per Indian child, and the DIA paid a total of \$1747.19 in tuition for the 1933-34 school year.⁷⁷

Over the course of the Depression and Second World War, Indian schooling continued to be a low priority for federal officials preoccupied with the task of stabilizing the national economy while directing a large percentage of state revenues toward war

⁷⁴ Ibid., 62.

⁷⁵ I am referring to the studies by Raptis previously noted, "Implementing Integrated Education," and "Exploring the Factors"; also see Ken Coates, "A Very Imperfect Means of Education: Indian Day Schools in the Yukon Territory, 1890-1955," in *Indian Education in Canada, Volume 1: The Legacy*, eds. Jean Barman, Yvonne Hebert, Don McCaskill, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1986).

⁷⁶ Raptis, "Implementing Integrated Education," 120.

⁷⁷ Ibid., Note 19, 139. Raptis notes that by 1944, the flat tuition fee paid by the DIA had increased to \$45 per Indian child per annum enrolled in provincial public schools.

efforts. In the 1933-34 academic year, the Dominion government spent a total of \$371, 291.78 for British Columbia's 16 residential schools and 47 day schools with an enrollment of 3,668 Indian children.⁷⁸ Ten years later, the school expenditure for the 1942-43 year had increased by a paltry \$860.17 to \$372,151.97 for 13 residential schools and 59 day schools serving a total of 3,591 Indian children.⁷⁹

British Columbia's rural public schools fared no better in the same time period. In a study of the "rural school problem" during the interwar period, Wilson and Stortz describe the difficulties for teachers, working and living in the province's isolated communities.⁸⁰ Although, the authors do not address the issue of Indian children attending the rural public schools, their analysis provides some insight into the socio-economic circumstances of rural communities and the challenges teachers faced. Wilson and Storz also shed light on the overall nature of educational bureaucracy and the structural changes made to improve the quality of the province's rural schools in the 1920s.

In 1926, there were 574 one-room schools in British Columbia, of which the vast majority (88%) were categorized as "assisted."⁸¹ Assisted schools relied on the provincial treasury to pay teachers' salaries and school equipment while parents and other community members were expected to pay building and maintenance costs of school facilities. The remainder of 12 percent had "rural" status, which meant that a school was

⁷⁸ Department of Indian Affairs (DIA) *Annual Report*, 1933-34, "Education," 13.; "School Statement," 71-76.

⁷⁹ Department of Mines and Resources, Indian Affairs Branch Annual Report, 1942-43, "Welfare and Training Service," 150; "School Statement," 169.

⁸⁰ J. Donald Wilson and Paul Stortz, " 'May the Lord Have Mercy On You': The Rural School Problem in British Columbia in the 1920s," *BC Studies*, no. 79, Autumn, (1988), 24.

⁸¹ Wilson and Stortz, "Rural School Problem," 28.

marginally better off because a larger number of residents were assessed for property taxes.⁸² According to Wilson and Stortz, the condition of the school, “reflected the level of community prosperity.”⁸³ Both rural and assisted schools risked closure if any less than ten children were enrolled monthly or, the average daily attendance fell below eight. Local school trustees had a difficult time keeping schools open in communities wherein seasonal economic activities such as fishing, farming, mining, or lumbering dictated a boom and bust cycle and a corresponding transient population.

Wilson and Stortz argue that Department of Education authorities, situated in Victoria, were inclined to overlook “conditions of stagnation or decay” in the more remote regions of the province.⁸⁴ Overly positive inspector reports or, in some cases, the lack of annual inspections of schools in more isolated areas served to misinform Superintendents, although the Putnam and Weir Report of 1925 (commissioned by the Department) had clearly pointed to the poor conditions of rural schools:

In certain cases dilapidated log structures with numerous defects in heating, lighting, and ventilation are used for school purposes. The water supply is usually inadequate, while the privies are often found in filthy condition. Especially is this the case in the more remote schools.⁸⁵

As rural populations migrated to find work in the cities during the Depression years, Wilson and Stortz claim the Department of Education “responded with larger funding allocations” for elementary and secondary schools in the urban centres.⁸⁶ By

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 56.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 45.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 56.

the end of the Second World War some of the remote assisted schools had deteriorated to the point of near-collapse.

Provincial authorities made no move to improve rural school conditions until the war ended. In 1945, the *Cameron Report*, commissioned by the Department of Education, recommended the amalgamation of 650 school boards into less than 100 school districts which effectively created a larger tax base from which to draw revenues in support of rural schools. While increased tax revenues enabled the province to build new schools and repair or expand others, “the locus of power and decision-making shifted from the local school boards and parents to the central authority in Victoria.”⁸⁷

Relieved from the fiscal restraints imposed by the war effort, British Columbia’s Coalition government (Liberal and Conservative) was anxious to develop the untapped natural resources of the northern region. Treasury funds were allotted for the building of roads and schools to attract a labour force and encourage permanent settlement. In a region that was home to a predominantly Indian population, Department of Education officials saw the economic advantage of sharing the costs of new school construction with Indian Affairs. The 1947-48 *Report of the Public Schools*, clearly stated the Department’s intentions:

The education of Indian children is the responsibility of the Dominion Government but in several parts of the Province it seems desirable, in the interests of the economy, to arrange for co-operation between local Boards of School Trustees and the Indian Affairs Branch for the construction and operation of schools where both Indian and white children could attend the same school.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Annual Reports of the Public School (hereafter ARPS), 1947-48.

In 1949, the British Columbia legislature passed an amendment to the *Public School Act*, which authorized the Minister or a Board of School Trustees to enter into agreements with Indian Affairs, “for the education of Indian children resident in their respective school districts.”⁸⁹

Post-War integration

Contrary to scholarly assumptions that the revised *Indian Act* of 1951 instigated the federal policy shift to integrated schooling, in the more isolated regions of the province the push for Indian integration began well before the government legislation to enable it. This was in large part because many provincial rural schools and church-state Indian schools were in a state of decay from years of reduced spending. “Joint federal-provincial funding for the construction and renovation of schools was certainly a driving force behind integration,” but as Raptis illustrates, specific socio-economic conditions of regional communities were also critical factors.⁹⁰

At Port Essington on British Columbia’s northwest coast, the focus of Raptis’s investigation, the local Indian Agent and public school trustees appealed to provincial authorities to integrate the Indian children from the day school well ahead of the amendments to the *Public School Act* and *Indian Act* in 1949 and 1951 respectively. The decision to integrate 17 Indian children, “had less to do with integration policy at the national level than with a multitude of local and regional factors,” according to Raptis.⁹¹ The most important factor was the demise of the fish canning industry and the internment

⁸⁹ BC Statutes 1949, Chapter 57, Section 13, 167-173. See “An Act to amend the *Public Schools Act*”, 167.

⁹⁰ Raptis, “Implementing Integrated Education,” 121.

⁹¹ Helen Raptis, “Exploring the Factors,” 519-520.

of Japanese Canadians during the war, which left the town with a reduced population and the trustees with a need for “financial assistance to maintain the ‘white’ school.”⁹²

Integration at Port Essington had little to do with the 1950s political rhetoric of “equality of opportunity” because Indian children were installed in schools tied to a centralized provincial education system that continued to teach them only the language and values of the dominant society.⁹³

Within the specific cultural context of the Yukon region, historian Ken Coates’s studies of Indian-white relations in pre- and post-war Canada, illuminate the ambivalent nature of Indian Affairs policy and the contradictory implications of church-state practices concerning the education of northern Aboriginal children. After the Klondike Gold Rush (1897-1899) had run its course, Indian Affairs officials in the early decades of the twentieth-century questioned whether any system of education at all was needed for Yukon Indians. Motivated by doubts that the northern territory could sustain economic growth due to the cycle of boom-and-bust mineral extraction, unforgiving climate, and lack of suitable agricultural land for settlement, federal officials believed the Indian population would sustain themselves through their hunting, trapping, and fishing activities.⁹⁴ Only the missionaries, motivated by the impulse to convert “pagan” Indians to Christianity, attempted to provide a rudimentary education to Indian children.⁹⁵

Before the 1950s, Indigenous children in the Yukon and northwest British Columbia received spotty schooling at best. While some children attended the Anglican

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Raptis, “Implementing Integrated Education,” 137.

⁹⁴ Coates, “Imperfect Means,” 133.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

boarding school at Carcross in southern Yukon, other children received primary schooling from Anglican and Catholic missionaries who traveled to the seasonal camps where Indians gathered for hunting and fishing activities. Children in the most isolated areas of the region received no schooling whatsoever.⁹⁶

The DIA provided only limited financial support to Anglican and Roman Catholic missionaries trying to maintain seasonal and day schools. Coates explains that local Indian Agents continually challenged missionary requests for schoolbooks and equipment as well as their efforts to establish new schools. Though missionary schools opened and closed depending on local variables and funding, by 1941-42 only a couple of missionary schools continued to operate because of reduced parliamentary appropriations to the DIA.⁹⁷

In 1942, when the Alaska Highway opened the region for military defense and large-scale industrial development, the Canadian government established a permanent presence in Whitehorse. A number of social programs were established to encourage white settlement and an industrial labour force.⁹⁸ DIA Indian Agents began to direct more attention to the plight of the Indians whose subsistence activities were significantly impacted by the construction of the highway, and the downturn in fur prices when the war ended.

⁹⁶ Ibid. See also: King, Richard A. *The School at Mopass: A Problem of Identity* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1967), 9-10. In his 1962-63 field study of the Anglican boarding school at Carcross, King credits the missionaries in the pre-war era for providing essential social services, including schooling, to Indian families when the Dominion government offered them nothing and the local non-Indigenous excluded them from the public schools.

⁹⁷ Coates, "Imperfect Means," 139-141.

⁹⁸ Coates, *Best Left as Indians: Native-White Relations in the Yukon Territory, 1840-1973* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 1991), 190.

In 1944, the federal *Family Allowance Act* extended a monthly payment to all Canadian families for each child under the age of 16 who attended school. To receive the benefit of \$5.94 (on average) per child, Indian families saw the advantage of moving closer to town sites where territorial public schools could be accessed.⁹⁹ Yet, when their children entered the public schools, they were exposed to an “aggressively assimilationist system,” according to Coates.¹⁰⁰ Teachers hired from the south had little understanding of conditions for Indigenous peoples in the north: “They also carried with them the rigid and hostile North American stereotypes about aboriginal people, and often allowed these attitudes to affect their work in the class-room.”¹⁰¹ Because teacher expectations were low for Aboriginal students and the students in-turn, “resisted the structure and form of non-Native pedagogy,” dropout rates were high.¹⁰² Citing territorial records for Indian attendance in 1973, Coates notes that only five children were enrolled in grade 12. The poor academic achievement of Indian children reinforced racist attitudes in the larger society.¹⁰³

Coates’s studies illustrate how both the church and state failed to prepare the Indigenous peoples in the northwest region for integration into the dominant society. Although Indian Affairs was championing the importance of integrated schooling by the late 1940s, federal officials placated demands of Anglican and Catholic bishops for increased funding to expand the boarding school at Carcross (Yukon Territory) and to

⁹⁹ See, “The Family Allowance Act,” in www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/articles/family-allowances (accessed March 15, 2012).

¹⁰⁰ Coates, *Best Left as Indians*, 205.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 206.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

build a new residential school at Lower Post (British Columbia). Coates concludes that from the 1950s to 1970s, “the Yukon Indians became an administered people, subject to the control of government officials, segregated from the non-Native population, and suffering from the trauma of being separated from their culture.”¹⁰⁴

In a comparative study of federal integration policies and the impacts to cross-border Coast Salish communities during the 1960s and 70s, Michael Marker explains that for many Coast Salish students, the experience of attending public schools in western Washington was as traumatic as it was for those who attended denominational residential schools in southern British Columbia. Marker suggests that American and Canadian Indian educational policies were similar in their assimilationist agendas however, “differences in schooling and the differences between settler state cultures across the Canada-USA border produced different circumstances for Coast Salish students who attended school south of the 49th parallel.”¹⁰⁵

Marker notes that in the US, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) came under scrutiny in 1926 when the government appointed Meriam Commission surveyed the socio-economic conditions of Indian communities across the United States. The Meriam report in 1928 blamed BIA policies for the overall poor quality of life for Indians on reserves and the dismal conditions for Indian youth in segregated boarding schools.¹⁰⁶ Some two decades ahead of changes to Canadian Indian Affairs policy, the report recommended that Indian children be integrated into public schools and on-reserve day

¹⁰⁴ Coates, *Best Left as Indians*, 190.

¹⁰⁵ Micheal Marker, “Indigenous resistance and racist schooling on the borders of empires: Coast Salish cultural survival,” *Paedagogica Historica*, Vol. 45 No. 6 (December, 2009), 765.

¹⁰⁶ Marker, “Indigenous resistance,” 763.

schools. Under the direction of US Indian Affairs Commissioner John Collier, the *Indian Reorganization Act* of 1934 led to progressive policy reforms in the interwar years.

Several boarding schools were closed and for those which remained, Collier guided policies which included programs to support Indian cultural and religious expression; and, Christian services in the schools were no longer mandatory for Indian children.¹⁰⁷

According to Marker, “This more secular environment, supporting Indian identity and cultural expression in the USA, was in contrast to policies and conditions in Canada.”¹⁰⁸

Indeed, as other scholars have demonstrated, no such reforms were implemented in Canada until after the *Special Joint Committee* released its final report in 1948 where an overall federal policy shift to Indian integration was recommended. By the early 1950s, when integrated schooling was underway in some regions of British Columbia, Anglican and Catholic clergy continued to advocate for segregated Indian schooling and as Marker points out, the problem was: “the power of the churches to influence policy confounded the efforts of both Native leaders and politicians to reform and transform the residential schools.”¹⁰⁹ The revised *Indian Act* of 1951, enabled provincial/territorial governments, public and separate school boards, and religious or charitable organizations

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 764. See also: Margaret Szasz, *Education and the American Indian: The Road to Self-Determination, 1928-1973* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1974): 30-89. Szasz presents a detailed discussion of Collier’s policy reforms. Reflecting the recommendation of the Meriam Report, Szasz notes that from 1928 to 1933, a total of 12 Indian boarding schools were closed. Roosevelt’s ‘New Deal’ (1933-1936) encouraged the construction of new schools, but a number of boarding schools continued to support the growing Indian population. Under Collier’s direction there was a “vast improvement” in Indian education. According to Szasz, Collier was a strong believer in Progressive education; he placed new emphasis on public and community schools, curriculum changes suited to the needs of the child, and cross-cultural training for teachers.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 769.

to make tuition agreements with Indian Affairs for the education of Indian children.¹¹⁰

Marker emphasizes that because of the “Canadian ambiguity about changing policy, the residential schools continued to operate in parallel to a muddled approach to integration.”¹¹¹

Many Coast Salish students in southern British Columbia attended residential schools in the 1950s and 1960s. Drawing on Terry Glavin’s work detailing the experiences of students at St. Mary’s Catholic residential school in New Westminster, Marker writes, “a large number of former students tell of physical and sexual abuse ... the experiences of cultural suppression and trauma are pointed to as part of the legacy which Aboriginal people are trying to recover from.”¹¹² In western Washington State, Coast Salish students attending integrated public schools during the 1960s and 1970s faced an overtly racist environment in response to the “public outcry against ‘special rights’ for Indians.”¹¹³ In the Puget Sound region, “hostility toward Lummi, Swinomish, Upper Skagit, Tulalip, and other Coast Salish youth in classrooms was fueled by resentment over fishing rights victories in the courts in the 1960s and 70s.” Marker argues that some Coast Salish families, as an act of resistance to state imposed public school integration, began to see the boarding school in Oregon as a safe alternative for their children:

Coast Salish communities in the Puget Sound region were utilizing the boarding school, a government project intended for assimilation and

¹¹⁰ The revised *Indian Act* of 1951 also protected the rights of Protestant and Catholic Indian families to send their children to corresponding denominational schools.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 764.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 768.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 766.

colonization, and reclaiming it for cultural revitalization and protection from the racist conditions in the public schools.¹¹⁴

For Marker, there is no question that Indian boarding schools and residential schools in the US and Canada had devastating effects, but he argues that the emphasis on residential schooling policy as the principal source for contemporary problems in Aboriginal education has overlooked the larger issue of societal racism and how it functioned in a regional context to debilitate students who attended integrated public schools.

Though Marker does not address the experiences of Coast Salish students who may have attended integrated public schools in British Columbia, nor offer a hypotheses as to why the churches were able to maintain their power and influence over Indian Affairs policy, he effectively demonstrates the importance of research that looks more carefully at “local complexity” and Indigenous “strategies for resistance” to the federal policies on either side of the border which ultimately failed to assimilate the Indigenous population.¹¹⁵

The body of secondary literature reviewed here reveals a scholarly consensus on the failure of Canada’s Indian Affairs department to formulate and implement effective educational policies for Indigenous children from the late nineteenth century onward. Scholars have demonstrated how the assimilationist policies of Indian Affairs in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century were shaped by missionary objectives to Christianize and civilize Indians. With little or no input from Indigenous peoples,

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 766.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 771.

politicians and church authorities driven by racist and bigoted beliefs insisted that segregated denominational schooling was in the best interests of Indian families.

Indian Affairs officials maintained the status quo until WWII came to a close and returning veterans and Indian leaders petitioned the government for enfranchisement and health and welfare services equal to those received by the white population. Leaders such as Andrew Paull of the North American Indian Brotherhood stressed the urgency of settling land claims, hunting and fishing rights, and the need for more on-reserve schools for children and vocational programs for adults if the government genuinely intended to improve Indian health and welfare. Scholars have demonstrated how the *Special Joint Committee* hearings of 1946-48 appeared to represent a concerted effort between federal MPs, Indian Affairs officials, social justice groups, and Indigenous leaders to arrive at a consensus of how to improve socio-economic conditions for the Indian population. The final report of the committee however, reflected the views of government authorities; their recommendation to integrate Indian children into the “White school system” overlooked the Indigenous demand for more on-reserve day schools and better teachers.

Studies exploring the formulation and implementation of federal integration policy have shown that racist notions of white superiority and Indian inferiority persisted. In the aftermath of the hearings, the political rhetoric espousing the virtues of integrating Indian peoples into the larger Canadian society used language seemingly more humane and less hostile than before. Yet, it also masked the government’s two-fold intention to expedite Indian assimilation by the most cost-efficient means and reduce the annual government expenditure required to maintain a segregated school system.

In British Columbia Department of Education officials anxious to improve the rural public schools after the war were also quick to see the economic advantages of sharing the costs of Indian schooling with the federal government. While there was no single sweeping initiative to overhaul the province's entire public school system, the limited evidence suggests that the implementation of integrated schooling policy was a response to local socio-economic conditions.

In northern British Columbia the expansion of resource-based industries after WWII required improvements to government infrastructure to sustain a permanent labour force. Provincial education authorities viewed integrated schools as an economically efficient solution to tax-payer demands. With little thought given to the social and cultural adjustment Indian children would have to make in the public schools, politicians assumed that Indian families would welcome the opportunity to have their children receive the same schooling as white children. It did not occur to Indian Affairs or provincial education authorities of the post-war era to change the provincial curriculum to accommodate Indian cultural differences. Anglo-Canadian values remained the most important to teach Indigenous children in the alleged state mission to move them from wardship to citizenship.

the province's minimum enrollment requirement to receive funding. Combined with an annual tuition grant from the DIA for the schooling of status Indian children, the Telegraph Creek school functioned officially as an "assisted" provincial school and by DIA definition, a "combined" school for Indian and white children. As this chapter will demonstrate, the Telegraph Creek school was in fact, an "integrated" school until provincial, federal, and missionary authorities interfered in the 1940s.

This chapter illustrates how decisions made by both provincial and Indian Affairs education officials leading up to the 1949 cost-sharing agreement to build a new school at Telegraph Creek, were far from benign. Indigenous children in northwest British Columbia became the objects of a post-war educational policy, which promoted integrated schooling and ironically, facilitated the beginning of segregated schooling. For the Tahltan community, the Canadian government's "muddled approach to integration" had far-reaching consequences indeed.¹¹⁶

This chapter begins with an introduction to the geographic setting and historical background of Tahltan territory and the socio-economic factors that contributed to the Anglo and Tahltan settlement in the town of Telegraph Creek. A description follows of the early Anglican and Presbyterian missionary activities which established the provincial school at Telegraph Creek in 1906 and a mission day school at Tahltan village in 1910 (about 12 miles upstream from Telegraph Creek). By 1916, the Anglican mission day school closed and many Tahltan families moved closer to Telegraph Creek to enroll their children in the provincial school alongside settler children. As the school became increasingly crowded in the 1920s and 30s, and Catholic missionaries became involved in

¹¹⁶ Marker, "Indigenous resistance," 764.

seasonal schooling for Tahltan children in the more remote parts of the Stikine Agency, Indian Agents and missionaries repeated demands for the DIA to build a residential school. Finally, this chapter addresses the archived correspondence between Indian Agents, teachers, trustees, and Indian Affairs administrators to illustrate how state-church interference upset the balance of settler-Tahltan social integration in Telegraph Creek.



Telegraph Creek and the Stikine, n.d. courtesy BC Archives collections, E-01095

Telegraph Creek: Background

The community of Telegraph Creek is situated at the junction of a creek and the Stikine River in the northwest corner of British Columbia. Located some 160 miles upriver from Wrangel (also spelled Wrangell historically) on the Alaskan panhandle near the mouth of the Stikine and over 1000 miles by road from Vancouver, Telegraph Creek is currently home to 350 members of the Tahltan First Nation and 50 people of other

ancestry. The Tahltan Tribal Council (TTC), as the governing administrative body for the Tahltan Band and the Iskut Band, describes Tahltan territory as a vast region encompassing 93,500 square kilometers (11%) of British Columbia.

The north-western border of Tahltan traditional territory runs parallel to the Alaskan-Canadian border, and the south-eastern border includes the upper Nass tributaries and western half of the Stikine plateau, including the sacred headwaters of the Stikine, Nass and Skeena rivers. Approximately 1300 Tahltan currently live in the villages of Telegraph Creek (Tlegohin), Dease Lake (Talh'ah) and Iskut (Luwe Chon).¹¹⁷ River boats, horses, and bush planes were the principal modes of transportation into the Stikine region until the Stewart-Cassiar Highway (#37) from the Alaska Highway (#97) to Terrace was completed in 1972.

The Tahltan people claimed the sovereign right to their territory with the “Declaration of 1910” signed by Chief Nanok and 83 members of the Tahltan nation.

The “Declaration” read in part:

We claim the sovereign right to all the country of our tribe—this country of ours which we have held intact from the encroachments of other tribes, from time immemorial, at the cost of our own blood. We have done this because our lives depended on our country. ... We desire that all questions regarding our lands, hunting, fishing, etc., and every matter concerning our welfare, be settled by treaty between us and the Dominion and British Columbia governments.¹¹⁸

To this day, no treaty has been established between the Tahltan Nation and the provincial and federal governments.

¹¹⁷ See “Territory,” Tahltan Central-Council, www.tahltan.org

¹¹⁸ See Appendix 1, “1910 Declaration of the Tahltan Tribe,” in *Out of Respect: The Tahltan, Mining, and the Seven Questions to Sustainability*, Report of the Tahltan Mining Symposium, April 4-6 Dease Lake, British Columbia. (The Tahltan First Nation and IISD International Institute for Sustainable Development, 2003), 42.

Historically, the Tahltan were hunters and fishers of the plentiful game and fish that the land and rivers of the Stikine region produced. They traveled the land mostly on foot with the assistance of sleds and pack dogs and developed good trading relations with the Alaskan Tlingit in the 18th and 19th centuries.¹¹⁹ Acting as middlemen between the Tlingit and other interior Indigenous groups, the Tahltan were largely isolated from the Russian and British traders who operated posts at Wrangell in the first half of the nineteenth century. The Tahltan were unable to resist an epidemic of smallpox between 1832 and 1838 that was likely carried by the Tlingit who had prolonged contact with the Russian traders on the coast. After another outbreak in the late 1840s, the Tahltan population was reduced from an estimated 1500 to approximately 325.¹²⁰

In 1839, the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) leased Fort Wrangell from the Russian American Company for a ten-year period and renamed the post Fort Stikine. The HBC traders were unable to penetrate the Stikine region when the Tlingit refused to relinquish control over their interior trade networks. By 1848, Fort Stikine was abandoned when Chief Factor James Douglas relocated the Pacific northwest headquarters to Fort Victoria.¹²¹

After the United States purchased Alaska from the Russians in 1867, Wrangell served as a supply post and steamer landing for the huge numbers of gold seekers that traveled up the Stikine to the Cassiar and Klondike gold fields in the latter half of the

¹¹⁹ Bruce B. MacLahlan, "Tahltan," in *Handbook of North American Indians, Vol. 6 Subarctic*, 458-467 (Washington: Smithsonian Institute, 1981).

¹²⁰ Sylvia L. Albright, *Tahltan Ethnoarchaeology*, (Simon Fraser University Publication Number 15, 1984), 16-17.

¹²¹ Laura F. Klein, "Demystifying the Opposition: The Hudson's Bay Company and the Tlingit," *Arctic Anthropology*, Vol. 24 No. 1 (1987), 104-108.

19th century. Coincidentally, explorations to extend Western Union's telegraph line beyond Hazelton, British Columbia were underway in the 1860s. Telegraph Creek was so named as a location point by surveyors planning a line intended to eventually cross through the Bering Strait to Russia and into Europe. The project was abandoned in 1867 when a transatlantic cable was successfully laid between Ireland and the east coast of Newfoundland.¹²²

When British Columbia became a province in 1871 with jurisdiction over Stikine country, the Alaskan Tlingit lost control of the trade with the Tahltan. A gold strike near Dease Lake, which led to the Cassiar gold rush in 1874, brought the HBC back to the region where they established a trading store at Glenora, a boat landing flat a few miles downstream from Telegraph Creek. The invasion of miners into the traditional territory of the Tahltan introduced them to infectious diseases, like measles, and large quantities of alcohol. As a way of resisting the encroachment of white miners, Tahltan clans came together and settled in a village at the confluence of the Tahltan and Stikine Rivers, 14 miles upriver from Glenora and Telegraph Creek.¹²³

Entrepreneur J. Frank Callbreath set up a trading and outfitting store at Glenora during the Cassiar rush and, when the Klondike gold rush of 1898-1899 brought a second influx of 3,000 to 3,500 miners, Callbreath and the HBC relocated their stores to Telegraph Creek. In 1897, the Dominion government had cleared the telegraph trail north from Telegraph Creek to Atlin and it became a major transportation route for miners, and

¹²² In 1901, the Canadian government used the abandoned telegraph trail to build a line from Dawson City, Yukon through Telegraph Creek, and south to Quesnel, BC. A telegraph office was located in Telegraph Creek until 1936 when wireless radio rendered it obsolete. Albright, *Tahltan Ethnoarchaeology*, 17. Also, for a colourful account of life as a telegraph line man, see: Guy Lawrence, *40 Years On The Yukon Telegraph* (Vancouver: Mitchell Press Limited, 1965).

¹²³ Albright, *Tahltan Ethnoarchaeology*, 18.

government agents. Between 1899-1901, the government completed a working telegraph system from Dawson, Yukon through Telegraph Creek to Quesnel.¹²⁴

Telegraph Creek became a central supply location for telegraph workers and miners who traveled up the Stikine and overland from more easterly points on their way to Dease Lake and north to Atlin and the Yukon goldfields. Though disease and alcohol had drastically reduced the Tahltan population during the gold rushes, those who survived continued their traditional subsistence activities and trade with the HBC and found waged work as guides, packers, and cooks for miners and outfitting companies.

After the Klondike rush petered out, Tahltan men readily transferred their skills to the business of big game hunting that steadily grew in the early 1900s. In his study of wildlife conservation in the Stikine Plateau, Jonathon Peyton notes that the “timing of hunting trips in the Stikine overlapped with the beginning of the regular hunting season for the Tahltan. Despite the potential conflict, the Tahltan engaged in both the developing economy and maintained their ties to the traditional subsistence hunting economy.”¹²⁵

Callbreath (Telegraph Creek’s first government agent and acting Indian Agent) and partners A.E. Belfry, and John Hyland (who became postmaster a few years later) were the principal outfitters at Telegraph Creek. They employed Tahltan men on a regular basis to guide hunters that came from the United States, Europe, and southern Canada attracted to the abundance of large game animals like grizzly bear, caribou, and big-horn sheep.¹²⁶ Several Tahltan families based themselves in Telegraph Creek because

¹²⁴ Ibid., 17.

¹²⁵ Jonathon W. Peyton, “Red Gods in the Sportsman’s Eden: Wildlife Conservation and the Ordering of Land in the Stikine Plateau, 1905-1918,” (MA thesis, University of Victoria, 2006), 52.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 50.

of opportunities to prosper in the new wage economy. The Tahltan used their wages to buy European goods and foodstuffs at the HBC store and a few families purchased lots and built log homes at the west end of the Telegraph Creek town site.¹²⁷ Known as “Dry Town” because there was no access to the creek water that serviced the rest of the town site, the Tahltan residents hauled their water directly up the steep bank of the Stikine River.

In 1905, the Dominion government set aside two reserves for the Tahltan. The larger 375 acre reserve encompassed the village of Tahltan established in 1898, roughly 12 miles upriver from the town of Telegraph Creek; a smaller 40 acre parcel located north of the village served as a winter pasture for horses and a hunting camp.¹²⁸

In 1915, the McKenna-McBride federal-provincial commission to investigate Indian lands in British Columbia, heard testimony from Tahltan Chief Charlie Quash who claimed the Tahltans had purchased the land at the Tahltan village in 1898 and in Dry Town. Indian Agent Scott Simpson verified that 10-12 Tahltan men and their families had purchased lots in Dry Town and paid annual property taxes which allowed their children to legally attend the Telegraph Creek public school.¹²⁹ Based on the recommendations of the McKenna-McBride report in 1916, the province increased the Tahltan reserve lands by 2,910 acres for a total of 11 reserves which encompassed their

¹²⁷ Harris, *Making Native Space*, 68. In 1864, BC prohibited Indians from pre-empting land, but they were never barred from purchasing land. According to historical geographer Cole Harris, after 1864 under the governance of Joseph Trutch, Indians in British Columbia could not make mineral claims, lease or licence land, or make a claim for irrigation water; they could “in theory” purchase land.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 220.

¹²⁹ There was no further discussion between Scott and the commissioners as to the ownership of land at Tahltan village as it had been allocated a Crown reserve in 1905. Indian Agent Simpson estimated that 10-15 Tahltan children legally attended the Telegraph Creek public school. See testimonies in the digital collection: *Our Homes Are Bleeding - Agency testimonies from the Royal Commission on Indian Affairs for the Province of British Columbia, 1913-16*. Union of BC Indian Chiefs www.ubcic.bc.ca

traditional settlements and fisheries; no reserve was surveyed for the Tahltan in the town site of Telegraph Creek.¹³⁰

Though less than fifty non-Indigenous people would ever settle permanently in Telegraph Creek, those who did so in the late 1800s and early 1900s developed a mutually beneficial relationship with the Tahltan people. What would prove to upset the balance in Tahltan-settler relations was the imposition of increasing government regulation of schooling and the eventual power struggle between Protestant and Catholic missionaries competing to save souls and acquire the necessary government monies in support of their efforts.



Indian Section of Telegraph Creek, n.d. courtesy BC Archives collections, E-01088
(Dry Town with Catholic Church ca. 1930)

Early missionary activity, settlement and schooling

Just as the fur trade and gold rush activities had led to settlement and natural resource development in the southern part of British Columbia, a similar pattern played

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 245.

out in the remote northwest in the 1870s and again in the late 1890s when gold was discovered in the Cassiar and Klondike regions. Protestant and Catholic missionaries, following on the heels of miners and capitalists rushing to the Klondike gold fields, continued their mission to convert the ‘heathen’ by establishing churches and schools in settler and Indian communities.

In 1896 Bishop Ridley of the Church of England (Diocese of Caledonia) made his first visit to the Stikine region. At Telegraph Creek he held services for whites and Indians and learned the Tahltan language before returning to the mission at Metlakatla on British Columbia’s northwest coast. At the behest of Bishop Ridley, the Reverend F.M.T. Palgrave was appointed to establish a mission at the Tahltan village roughly 12 miles upriver from Telegraph Creek.¹³¹ From 1897 to 1901 Palgrave concentrated his efforts on converting the Tahltan people to Christianity. On a return visit in 1898, Ridley estimated that there were 3,500 miners between Wrangell and Telegraph Creek on their way to the Klondike gold fields. In the Church Missionary Society (CMS) newsletter, *Snapshots of the North Pacific*, Ridley reported that in 1900 the majority of miners had left the territory but Catholic missionaries were interfering with Palgrave’s work at the Tahltan mission:

The Roman Catholics had been hindering his work, and will do so. The day-school teaching is the chief barrier against such machinations. These Romans do not so far as I have seen, educate their Indians, and therefore the Heathen eventually see the difference and value our efforts the more.¹³²

¹³¹ Jan K. Krueger, Shane Conn and Beth Moreau, “Tahl Tan Mission Study” British Columbia Archives (hereafter BCA), MS-2052 undated typed transcript 153 pgs. Opportunities for Youth Project (1971), 52.

¹³² Quoted in Krueger, Conn, and Moreau, “Tahl Tan Mission,” in *Snapshots of the North Pacific*, A. J. Janvrin, ed. (London, 1904), 54.

Palgrave had built a mission house that served as both church and day school for the Tahltan and Ridley criticized the Presbyterians who ministered to the white population at Wrangell for not establishing a school at Telegraph Creek.¹³³ Ridley also accused some of the local whites for interfering in Palgrave's missionary work: "Some of the whites, as if to justify their conduct, try to undermine the missionaries' influence by telling the Indians they are paid for converts so much per capita."¹³⁴ He was highly critical of the behaviour of the miners who continued to prospect in Stikine country and travelled to and from Telegraph Creek:

The trail leading to the mines passes by the Taltan [sic] and the miners after a season's work is done, decoy from their homes the young women and provide them with the tawdry finery dear to their hearts. Telegraph Creek is their winter quarters and there drunkenness and debauchery are so established by long usage that no one seems to see the sin of it. Young Indian men ape the manners of the whites. The only sober and grave Indians are those that refuse to associate with the wicked crowd. It is among these separated ones Mr. Palgrave has been successful.¹³⁵

In all likelihood, the Presbyterian clergy were aware of Ridley's criticisms and seized the opportunity to expand their missionary endeavours beyond Wrangell on the coast and into British Columbia's Stikine region. In the spring of 1905, Presbyterian medical missionary Dr. Inglis arrived in Telegraph Creek. Inglis was surprised to find: "no church, no school, no hospital, no public institutions of any kind, except three saloons all driving a good trade."¹³⁶ The priority of the Presbyterian mission was to provide church, medical, and school services to the white population at Telegraph Creek;

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 57.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ BCA, Vertical Files, D-19/140, "Telegraph Creek Mission and Hospital," report published by Women's Home Missionary Society of the Presbyterian Church of Canada (1912), 2.

however, in a community which averaged a settler population of 25-30 whites and around 150 Tahltan (depending on the season) the needs of the majority could not be overlooked.¹³⁷

By the fall of 1905, Dr. and Mrs. Inglis had secured the use of a large floored tent where two services were conducted on Sundays: “a native service with interpreter in the morning, and an English service in the afternoon.”¹³⁸ School was held on weekday mornings. In 1906, the Presbyterian church purchased four buildings in the centre of town, one of which was a former saloon, which they used as a church. Another building, previously an outfitter’s store, became the Telegraph Creek school.

In January of 1907, twenty-one pupils were enrolled and school trustees appointed. Under the terms of the *Public School Act*, the trustees obtained a grant from the provincial treasury and the Telegraph Creek school was designated an “assisted” public school.¹³⁹ Mr. R.H. MacInnes, from the Normal School in Victoria was hired to be the school’s first teacher. With only a handful of school-aged white children in town and no denominational Indian day school in the near vicinity, school trustees welcomed the attendance of local Tahltan children and those of mixed ancestry to meet the province’s minimum requirement of ten children.

In the spring of 1907, Dr. Inglis returned to Victoria and obtained a provincial grant to build a hospital in Telegraph Creek. With funds matched by the Dominion government in 1908 and contributions raised by the Presbyterian Missionary Society, a hospital was operating by 1910. While in Victoria, Dr. Inglis spoke to a Presbyterian

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 3.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

congregation. Taking the moral high-ground, he credited the Presbyterian mission for a “noticeable improvement among the whites, there being now only one saloon where there were formerly three.”¹⁴⁰ In reality, there were only 25 whites settled in Telegraph Creek and a small number of miners traveling through the district; the large quantities of alcohol previously needed to service the invasion of miners heading for the Klondike were no longer necessary. For the Presbyterians, even the one saloon operating in 1908 was troublesome:

a few feet from the church, [the saloon] made no pretense at Sabbath observation . . . in a place like Telegraph Creek, where vice has so long had a free hand, the missionary is often obliged to make himself obnoxious to others in his efforts to reform.¹⁴¹

Nevertheless, the Presbyterian mission had noticeably improved the social conditions for the settler and Tahltan families residing in the Telegraph Creek community by obtaining the necessary provincial funding for the school and Dominion financial support for the hospital. By 1912, enough funds had been raised to build a new log school house with a classroom on the first floor and teacherage above. Inglis reported, “school books are supplied free to the Indian as well as the white children, while the progress made by the pupils, both white and Indian, has been excellent.”¹⁴²

In the meantime, Anglican missionaries negotiated the required DIA funding to revive their mission day school at the Tahltan village. The mission was first abandoned by Reverend Palgrave who had returned to England in 1901 after frostbite damage to his foot, and again in 1903 when his replacement Reverend T.P. Thorman and his wife

¹⁴⁰ *The British Colonist*, April 12, 1907.

¹⁴¹ BCA, Women’s Home Missionary Society, “Telegraph Creek Mission,” 5.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 3.

suffered the death of their four-year-old daughter. Before his return to England, Thorman had accomplished the baptism of 50 Tahltans, and with the help of the Indians constructed a larger mission-school house and begun the building of a church.¹⁴³ In the summer of 1909, Anglican Reverend Palgrave made a return visit to the Tahltan mission. He discovered that some of the Tahltan had moved from the village to the town of Telegraph Creek:

so that their children may not be deprived of the R's ... Others, again have refused to let themselves and their families be exposed to the temptations so hard to resist there ... and have therefore remained on their own ground and gone on hoping against hope for the time when the mission school and church should be opened for their own exclusive use.¹⁴⁴

In 1910, the Anglican Bishop Du Vernet (Diocese of Caledonia) in a letter to Palgrave announced that the DIA had promised a teacher's grant of \$500 for the day school and a \$250 per annum rental fee for the use of the mission school building in the Tahltan village. With the Dominion funding and CMS donations, Du Vernet was able to offer a salary of \$1000 per annum for T.P. Thorman and his son Robert to return to the Tahltan Mission.¹⁴⁵ With assistance from the Tahltans, Thorman refurbished the dilapidated mission-school house and by July 1910 the school opened with 15 students.

Thorman reported to Palgrave in February of 1911: "I have eighteen in school now, mostly boys —six girls only—and so far have earned the full Government grant."¹⁴⁶ In October, Thorman's school attendance had fallen to four children as most of the

¹⁴³ Quoted in Krueger, Conn, and Moreau, "Tahl Tan Mission," in *Snapshots of the North Pacific*, A.J. Janvring, ed. (London, 1904), 59.

¹⁴⁴ Yukon Archives (hereafter YA), Jan Krees Krueger Fonds MSS 101 F.18 79/85, F. Palgrave, Letter to the Editor, 1909 in *North British Columbia News*, (London: Church Missionary Society), xxxi.

¹⁴⁵ YA, F. H. Du Vernet, Letter to Palgrave, 18 April, 1910 *North British Columbia News*, xxxiii.

¹⁴⁶ YA, T.P. Thorman, Letter to Palgrave, 11 February, 1911 *North British Columbia News*, 80

Tahltan were out on their fall hunt. He expressed his concerns to Palgrave: “what the department [DIA] will say I do not know, still the Indians must get their living...”¹⁴⁷ In the summer of 1912, Thorman complained to Palgrave that the agitation over Tahltan land claims was “embittering Indians against white men.”¹⁴⁸ Although Thoman was proud to have baptized Chief Nanok and his wife, and 23 other Tahltan in 1911, he expressed frustration in 1912 with the “madness about the BC land” which had left the Tahltans “most unsettled of mind and not as wise as before.”¹⁴⁹

The Tahltans working for the Telegraph Creek outfitters had likely heard about the emerging Indian rights movement from James Teit who came to Stikine country as a big game hunting guide in 1903 and 1905. Teit, an ethnographer for Franz Boas, spent additional time with the Tahltan documenting their material culture and collecting their oral histories. As an advocate for Indian rights, and an agent for the Interior Tribes of British Columbia, Teit encouraged Chief Nanok to partake in several meetings at Spences Bridge in the Okanagan where the southern tribes came together to formulate strategies to protect Indian rights and land claims from provincial interference.¹⁵⁰

Inspired by the chiefs from the southern interior, Chief Nanok with Teit’s assistance drafted the “Declaration of 1910” in which the Tahltan “voiced their own concerns about land rights and the possible usurpation of hunting territory by the

¹⁴⁷ YA, T.P. Thorman, Letter to Palgrave, 10 October, 1911 *North British Columbia News*, 6.

¹⁴⁸ YA, T.P. Thorman, Letter to Palgrave, July, 1912 *North British Columbia News*, 29.

¹⁴⁹ YA, T.P. Thorman, Letter to Palgrave, 11 February, 1911 *North British Columbia News*, 80.; Thorman to Palgrave, 10 October, 1911 *North British Columbia News*, 6.

¹⁵⁰ Peyton, “Red Gods,” 58.

crown.”¹⁵¹ Teit continued to act as a liaison between the Tahltan and the Interior Tribes on his ethnographic field trips in 1913 and 1915.

When T.P. Thorman retired, and his son Fred P. Thorman took over the Tahltan mission in August 1912, the problem of erratic pupil attendance would continue at the mission day school. For Fred, the Tahltans’ “migratory habits seriously handicap the teacher and their own advancement in the way of learning.”¹⁵²

By 1913 another gold strike on the Nahlin River was causing trouble between whites and Indians. Thorman petitioned the Indian Affairs department for an Anglican “Industrial” school, which he saw as the long-term solution for educating the Tahltan youth but he opined, “until the Land Question is settled, nothing of this sort will receive consideration at headquarters.”¹⁵³

From 1913 to 1916, Fred Thorman and his brother Robert managed to keep the day school running at Tahltan and minister church services to the Tahltan in Telegraph Creek one Sunday per month.¹⁵⁴ Yet, in the midst of the First World War, the DIA—operating with a reduced budget—withdrawed the tuition grant for the Tahltan day school when Thorman reported poor attendance rates for the 1915-16 school year.¹⁵⁵

Fred Thorman returned to England and served in the British Army Medical Corps and returned to the Tahltan mission in 1918 when the war ended. He did not reopen the mission day school since many of the Tahltan had moved closer to Telegraph Creek

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 57.

¹⁵² YA, F.P. Thorman to Bishop Du Vernet 10 March, 1913, *North British Columbia News*, 45.

¹⁵³ YA, F.P. Thorman to Mr. Robinson, 23 August, 1913, *North British Columbia News*, 45.

¹⁵⁴ Krueger, Conn, and Moreau, “Tahl Tan Mission,” 70.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 74.

where their children could attend the provincial school. With his wife and children in tow, Thorman centered his focus on establishing an Anglican presence in the town of Telegraph Creek with the construction of a new parsonage and church (St. Aidan's). A new church at the Tahltan mission was also underway when Thorman's successor, Captain Hodgeson took over in 1924.¹⁵⁶ The Anglicans remained the only missionaries administering to settlers and Tahltans in the town of Telegraph Creek and at the Tahltan village until 1930 when the Oblate Fathers built a church for the Tahltan in Dry Town.¹⁵⁷

In the fall of 1907, the first teacher at the Telegraph Creek school, R.H. MacInnes appealed to Frank Callbreath, acting Indian Agent for the Cassiar Agency (later renamed Stikine Agency), to obtain funding for the Indian children attending the school. MacInnes had learned that the DIA was willing to make a grant of \$30.00 per month if the Anglicans returned to run their mission day school in the Tahltan village. MacInnes asked, "could not this grant be made towards the School at this point" and went on to give high praise to his Tahltan pupils:

Under the Provincial School Act none living the Indian mode of life are admitted to the School but here there are 17 Indian children attending. The parents of the children are very anxious that they should secure an education and nearly all have promised to leave their children in Town during the winter, while they go of [sic] hunting. The children are bright and intelligent,

¹⁵⁶ YA, "Telegraph Creek and Tahl Tan – Be Anxious for Nothing" 1924 *North British Columbia News* 140.; "Light After Darkness – a Cheering Note from Mrs. Thorman," January, 1923 *North British Columbia News*, 74.

¹⁵⁷ A precise date could not be located, but the historical record indicates no Presbyterian missionary activity in Telegraph Creek from 1913 onward. Perhaps the First World War redirected their efforts elsewhere? The Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI) was ministering to the Tahltan at Klappan (Iskut) and Kaska peoples in isolated parts of Stikine country by the mid-1920s and did not build a church until 1930 in the Tahltan community of Dry Town in Telegraph Creek.

and are anxious to learn; they readily obey what they are told to do, and are very regular in their attendance.¹⁵⁸

In support of MacInnes' request, Callbreath immediately sent a letter to A.W. Vowell, the federally appointed Indian Superintendent for British Columbia. Callbreath explained that there were no plans for an "assisted" school at the Tahltan village and he feared that MacInnes, if not given a salary increase, would not stay in Telegraph Creek. "Mr. MacInnes finds he will be unable to remain here with the salary as paid by the Provincial Government on account of the high rate of living."¹⁵⁹

On October 26, Indian Superintendent Vowell addressed a letter to the Secretary of the Department of Indian Affairs echoing Callbreath and MacInnes' request for a grant to subsidize the teacher salary paid by the province. Vowell reiterated that there were "17 Indian children living at and in the vicinity of Telegraph Creek, the headquarters of the agency" and that the Indian parents were "very keen in the matter of having schooling provided by the Department ... they will do whatever they reasonably can to ensure as regular an attendance as possible".¹⁶⁰ The DIA made no decision until Callbreath wrote again to Vowell in the spring of 1907:

Mr. MacInnes the teacher informs me he will not remain for the salary paid him by the Provincial Government. I trust this grant will be allowed as there

¹⁵⁸ Library and Archives Canada (hereafter LAC), Indian Affairs, School Files RG10, Volume 6417 File 849 part 1-4, "Stikine Agency, Telegraph Creek Day School," Mflm C-8750, Letter MacInnes to Callbreath, 12 October 1906. As noted previously, British Columbia's *Public School Act* did not officially state that Indian children were prohibited from attending public schools. MacInnes perhaps made an assumption based on the practice of some school boards in the south, which had excluded Indian children.

¹⁵⁹ LAC, RG10 Volume 6417, File 849 1-4, "Stikine Agency," Mflm C-8750, Letter J. Frank Callbreath to A.W. Vowell 13 October, 1906.

¹⁶⁰ LAC, RG10 Volume 6417, File 849 1-4, "Stikine Agency," Mflm C-8750, Letter Vowell to Secretary (DIA), 26 October, 1906.

are only four white children attending. I doubt if the school would be reopened once closed.¹⁶¹

In a second letter to the secretary of Indian Affairs Superintendent Vowell took a firm stand. He reiterated that there were only four white children enrolled in the Telegraph Creek school and if the DIA would provide the “usual sum of \$300.00 per annum for the Indian children of the locality” combined with the salary paid by the provincial government, Mr. MacInnes could be “induced to remain.” Rather than lose the teacher and be faced with the difficulty of attracting another to the remote locale far from the “centres of civilization” Vowell recommended, “if at all possible to do so, provision be made immediately for the payment of the salary of a teacher for that point.”¹⁶²

Two weeks later, Vowell received word from Ottawa that a grant of \$300 per annum would be paid quarterly upon the receipt of attendance returns for the Telegraph Creek School.¹⁶³ On August 26, Callbreath submitted the returns for September 1906 to June 1907 but did not receive the \$300 for MacInnes until Vowell once again intervened.¹⁶⁴ Finally, on October 23 the secretary stated that salary for the outstanding quarters would be paid in full and forwarded to Callbreath.¹⁶⁵ Mr. MacInnes continued to teach at the Telegraph Creek school until 1912.

¹⁶¹ LAC, RG10 Volume 6417, File 849 1-4, “Stikine Agency,” Mflm C-8750, Letter Callbreath to Vowell, 20 May, 1907.

¹⁶² LAC, RG10 Volume 6417, File 849 1-4, “Stikine Agency,” Mflm C-8750, Letter Vowell to Secretary (DIA), 10 June, 1907.

¹⁶³ LAC, RG10 Volume 6417, File 849 1-4, “Stikine Agency,” Mflm C-8750, Letter J.D. McLean, Secretary (DIA) to Vowell, 25 June, 1907.

¹⁶⁴ LAC, RG10 Volume 6417, File 849 1-4, “Stikine Agency,” Mflm C-8750, Letter with enclosed school returns for Sept./Dec., 1906; March/ June, 1907. Callbreath to Vowell 26 August, 1907; Letter Vowell to Secretary (DIA), 8 October, 1907.

¹⁶⁵ LAC, RG10 Volume 6417, File 849 1-4, “Stikine Agency,” Mflm C-8750, Letter S. Stewart, Assistant Secretary (DIA) to Vowell, 8 October, 1907.

Though delivering mail by dog team, steamer, and train in the early 1900s from the isolated northwest corner of British Columbia to Ottawa was undoubtedly slow, it had taken one full year for the DIA to authorize a grant for the teacher's salary in support of the Tahltan pupils attending the Telegraph Creek school. The collaborative effort made by the local residents, teacher, and acting Indian Agent Callbreath (a community stakeholder who had operated an outfitting business since the gold rush years) provided the impetus for Indian Affairs to take financial responsibility for schooling the local Indian children.

Unfortunately, for the Tahltan community, DIA administrators in Ottawa had little patience for the local socio-economic realities the isolated community of Telegraph Creek experienced. As the following correspondence indicates, the top priority for the DIA was economic efficiency and local Indian Agents were held accountable for the school attendance of Indian children. Indian Affairs had no intention of paying tuition for children who did not attend school regularly, no matter what the reasons were, nor were they prepared to pay for children who were not considered status Indians under the terms of the *Indian Act*.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁶ Leslie, "Assimilation," 79-80. According to Leslie, the revised *Indian Act* (1927) defined "Indian" virtually the same as the *Indian Act* of 1880. "The 1927 Indian Act stated: 3. The term 'Indian' means - First. Any male person of Indian blood reputed to belong to a particular band; Secondly. Any child of such persons; Thirdly. Any woman who is or was lawfully married to such a person." Leslie explains that band membership lists, which determined "status" were difficult for Indian Agents to verify, especially in isolated regions where Indigenous groups moved about for seasonal hunting and gathering activities. Indian Agents spent significant time trying to determine precisely who was an "Indian" and qualified for federal benefits such as schooling, welfare relief, and Mothers' Allowance.

Student and teacher transiency

According to Indian Agent G.D. Cox, by 1911 there was a problem with the teaching provided by Mr. MacInnes at the Telegraph Creek school. In his June report for the Stikine Agency he wrote:

I beg to say that the attendance has been falling off considerably, even the Indians that reside here permanently will not send their children and I would not recommend the continuing of the grant towards the Teacher's salary. The present teacher does not appear to take much interest in his work and it seems useless to appeal to the School Board as none of the members appear to care whether school helps or not.¹⁶⁷

Cox does not clarify the reasons for MacInnes' disinterest, but the response from Ottawa indicated that the DIA was more concerned with schooling expenditures than teaching performance. In August of 1911, the Assistant Deputy and Secretary of Indian Affairs J.D. MacLean advised the new Indian Agent Scott Simpson that, "unless an effort is made to increase the attendance and have those children who are in the neighborhood of the school [in Telegraph Creek] go regularly the Department will have to consider the withdrawal of the grant."¹⁶⁸

Simpson, a former HBC trader at the Dease Lake post in the 1890s, knew the seasonal hunting and fishing patterns of the Tahltan.¹⁶⁹ As the Indian Agent (after years of trading with the Tahltan) he understood the reasons for irregular school attendance and attempted to inform his superiors in Ottawa. Reporting in October 1911 to A.M. Tyson,

¹⁶⁷ LAC, RG10 Volume 6417, File 849 1-4, "Stikine Agency," Mflm C-8750, Letter G.D. Cox (Indian Agent) to J. D. McLean, Assistant Deputy and Secretary (DIA), 28 June, 1911.

¹⁶⁸ LAC, RG10 Volume 6417, File 849 1-4, "Stikine Agency," Mflm C-8750, Letter J. D. MacLean to Scott Simpson (Indian Agent), 17 August, 1911. It should be noted that the Assistant Deputy and Secretary was second in command to the Deputy Indian Superintendent General of the DIA.

¹⁶⁹ Hudson's Bay Company Archives (hereafter HBCA), www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives See: "Biographical sheets" Webster Scott Simpson entered HBC service in 1872 as an apprentice clerk. Twenty years later he was a trader at the "Dease Post, Cassiar District" (1891-93) and married Emma Gardner at Dease Lake in May, 1899.

Inspector of Indian Agencies for British Columbia, Simpson explained that the majority of the Tahltan were away at their winter hunting grounds and few parents were able to leave their children with relatives at Tahltan village or Telegraph Creek:

consequently the attendance at both schools has been small, but there is just a possibility that more may attend after Christmas when those of the hunters who have been successful in their fur catch can afford to leave their families in the village for the few months of the remaining winter. I think it would be a mistake to close the school as was suggested by my predecessor. Those who are fortunate in being able to attend are advancing in a very encouraging manner and both of the teachers are making every effort to bring them forward.¹⁷⁰

Simpson suggested that a boarding school where parents could leave their children to be housed and fed while they were away hunting was: “the only reasonable solution to the problem of educating the rising generation of the Tahltan tribe, the larger percentage of whom are bright and intelligent and quick to adapt themselves to the White man’s ways.”¹⁷¹

For the year ending in March 31, 1912 Simpson reported a total of 15 Tahltan children enrolled at the Telegraph Creek school, but on average only 4 attended. At the Tahltan mission day school, 29 children were enrolled and on average, 13 attended.¹⁷² In defense of the Tahltan children’s erratic school attendance, Simpson reiterated his observations and again stressed the need for a boarding school for the Tahltan children who attended the day schools at Telegraph Creek and Tahltan village:

The principal means by which these Indians obtain a living is by trapping fur-bearing animals. When on these hunting and trapping expeditions the parents

¹⁷⁰ LAC, RG10 Volume 6417, File 849 1-4, “Stikine Agency,” Mflm C-8750, Letter Scott Simpson (Indian Agent) to A.M. Tyson, Inspector of Indian Agencies for BC, n.d. but Simpson encloses school returns for month ending 31 October, 1911.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Department of Indian Affairs (DIA) Annual Report, for year ended March 31, 1912.

take the children with them, there being no boarding school in the district, so that it is not an uncommon state of affairs to find on one visit as many as twenty children in attendance at school, while on the next visit one may find but five or six ... it is gratifying to be able to report that even under these conditions they are all advancing, and those of them that have been fortunate enough to be in regular attendance are fully up to the standard of white children under similar conditions.¹⁷³

From the fall of 1907 to June of 1912, the teacher at the Telegraph Creek school Mr. MacInnes received a provincial salary of \$100 per each of ten teaching months and the DIA's annual tuition grant of \$300. In the summer of 1912 after MacInnes resigned, school trustee Mrs. Winnifred Hyland (married to local outfitter and postmaster John Hyland) went to Victoria to find a new teacher. Likely informed by Agent Simpson of the DIA's threat to pull the tuition grant if the attendance of Indian pupils did not improve, Mrs. Hyland took matters into her own hands and made an anxious appeal to H.S. Clements, a Vancouver Member of Parliament:

Do you know why the Indian Department took away the school grant from Telegraph Creek? Do you think they could be persuaded to continue it? Our teacher is leaving this summer and while I was in Victoria tried to find another but no success, and without the Indian grant it will be almost impossible to persuade anyone to go up there. You know the fare is high and living is so expensive, and there really should be inducement held out to get a young person to stay there. The Indian Department were [sic] only paying \$25 a month and we allowed all the Indian children to go to the school and they are getting along splendid, it is our assisted school.¹⁷⁴

Although Mrs. Hyland incorrectly stated that the monthly grant paid by the DIA was \$25 instead of \$30 per each of ten teaching months, her decision to write to Clements proved effective. He pursued the matter directly with Frank Pedley, the Deputy Minister of Indian Affairs in Ottawa. Clements described the Hylands as "prominent people" in

¹⁷³ DIA Annual Report, for year ended March 31, 1913, 398.

¹⁷⁴ LAC, RG10 Volume 6417, File 849 1-4, "Stikine Agency," Mfilm C-8750, Letter Winnifred Hyland to H. S. Clements, 9 July, 1912.

Telegraph Creek and, “I know of no one that knows the conditions there better than themselves. ...They have always shown a great deal of regard and care for the Indians... If you can comply with their wishes, I would appreciate it.”¹⁷⁵ By contrast to his 1911 directive to Simpson to impress upon the Indian parents the importance of regular school attendance, Assistant Deputy MacLean softened his tone in a return letter to Clements in July 1912: “so long as the attendance will warrant it, it is not the intention of the Department to withdraw this grant.”¹⁷⁶

The DIA continued to pay tuition grants for the Tahltan children enrolled in the Telegraph Creek school and the mission day school at Tahltan village until the latter closed in 1916 due to low attendance and Reverend Thorman’s return to England. Indian Affairs also extended limited support to the Oblates (OMI) who conducted seasonal schools in the more isolated areas of the Stikine Agency, but they did not act on Indian Agent Simpson’s suggestion to build a boarding school in the vicinity.

From 1916 to 1926, the school at Telegraph Creek was alternately staffed by three teachers—all men who stayed between one and four years. Mr. R.T. Pollock began teaching in 1922 and in the same year the DIA grant was increased to \$500. The Department’s annual report for 1922-23 indicates that Pollock taught a total of 22 children.¹⁷⁷ In his September report, Agent Simpson stated that pupil attendance was

¹⁷⁵ LAC, RG10 Volume 6417, File 849 1-4, “Stikine Agency,” Mflm C-8750, Letter Clements to Frank Pedley, Deputy Minister Indian Affairs, 19 July, 1912.

¹⁷⁶ LAC, RG10 Volume 6417, File 849 1-4, “Stikine Agency,” Mflm C-8750 Letter Mclean to Clements, 14 August, 1912.

¹⁷⁷ DIA *Annual Report*, “School Statement for Indian Day Schools in the Dominion” for year ending March 31, 1923, 54.

good and the children, “show a marked improvement” over the previous quarter.¹⁷⁸ He recorded 6 children as white and 16 as Indian but of these, 5 were children whose mothers had recently married white men. In his October report, Simpson listed the names of three “Indian children proper” and the children of the women who had married “White Men” that were attending school regularly.¹⁷⁹ Under the terms of the *Indian Act*, an Indian woman who married a white man lost her status and her children became legally “white”. The eleven status Indian children enrolled in the 1922-23 school year justified the continuation of the DIA’s \$500 annual tuition grant.¹⁸⁰

Pollock returned to Scotland in 1926 and was replaced by Miss Clara Tervo, who held a first-class teaching certificate from Victoria.¹⁸¹ Tervo was born and raised in Glenora, downriver from Telegraph Creek and the initial landing site for the thousands of Klondike gold seekers who entered the Stikine at Wrangell in 1897. Clara’s father was Christian Albert Tervo, a general merchant who ran a supply store in Glenora during the

¹⁷⁸ LAC, RG10 Volume 6417, File 849 1-4, “Stikine Agency,” Mflm C-8750, Letter Simpson to A. F. MacKenzie, Acting Assistant deputy and Secretary (DIA), 30 September, 1922.

¹⁷⁹ LAC, RG10 Volume 6417, File 849 1-4, “Stikine Agency,” Mflm C-8750, Letter Simpson to A. F. MacKenzie, Acting Assistant deputy and Secretary (DIA), 1 November, 1922.

¹⁸⁰ DIA annual reports show a \$500 annual tuition fee was paid to trustees of the Telegraph Creek school from 1922 to 1933. British Columbia negotiated a flat tuition per capita fee of \$20 per capita for all status Indian children attending public schools in 1933.

¹⁸¹ First-class certificates were granted by the Provincial Board of Examiners to students who scored higher than 70% on the “Public School Teachers Examinations”. These certificates were permanent and never had to be renewed. Second-class certificates were awarded to those who scored over 50% and were valid for three years. Third-class certificates were given to those scoring over 30% and were valid for one year and were renewable. See *Homerom* at www.viu.ca/homerom/content/topics/teachers/teacher2.htm See also: Wilson and Stortz, “Rural School Problem,” 39. In 1922, the Department of Education abolished third-class certificates in an effort to improve provincial teaching standards. A first-class certificate required a high school diploma and one year of Normal School. Second-class certificates required three years of high school and one year of Normal School.

gold rush and worked as a Deputy game warden for the Cassiar district in the early 1900s.¹⁸²

Tervo likely knew what to expect as a teacher in Telegraph Creek having taught previously in Hazleton, some 100 miles south. She believed the school to be “one for the joint education of both whites and Indians.”¹⁸³ In a letter addressed to Duncan Campbell Scott, the DIA Deputy Indian Superintendent General, she requested a salary of \$700 per annum to teach the Indian children in light of the high cost of living at Telegraph Creek and her “four years of successful teaching experience in the Province.”¹⁸⁴ Acting on school trustee Frank Callbreath’s recommendation, W.E. Ditchburn Indian Commissioner for British Columbia telegraphed Scott suggesting that Tervo’s request be granted.¹⁸⁵ The DIA, however, saw no need for a salary increase. In a return telegram, Assistant Deputy J.D. MacLean stated that the average attendance was only five Indian pupils in the past year at Telegraph Creek and considered the “present grant of five hundred dollars” to be their “full share.”¹⁸⁶

Annual Reports of the Public Schools of British Columbia (ARPS) show that on average, 25 children were enrolled in the Telegraph Creek school between 1920 and 1925 but these records do not indicate pupil ethnicities. Indian Agents kept track of the attendance numbers of white children, never more than a handful, and the status Indian

¹⁸² BCA, MS1905 Tervo, Christian - Glenora General Merchant 1901-1910/ GR-0446 Provincial Game Warden 1905-1922 – correspondence with Tervo 1911-1912.

¹⁸³ LAC, RG10 Volume 6417, File 849 1-4, “Stikine Agency,” Mflm C-8750, Letter Clara M. Tervo to Duncan C. Scott, Superintendent General (DIA), 24 August, 1926.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁵ LAC, RG10 Volume 6417, File 849 1-4, “Stikine Agency,” Mflm C-8750, Telegraph W.E. Ditchburn to Duncan C. Scott, 24 August 1926.

¹⁸⁶ LAC, RG10 Volume 6417, File 849 1-4, “Stikine Agency,” Mflm C-8750, Telegraph J. D. McLean to W.E. Ditchburn, 25 August 1926.

children who qualified for the tuition grant. The DIA did not pay tuition for the Tahltan children whose parents lived in Telegraph Creek and paid property taxes and were therefore legally entitled to send their children to the provincial school. Although these children were technically status Indian children (registered members of the Tahltan band), they did not live on-reserve and under the terms of the *Indian Act* Indian Affairs was not financially responsible for their schooling. The DIA officials appeared to categorize these children as “half-breeds” along with other children of mixed Indian and European heritage.¹⁸⁷

In September 1926, Tervo accepted the terms of the DIA salary offer \$500 and began her teaching appointment for the 1926-27 academic year at Telegraph Creek. At the end of the 1927-28 academic year, her last year in Telegraph Creek, Tervo completed an information form at the behest of the Department of Education’s *Teachers’ Bureau*.¹⁸⁸ The purpose of the *Bureau*, formed in 1920, was to act as a kind of “employment exchange” wherein school boards of rural and assisted schools could post vacancies and prospective applicants could access details about a school and community of interest. To gather the necessary information, in 1923 and 1928 the *Teachers’ Bureau* sent out hundreds of questionnaires to teachers. In 1928, Tervo’s submission was one of 711 forms returned from teachers in rural schools.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁷ LAC states that in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the federal government used the term of “half-breed almost exclusively” when referring to Métis people. See LAC “Genealogy and Family History – Métis – Half-breed” www.collectionscanada.gc.ca

¹⁸⁸ BCA, British Columbia Department of Education Teachers’ Bureau, GR-0461. Box 2, File 10 Telegraph Creek Tervo, C.M., 9 May, 1928. The detailed finding aid notes that 728 schools were open in BC for the year ending June 1928. The archive houses a collection of 711 returned school district information forms for 1928.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

Tervo's answers to the survey's questions emphasized the isolation of living and teaching in Telegraph Creek: "The steamboats stopped coming by October 15 and there was no mail at all for 2 months." Over the course of the winter, mail arrived twice per month by dogsled until the boat service resumed in May. For Tervo, Telegraph Creek was a "typical Frontier town," a "trapping and mining" community where "the average winter white population was only twelve with three being women making it rather lonely socially." She complained that the nearest doctor was 180 to 220 miles away; the school needed a new foundation and the floor of the teacherage "sagged" in the centre.¹⁹⁰ Tervo reported a "mixed school of whites, half-breeds, and Indians" and the number of school age children in the district as 25. For 1927-28 she cited enrollment numbers of "17 children with an average attendance of 12." Tervo stated that her "present salary" was \$1820 per annum, but did not mention that \$500 was paid by the DIA.

Tervo was likely unaware that the provincial salary of \$1320 she received in 1928 was significantly higher than the salaries for other teachers in rural and assisted schools; however, the social isolation she described in her *Teachers' Bureau* survey may have indeed outweighed the higher salary and discouraged female teachers from applying.¹⁹¹ Tervo's answers to the questionnaire gave no hint of her relationship with pupils, nor their academic achievement levels, but on a positive note she found the climate "healthful" and the scenery "beautiful" for "outdoor sports, hiking, hunting."¹⁹²

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Wilson and Stortz, "Rural School Problem," 36. The authors report that 545 out of 739 (73.7%) teachers submitting information forms to the Teachers' Bureau in 1928, reported salaries of less than \$1,100.

¹⁹² Ibid.

While scholars have shown that the majority of British Columbia's rural school teachers were female in the first half of the twentieth century, quite the opposite was true for the school in Telegraph Creek. In the 41 year period from 1906 to 1947, 11 male teachers served a combined total of 32 years. The historical record shows that only three females (including Tervo 1926-28) taught at the school for a period of five years between them.¹⁹³

Other than their record of longevity, there is no evidence to explain how and why the Telegraph Creek provincial school attracted and sustained a succession of male teachers when females made up 83.5 percent of the rural teaching force in British Columbia by 1930.¹⁹⁴ It can only be speculated that the "frontier" atmosphere of the town, for various reasons, appealed to men more than women.

The push for residential schooling

The *Indian Act* was amended in 1920 to make school compulsory for Indian children between the ages of 6 to 16, but in northwestern British Columbia where school facilities were few and far between DIA authorities could not enforce school attendance. Although Indian Agent Scott Simpson had suggested, as early as 1912, that the DIA consider building a boarding school for Tahltan children in the Stikine Agency, the Department had not acted. By the 1930s when the Telegraph Creek School was physically deteriorating and the classroom overcrowded with settler and Tahltan children,

¹⁹³ Male and female teachers at Telegraph Creek were named in the *ARPS* until 1947. The Telegraph Creek school was not listed in 1948 as it may have been closed until the new school opened in 1949. Teachers' names were no longer published in the *ARPS* in 1949.

¹⁹⁴ Wilson and Stortz, "Rural School Problem," 40.

Simpson's replacement, Harper Reed, persistently pressed the DIA for a residential school to ameliorate the school problem.

Reed, having served in the Boer War and WWI, came to northwest British Columbia as a prospector and surveyor and then worked as a telegraph operator and an Indian Agent from 1927 to 1942.¹⁹⁵ Reed travelled the Stikine Agency by dog team in the winter and canoe in the summer. In his first report to W.E. Ditchburn the federal Indian Commissioner for British Columbia, Reed explained that the number of school-aged children in the Stikine region had grown to 155 and that discussion of a residential school was, "becoming a vital and much talked of question amongst the Indians themselves."¹⁹⁶ He claimed the Indians were encouraged by the Roman Catholic clergy engaged in mission work in the Agency, and in part to:

the general trend of affairs, by which the Indians see that it is to the advantage of their children to have them read, write and add figures. Eaton's catalogues [likely shipped to the HBC store for settlers in Telegraph Creek] have also had a lot to do with this line of thought.¹⁹⁷

According to Reed, the Indians were more concerned with the general schooling of their children rather than its particularly religious aspect: "It did not matter so much where they went, so long as the children were looked after and taught."¹⁹⁸

Agent Reed suggested that the best site for a residential school was at 6 Mile Creek, roughly six miles downstream from Telegraph Creek. This location had good water, salmon fishing, and "above all is on a main line of travel and supplies can be got in

¹⁹⁵ BCA, T. F. Harper Reed fonds MS-0516, Box 2, File 9 Biographical notes: b. 1878, Exeter, Devon County, England/ d.1965 Victoria, BC.

¹⁹⁶ LAC, RG10 Volume 6417, File 849 1-4, "Stikine Agency," Mfilm C-8750, Letter Harper Reed (Indian Agent) to W.E. Ditchburn, Indian Commissioner for BC (DIA), 29 August, 1928.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

at a reasonable rate, and would be in connection with the town of Telegraph Creek, the Dominion Government [telegraph] wire, and it is hoped a resident doctor.”¹⁹⁹

In August 1930, C.C. Perry the federal Assistant Indian Commissioner for British Columbia investigated the situation at Telegraph Creek. Perry first met with veteran school trustee Mrs. Hyland who blamed the provincial Education Department for not providing sufficient school desks and books. While provincial treasury funds paid the salary of the teacher, Mr. D.C. McDevitt, no additional school taxes were collected from the district to pay for classroom supplies and equipment. Agent Reed advised Perry to ask the DIA for authorization to purchase the needed books and desks. In Perry’s opinion, “No doubt, lack of school taxation in Telegraph Creek is responsible.”²⁰⁰ There is no evidence to show why taxes were not collected from local residents of Telegraph Creek, but it is probable that by 1930 the community was feeling the impacts of the North American economic depression which reduced demand for furs, big-game hunting expeditions and natural resource extraction the Stikine region depended on.

To discuss the possibility of the DIA building a residential school in the Stikine Agency, Perry met with Indian Agent Reed, Father Allard (OMI) and the Reverend Commander Hodgson of the Anglican Church in August 1930. According to Perry, the meeting was the first step needed to solve “the long standing controversy between the

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ LAC, RG10 Volume 6417, File 849 1-4, “Stikine Agency,” Mfilm C-8750, Extract from report of C.C. Perry, Assistant Commissioner for BC, August 30, 1930.

representatives of the Roman Catholic and Protestant Anglican Churches respectively, as to which church merits an ascendancy in regard to residential school facilities.”²⁰¹

For Perry, the first priority was to examine the Stikine Agency’s official census to sort out the religious affiliation of the Indians claimed to be baptized into the churches. The census book was examined “Family by Family” and an agreement was reached between Father Allard and Reverend Hodgson as to the religious affiliation of each family.²⁰² In many cases, Indians in Stikine country had been baptized in past years by the Anglicans and re-baptized later with their children into the Roman Catholic Church and vice versa. Perry expressed distress for the “division through baptism, by the respective clergy, of families.”²⁰³ In a conciliatory gesture toward the Indian families concerned, Perry stated that any agreement reached between the churches as to religious affiliation was “subject of course to the acceptance of such status by the respective Family heads.”²⁰⁴

In the Telegraph Creek vicinity, including the Tahltan village and Dease Lake, Perry reported that 130 Indians were of the Roman Catholic faith and 150 were Anglican Indians. In the entire Stikine Agency the total population of Indians was 812. Of these, the Anglicans claimed 372, and the Catholic Church claimed a total of 440 adherents to the faith.²⁰⁵

²⁰¹ LAC, RG10 Volume 6417, File 849 1-4, “Stikine Agency,” Mflm C-8750, Extract from report of C.C. Perry, Assistant Commissioner for BC, 30 August, 1930, 1.

²⁰² Ibid., 1.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 2.

Though Anglican missionaries had been active at Tahltan from 1901 to 1916 after the First World War ended, they had confined their activities to ministering the settler and Tahltan populations in Telegraph Creek. The Anglican Church had made far more inroads with the Indians in the Southern Yukon region. By 1910, Bishop Bompas had established a boarding school at Carcross, Yukon; however, Perry recommended that a special inspection be made at the Carcross school, “which at present seems to bear an unsavoury reputation in the North.”²⁰⁶ He thought it important to improve conditions at the residential school so that, “children of Anglican families in the Stikine agency may be given suitable and satisfactory residential school accommodation and supervision.”²⁰⁷

At this juncture it was notable that no provincial education official, school trustee, or Tahltan individual was present in the meeting to point out the relative success of the Telegraph Creek school wherein Tahltan and settler children had learned together for over twenty years regardless of their religious affiliation. The proposed residential school would clearly have segregated Indian children and possibly created a permanent religious divide in their home communities. In 1930, Father Allard and Reverend Hodgson demonstrated no particular concern for a religious division of the Tahltan; instead, they continued to argue in Perry’s presence over which denomination had the right to establish a school in the region. Allard had recently constructed a church with the assistance of the Tahltan in Dry Town, but Hodgson considered the town of Telegraph Creek and vicinity to be Anglican missionary territory given their early efforts at Tahltan village. The fact

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

that the Tahltan mission day school had been closed since 1916 did not weaken Hodgson's resolve to reclaim Anglican territory.²⁰⁸

In Perry's view, the DIA needed to consider the provision of a residential school, at 6 Mile Creek (the location Indian Agent Reed favoured) and whether such a school should be "denominational, undenominational or inter-denominational."²⁰⁹ If the DIA determined that a residential school be denominational, Perry leaned toward the Catholic Church:

Whether or not the Anglicans' view that the Catholics are usurping their recognized Missionary territory or sphere of influence should be endorsed in view of the limited nature of the present Missionary work of the Anglicans and the recent more active work of the Roman Catholics in this district.²¹⁰

In 1930, the concept of an "inter-denominational" school was not acceptable to all parties. Perry reflected, "...while approved by Reverend Hodgson for the Anglicans, it is not received with satisfaction by Reverend E. Allard, O.M.I. of the Catholic Church."²¹¹ The archive reveals that the DIA took no immediate action after receiving Perry's report in August of 1930.

The provincial Department of Education, likely apprised of Perry's findings at Telegraph Creek, dispatched school inspector H.C. Fraser to Telegraph Creek in September 1930.²¹² Arriving on a Saturday because the river boat was delayed, Fraser met with teacher Mr. McDevitt who informed him the school had only three white

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 2.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 3.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Ibid.,4.

²¹² BCA, GR-0122 British Columbia Department of Education, School Inspector Reports, Telegraph Creek, 14 September, 1930. Provincial school inspector reports for the period of 1918-1948 were searched for reports of the Telegraph Creek school; only the 1930 report by Fraser was found in the archive.

children enrolled and 32 of “mixed blood” in the previous year. McDevitt held a second-class certificate and was in Fraser’s opinion, “of good personality and apparently of sound judgment.” Fraser noted that McDevitt’s former experience teaching Indian children in Ucluelet “should be of help to him.”²¹³

Fraser described the Telegraph Creek school as a log building with teacher’s quarters on the second floor which needed “repairs to make the upstairs floor safe.”²¹⁴ According to Fraser, the building and outdoor toilets were clean but there was only running water in the summer. In winter, water had to be carried from the creek. Fraser did not report any problem with school desks but his final remark that a “new library of \$100 worth of books is now ready for use” indicates that either the province or the DIA had responded to the demands for new textbooks voiced by school trustee Mrs. Hyland in her meeting with Perry in the month prior.²¹⁵ The province would not send another school inspector to Telegraph Creek until 1949. Settler and Tahltan children—Anglican and Catholic—continued to attend the Telegraph Creek school for another two decades.

In 1933, an Indian Affairs memo to agent Reed outlined the agreement made with British Columbia’s Department of Education to pay a tuition grant of \$20 per capita “based on average attendance” of Indian pupils in public schools.²¹⁶ At the Telegraph Creek school, the shift from block to per capita funding meant that Mr. McDevitt, who had taught an average of 34 children since 1930, had his salary reduced in September 1933 from \$1320 to \$1000. This amount is recorded in the *ARPS* for 1933-34 which

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ LAC, RG10 Volume 6417, File 849 1-4, “Stikine Agency,” Mfilm C-8750, Memorandum (DIA), 13 June, 1933.

itemized the provincial grant as \$990 and a district expenditure of \$228.16.²¹⁷ The DIA annual school statement for the “combined” school in Telegraph Creek in 1933, indicated 17 students on the roll but an average attendance of just seven. In the year ending 1934, the DIA annual report listed the total tuition fees paid to the province as \$1308.63 with no further breakdown detailing school expenditures per Indian Agency.²¹⁸

Based on the \$20 tuition fee per Indian pupil, the DIA by 1934 had reduced their annual expenditure for Telegraph Creek from \$500 to \$140—a reduction of 70 percent. For the provincial Department of Education, the fee per capita arrangement was also economically advantageous. DIA funds were now received by schools across the province whose numbers of Indian pupils did not meet the quota needed to receive the former block tuition grant.

For McDevitt, the wage loss was discouraging. In 1934-35 he took another drop in salary. The *ARPS* records a salary of \$900 paid by the province and no contribution from the district.²¹⁹ McDevitt did not return to the school in the fall of 1935. He was replaced by Mr. J. Walter Hughes with a first-class teaching certificate who accepted the teaching post at the same salary of \$900. Remarkably, he stayed on for the next ten years.²²⁰ From 1936 to 1943, Hughes earned a salary of \$1000 for the ten-month school year. During the same time period, the provincial government expenditure was reduced to \$680 but the district expenditure increased to an average of \$400 per year.²²¹

²¹⁷ *ARPS*, 1933-34.

²¹⁸ *DIA*, 1933-34, 13.

²¹⁹ *ARPS*, 1934-35.

²²⁰ No biographical information could be located on Mr. Hughes other than his name and salary recorded in the *ARPS* and the references to his teaching in the government correspondence.

²²¹ *ARPS*, 1936-1943.

There is no record of a provincial school inspector visiting Hughes during his tenure but G.S. Pragnell, Inspector of Indian Agencies reported to Ottawa in July 1936: “This is actually a white school, though, by arrangement, we have eight children there, seven on the day of my visit.... Mr. Hughes, the teacher appears to be doing very good work, in a very poor schoolroom, though kept clean and tidy.”²²² Echoing the complaints made by Mrs. Hyland and provincial inspector Fraser in 1930, Pragnell observed that the blackboards and old double desks were in bad condition and supplies were lacking yet, “on examination, the children appeared to be well up to grade.”²²³

The historical record shows that the Department of Education did not increase the provincial grant in 1936 or 1937 to improve the physical conditions of the schoolhouse or provide adequate school supplies.²²⁴ Indicating more concern for maintaining provincial budgetary allotments than the quality of schooling in Telegraph Creek, the Department of Education decreased the grant portion to \$680 in 1938.²²⁵ It was left to the local school board to raise district expenditures to cover the teacher’s salary of \$1000. The DIA per capita tuition fee was considered an “extra” for the teacher.²²⁶

Conditions at the Telegraph Creek school rapidly deteriorated after 1936. Until he resigned his post in 1942, Indian Agent Reed wrote a continuous stream of reports to

²²² LAC, RG10 Volume 6417, File 849 1-4, “Stikine Agency,” Mflm C-8750, G.S. Pragnell, Inspector of Indian Agencies to DIA, 28 July, 1936.

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ ARPS, 1936-37; 1937-38.

²²⁵ ARPS, 1938-39.

²²⁶ LAC, RG10 Volume 6417, File 849 1-4, “Stikine Agency,” Mflm C-8750, Report, Reed to DIA, 17 November, 1933.

Ottawa about problems at the school. In February 1939 he blamed the increasing attendance of Indian children and the limited provincial funding for the poor conditions:

This school building is very ancient and has been already condemned but as we are so remote from Victoria headquarters, and taken with the fact that practically no Provincial Revenue is taken out of the District, little attention is given, or for that matter—can be expected, in regard to a new school building—from the Provincial Authorities.... There are at present 43 children attending this school, 16 of which are Indian, 3 of which are white children and the rest being halfbreeds.²²⁷

According to Reed, the Tahltan were struggling to bring in enough furs to the HBC and were moving closer to the town site in order to access relief provisions (foodstuffs) from the store:

As fur generally is vanishing the outside Indian families in the near district wish to come into town, send their children to this school, and as they cannot support their families, apply for relief, and practically live on store provisions.²²⁸

Reed claimed that the Indians had access to the Anglican summer day school on the Tahltan reserve and a winter day school at Klappan (Iskut) run by the Catholic priests:

As these families can send their children to other schools, and have even promised to do so ... an effort was made to restrict their coming into town, with the excuse of using this local school.... Some “ruling” is really needed ... if this is allowed to continue the other schools [seasonal denominational schools] will be depleted of children and will therefore have to close down.²²⁹

Due to the Depression in the inter-war years, provincial treasury funds were limited but Reed was hopeful the province would take action after the Minister of Health received Dr. Meyer’s inspection report of conditions at the Telegraph Creek school:

²²⁷ LAC, RG10 Volume 6417, File 849 1-4, “Stikine Agency,” Mfilm C-8750, Report, Reed to DIA, 13 February, 1939.

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Ibid.

Dr. Meyer, a resident physician inspected the Telegraph Creek school at the request of the provincial Minister of Health. A rather drastic report was rendered, which rather shocked our local Government Agent, but which it is hoped by all the people in Telegraph Creek will result in some action by the Province to improve matters generally. ... The school building was condemned years ago, and since that time the youngsters in the Town have greatly increased, so that today it is a matter of over-crowding. This is rather serious in a community where T.B. [tuberculosis] is known to exist and the home conditions of the various half-breeds and Indians are not any wheres [sic] up to a standard of decent living.²³⁰

In response, R.A. Hoey, Indian Affairs Superintendent of Welfare & Training, showed no sympathy for the Indian families that Reed referred to.²³¹ He agreed that the Indians who had applied for relief with the “excuse” of sending their children to the Telegraph Creek school was not valid. Hoey instructed:

You may definitely inform the Indians that unless the resident Doctor and yourself approve of any family coming to live in Telegraph Creek Townsite for the winter, no relief will be allowed by this Department to such family. ... The winter schools already in operation should provide educational facilities for many of the families who otherwise would move into Telegraph Creek.²³²

Reed repeated his complaints in his 1939 November and December reports to Ottawa. He expressed serious concern for the state of affairs in Telegraph Creek and the lack of provincial responsibility to improve the situation at the school:

The school premises etc. is really no concern of this office, except in the case of overcrowding and health matters, and should more Indians live within this townsite over next winter, overcrowding will be in excess of anything yet achieved—which fact does concern the Indian Office.²³³

²³⁰ LAC, RG10 Volume 6417, File 849 1-4, “Stikine Agency,” Mflm C-8750, Report, Reed to DIA, 12 March, 1939.

²³¹ In 1936, Indian schooling came under the direction of the Superintendent of Welfare & Training when the Department of Indian Affairs lost its independent status and became a branch of the Ministry of Mines and Resources.

²³² LAC, RG10 Volume 6417, File 849 1-4, “Stikine Agency,” Mflm C-8750, Letter, R.A. Hoey to Reed, 27 March, 1939.

²³³ LAC, RG10 Volume 6417, File 849 1-4, “Stikine Agency,” Mflm C-8750, Report, Reed to Indian Affairs, November, 1939.

Reed's solution was to take careful accounting of the status Indians attending the school for the quarter ending December 31. Four children did live on the nearby Casca reserve, and ten were children whose parents lived in Telegraph Creek and paid the school tax. Reed blamed teacher Hughes for trying to pass the Etzerza family of four children as reserve children when they resided "just outside the Town's limits but not on the Indian Reserve. Therefore they do not pay the local school taxes."²³⁴

In a return letter from Hoey in February, Reed was informed that based on his information, "no grant is being allowed for the four Etzerza children."²³⁵ Hoey made no further suggestions as to how Reed should proceed and there was still no action forthcoming from the province to improve conditions in the school. By August 1940 Reed was beside himself:

The situation in this Townsite is extreme. Most of the children attending this school are halfbreeds, or straight Indians; and therefore the parents cannot take a lively interest. Moreover these half-breeds are living from hand to mouth, even more so than our Indians ... This is certainly one place in British Columbia at which the Provincial School authorities should take the whole matter upon themselves and supply the necessary housing and equipment to carry on their Provincial School education. This community simply cannot shoulder the expenses now necessary to place this school in a sanitary and well-running condition.²³⁶

One year later, Reed pursued the matter with Bishop Coudert OMI (Catholic Diocese of Yukon and Prince Rupert) who was conducting his annual inspection of the seasonal schools in the Stikine region. Reed suggested that the Oblates start up a winter

²³⁴ LAC, RG10 Volume 6417, File 849 1-4, "Stikine Agency," Mflm C-8750 Report, Reed to Indian Affairs, 13 January, 1939

²³⁵ LAC, RG10 Volume 6417, File 849 1-4, "Stikine Agency," Mflm C-8750 Letter, Hoey to Reed February 7, 1939.

²³⁶ LAC, RG10 Volume 6417, File 849 1-4, "Stikine Agency," Mflm C-8750, Report, Reed to Indian Affairs, 14 August, 1940.

school for the Catholic Indian children “who were living within the Township during the winter, and did not attend the local Provincial School” though he made it clear that such a school should not be located in the Telegraph Creek townsite.²³⁷

Finally, Indian Affairs dispatched inspector Coleman to do a thorough review of schooling conditions at Telegraph Creek.²³⁸ Arriving in September 1941 he found the teacher Mr. Hughes, to be “very competent” but the school house with the teacher’s residence above was:

in very poor condition.... Five fires have occurred in the building in recent years. Sanitation consists of two dilapidated latrines. The only ventilation is from the wall and window leakages.... Due to the general conditions of the building, colds among the pupils are very prevalent with the usual lowering of resistance of the Indian pupils to pulmonary affections.²³⁹

Based on attendance figures supplied by Hughes, Coleman claimed that the average annual attendance was approximately 40 children including status Indian children.²⁴⁰

Coleman recommended that a new one-room Indian day school with a teacher’s residence be built at the Casca reserve on the left bank of the Stikine, a half-mile south of Telegraph Creek. Coleman undertook an informal survey of the local Tahltan families and determined that they were almost equally split between Catholics and Anglicans. In Coleman’s opinion, a nondenominational teacher should be employed to teach the Anglican children from November to April and the Catholic children from May to

²³⁷ LAC, RG10 Volume 6417, File 849 1-4, “Stikine Agency,” Mflm C-8750, Report, Reed to Indian Affairs, 8 August, 1941.

²³⁸ LAC, RG10 Volume 6417, File 849 1-4, “Stikine Agency,” Mflm C-8750, Report, Coleman to Indian Affairs, September, 1941.

²³⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁰ APRS for 1940-41 show 31 children enrolled and in 1941-42, 34 children in the Telegraph Creek School. These figures may not have included the status Indian children paid for by Indian Affairs.

October. “The respective missionaries could be given full access during their respective periods, for reasonable religious instruction.”²⁴¹

Coleman did not explain how the proposed schooling arrangement would suit the seasonal hunting and fishing activities of the Tahltan nor did he claim to have consulted them. Ottawa took no immediate action on Coleman’s proposal although D.M. McKay, Indian Commissioner for British Columbia, followed up with a note to Ottawa in the fall of 1941:

this project should be given consideration as soon as funds can be provided.... This report indicates a careful investigation by Mr. Coleman of conditions among the Indians of the Stikine agency ... which should be most helpful in improving our administration of the Indians in that remote section of British Columbia.²⁴²

In the summer of 1942, construction of the Alaska Highway for military purposes disrupted the lives of the Kaska people. Their traditional territory lay west of Tahltan territory and the highway route passed through its centre.²⁴³ The Tahltan who had survived the onslaught of miners in the nineteenth century and adjusted to a small but permanent presence of white settlers in the Stikine region since the early 1900s were not initially affected during the construction phase of the highway. During the war, fur prices remained high and the Tahltan continued to trap and trade with the HBC as well as

²⁴¹ LAC, RG10 Volume 6417, File 849 1-4, “Stikine Agency,” Mflm C-8750, Report, Coleman to Indian Affairs, September, 1941.

²⁴² LAC, RG10 Volume 6417, File 849 1-4, “Stikine Agency,” Mflm C-8750, Note, D.M. MacKay, Indian Commissioner for BC, to Indian Affairs, October 1941.

²⁴³ Ken Coates and W.R. Morrison, *The Alaska Highway in World War II: The U.S. Army of Occupation in Canada’s Northwest* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 77-78. Lower Post, just below the border of British Columbia and Yukon, was established as a trading post by the HBC in 1876 and was a central meeting place for Kaska and other Indigenous fur traders. Having had little contact with foreigners, before the influx of American military and civilian workers based at Lower Post in 1942, the Kaska had little resistance to fight diseases such as measles and influenza. They also suffered from exposure to large quantities of alcohol, brought to the army base. The ecological destruction of their land compromised their subsistence activities of hunting and trapping.

maintain their traditional subsistence practices.²⁴⁴ Well aware of the ill-effects from contact with the thousands of military and civilian workers bulldozing their way through the northwest in 1942, Bishop Coudert began pressing Indian Affairs for a residential school that would serve Indians of the Stikine and Yukon Agencies:

With the Alaskan Highway now connecting Lower Post with Teslin or Tagish Lake, the realization by the Department of our long cherished project of an Indian Residential School and Preventorium at Teslin Lake or at Tagish Lake would afford a considerable help for the education and civilizing of the Indians of Lower Post and Frances Lake; moreover destitute, backward, orphan children from other parts of the Stikine Agency and the Yukon Territory could also greatly benefit by such a school.²⁴⁵

Since the mid-1920s, the Oblates had been operating winter day schools in Tahltan territory at Dease Lake, and Iskut Lake (Klappan); in neighbouring Kaska country, a summer school was located at McDame and a winter school at Caribou Hide.²⁴⁶ Coudert argued that while the DIA supported the Anglican boarding school at Carcross (74 miles south of Whitehorse):

... nothing is being done for the children of the Catholic Indians of the Yukon, and so little is done for the Catholic Indians of the Stikine Agency. ... We rely on the spirit of Justice and Fairmindedness [sic] of the Officials of the Indian Affairs Branch to see that a better treatment be granted to the Indians of the North, and we dare to insist that Justice be done to our Catholic Indians through a more adequate support of the existing day schools.²⁴⁷

Coudert also claimed that the Oblates had been approached “time and time again by the Indians in Atlin [British Columbia], Tagish, Carcross, and Whitehorse [Yukon Territory]

²⁴⁴ Albright, “Tahltan Ethnoarchaeology,” 20.

²⁴⁵ LAC, RG10 Volume 6417, File 849 1-4, “Stikine Agency,” Mflm C-8750, Letter, Bishop Coudert to Phil Phelan, Welfare & Training (Indian Affairs Branch) 23 September, 1942, 2.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 1-2.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

for a Catholic Boarding School ... several of our Catholic Indian children had to be sent to the Anglican school at Carcross in the past, much to their detriment.”²⁴⁸

R.A. Hoey (who had replaced Phil Phelan) replied to Bishop Coudert in early October. Hoey explained that Coleman’s report had been carefully reviewed by Indian Affairs officials and suggestions for an appropriate school in the Stikine Agency had been sent on to D.M. McKay, Indian Commissioner for British Columbia, who was also advised to discuss the matter with the Bishops.²⁴⁹ He enclosed a copy of the letter for Coudert to review. In defense of the Department and the fair treatment given to Anglican and Catholic organizations, he attached a list of all the residential schools in Canada:

You will readily see that while no Catholic residential school has been established in the Yukon, the number of Catholic schools in operation in the Dominion indicates that there has been no discrimination on the part of the Government at any time in the establishment of residential schools—certainly no discrimination against the Catholic Church.²⁵⁰

Responding to R.A. Hoey, Coudert was highly insulted by inspector Coleman’s proposed nondenominational Indian day school, which he claimed was “illegal and unpractical.... Why should our many Catholic children of the Stikine Agency be compelled to frequent an undenominational school when by right they are entitled, according to the Indian Act, to a Catholic School?”²⁵¹ He argued that Coleman displayed a “thorough ignorance of the local conditions” in the region. The Bishop questioned how

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ LAC, RG10 Volume 6417, File 849 1-4, “Stikine Agency,” Mflm C-8750, Letter, Hoey to Bishop Coudert, (Diocese of the Yukon and Prince Rupert, Whitehorse, YT) 8 October, 1942.

²⁵⁰ Ibid. Hoey’s list of residential schools is not shown in this file. See Indian Affairs Annual Report, “school statement for the year ending March 31, 1943”, 168. Listed are 13 denominational residential schools in British Columbia: 9 Roman Catholic, 2 Church of England, and 2 United Church.

²⁵¹ LAC, RG10 Volume 6417, File 849 1-4, “Stikine Agency,” Mflm C-8750, Letter, Bishop Coudert to Hoey, Nov.12, 1942, 2.

Indian children were expected to reach a day school at 6-Mile Creek, from their outlying camps; Dease Lake was 80 miles away and Caribou Hide 200 miles distant:

The suggestion is too ridiculous to be dwelt on any longer. ... The only logical solution of the school problem in that region is the one we have constantly advocated for the past five years ... the erection of decent day school buildings right where our missions actually stand in Dease Lake, McDame, Klappan and Caribou Hide ... and a Boarding School and a Preventorium in a central place where to destitute and neglected children, as well as T.B. cases, would be sent from the various parts of the Stikine Agency and the Yukon.²⁵²

Bishop Coudert favoured the possibility of Lower Post or Watson Lake as the most central points to serve the Indians of northwestern British Columbia and the Yukon. In closing, the Bishop explained that his intention was to work with, rather than against, Indian Affairs officials to achieve: “the best possible treatment of the Indians entrusted to our common care ... I dare to maintain that a good “entente cordiale” between Church and State over the education of the Indians should by all means be fostered and encouraged by both sides.”²⁵³ Indian Affairs would eventually concede to Coudert’s demands; his wish for a Catholic boarding facility would be realized after WWII ended.

As church and state authorities debated the residential school issue during the war years, things remained much the same in the Telegraph Creek school. Mr. Hughes earned a salary of \$1000 per annum from 1936 to 1943 but there was no extra money to repair the schoolhouse.²⁵⁴ As district revenues gradually increased between 1943 and 1945, Hughes would finally see a reasonable salary increase in his tenth and last teaching year. In the 1945-1946 academic year, 33 children attended the school and Hughes was paid a salary of \$1516, which reflected the usual provincial grant of \$680 per annum but an

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ Ibid.

²⁵⁴ ARPS, 1936-1943.

increased district expenditure of almost \$600.²⁵⁵ Still, his salary in 1945 remained less than the \$1820 salary paid to Clara Tervo in 1928.

The province did little to advance the condition of rural schools until they acted on the recommendations of the *Cameron Report* after 1945, and consolidated school districts to raise tax revenues.²⁵⁶ Telegraph Creek, due to its isolation, remained an “unattached district” dependent on local property taxpayers. Somewhat helpful for rural teachers in 1947 was the provincial approval of an allowance of \$100 per school year for teachers employed in “remote or isolated districts,” for schools in unattached districts like Telegraph Creek, teachers were granted \$150 per year.²⁵⁷

From integration to segregation

After the Alaska Highway was completed in 1942, and the war came to an end, Stikine country became a target for mining exploration companies and big-game hunters which led to more government regulation of natural resources and interference in traditional Indigenous subsistence activities. While some employment opportunities opened up for the Tahltan, more settlers also took up waged work in the region. As birth rates began to increase rapidly in the mid-1940s, federal post-war social programs such as *Mothers Allowance*, premised on children attending school regularly, pushed governments to build new schools and/or expand existing schools. Tahltan families wishing to receive federal benefits moved closer to Telegraph Creek in an effort to send their children regularly to school. As a result, the provincial school became increasingly

²⁵⁵ ARPS, 1945-46.

²⁵⁶ Raptis, “Implementing Integrated Education,” 121.

²⁵⁷ BCA, British Columbia Council of Public Instruction orders-in-council GR-0138, Box10, File 2, 29 August, 1947. Signed G. M. Weir, Minister of Education.

crowded and by the spring of 1949, some 81 pupils were crammed into two rooms—the downstairs classroom and the former teacherage upstairs.²⁵⁸

In April, Indian Agent R.H.S. Sampson met with the local school board to address the dire schooling situation. In a letter to W.S. Arneil, Indian Commissioner for British Columbia, Sampson claimed that everyone agreed that something had to be done to accommodate the 25–30 Indian children living in the vicinity, “in addition to fifteen Indian children whose parents are tax-payers and who are therefore entitled to attend the provincial school.”²⁵⁹ According to Sampson, the province had attempted to build a new school in 1948 but due to a shortage of materials, construction did not get started.²⁶⁰ Based on agent Sampson’s count, there were 44 white and 54 Indian school-aged (ages 6-15) children. He also noted that of the total number of Indian children, 35 were Protestant and 19 were Roman Catholic.²⁶¹ It was time, Sampson suggested, that the provincial Department of Education be consulted as to the possibility of building a new and larger “combined white and Indian school” in conjunction with the province.²⁶²

In 1948, the final report of the *Special Joint Committee* had recommended that Canada’s *Indian Act* be revised in the sections that pertained to education, “in order to prepare Indian children to take their places as citizens ... wherever and whenever possible Indian children should be educated in association with other children.”²⁶³

²⁵⁸ LAC, RG10 Volume 6417, File 849 1-4, “Stikine Agency,” Mflm C-875 Letter, R.H.S. Sampson to W.S. Arneil, Indian Commissioner for BC, 13 April 1949.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

²⁶² Ibid.

²⁶³ Annual Report, 1949, Department of Mines and Resources, Indian Affairs Branch, “Education Service,” 199.

In the Indian Affairs Branch annual report for the year ending March 31, 1949, director D.M. MacKay stated, “in line with this policy, the education division has been negotiating with school boards and Provincial Departments of Education for the training of Indian children in Provincial Schools.”²⁶⁴ What MacKay’s report did not allude to was how reluctant the churches were to relinquish their control over Indian schooling. At the end of the 1948 hearings, the Protestant churches agreed that denominational schooling should be gradually phased out but wished to retain residential schools for orphans and neglected children. Catholic clergy however, had expressed firm opposition to any form of integrated public schooling during the hearings and continued to petition the federal government for assurances that proposed changes to the *Indian Act* would not usurp the right of Catholic Indian children to receive Catholic education in separate schools.²⁶⁵ Until the churches were satisfied with the revisions made to the “Schools” section of the final bill which legislated changes to the *Indian Act* in 1951, Indian Affairs authorities could do little to fully integrate Indian children into the public school system.

For provincial and federal education officials negotiating the construction of a new school at Telegraph Creek in 1949, the children’s religious affiliation was indeed the principal factor that would shape the final cost-sharing agreement. In May of 1949, Indian Commissioner Arneil acted on agent Sampson’s request to consider the building of a new “combined White and Indian school” by contacting Bernard Neary,

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

²⁶⁵ Leslie, “Assimilation,” 169-201. Leslie explains in detail how testimonies from Protestant and Catholic Church representatives during the *Special Joint Committee* hearings reflected competing views of integrated and segregated schooling motivated by divergent ecclesiastical interests and similar economic considerations.

Superintendent of Education for Indian Affairs. Based upon Sampson's school population figures forwarded by Arneil, Superintendent Neary wrote:

It is presumed that the children concerned will be mainly Anglican ... we should explore the possibilities of entering into an agreement with the Province for these Indian children who can attend this new Telegraph Creek Provincial School. I presume that the R.C. [Roman Catholic] children will still continue to attend the seasonal school at Klappan.²⁶⁶

Neary failed to recognize that the seasonal school at Klappan (Iskut) was situated approximately 60 miles south of Telegraph Creek in the traditional territory of the Iskut, a separate band of Tahltan people and was therefore inaccessible to Tahltan Catholic children residing in the Telegraph Creek vicinity. The correspondence that ensued between federal and provincial education authorities in 1949 further illustrates how bureaucrats in both Victoria and Ottawa knew little of the unique circumstances at Telegraph Creek.

In June, 1949 Arneil replied to Neary after a review of Sampson's school age children revealed that the population was "almost equally divided between Roman Catholics and Anglicans."²⁶⁷ Arneil voiced his concern that because the Department had previously assumed "the children concerned were mainly Anglican ... before proceeding with this matter I should wait further instructions."²⁶⁸ Replying to Arneil in early July, Neary stated that the Department was "only able to enter into an agreement with the School Board for the education of Anglican children" and he expected that the "Roman Catholics will probably request the establishment of an Indian Day School for their

²⁶⁶ LAC, RG10 Volume 6417, File 849 1-4, "Stikine Agency," Mflm C-8750, Letter Neary to Arneil, 25 May, 1949.

²⁶⁷ LAC, RG10 Volume 6417, File 849 1-4, "Stikine Agency," Mflm C-8750, Letter Arneil to Neary, 10 June, 1949.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

children.”²⁶⁹ Neary advised Arneil that R.F. Davey, District Inspector of Indian Schools in British Columbia should be the one to “approach the Provincial Authorities accordingly.”²⁷⁰

Was Neary informed that Bishop Coudert had persistently called for a separate school for Indian Catholic children in the Stikine Agency since the early 1940s? The situation in 1949 would not have been surprising if he had referred to Inspector Coleman’s report in 1941 wherein an “inter-denominational” school was advocated for an almost equally divided Anglican-Catholic Tahltan population; or C.C. Perry’s 1930 report in which the Anglican and Catholic clergy claimed an equal number of Indian faithful in their justification for separate denominational schooling in the Stikine agency.

Meanwhile, F.T. Fairey, Superintendent of Education in Victoria, sent provincial school inspector S.J. Graham to Telegraph Creek. As a provincial representative, Graham appeared to be as uninformed as the Indian Affairs Commissioner. His report does not acknowledge that the Telegraph Creek school had been condemned in the late 1930s. In a report to Fairey dated July 4, 1949 he found the physical condition of the school “appalling” and described it in detail:

Forty-nine pupils are enrolled in the senior room which occupies the class room space on the ground floor. The dimensions of this class room are 20 ft. x 31 ft. with considerable space taken up in the centre of the room by a chimney and barrel type heater. Pupils are seated in double and triple desks. Lighting is totally inadequate. The attic of the school, which was formerly used as a teacher’s residence is now used to house the grade one pupils who range in age from 6-12 years. Access to this room is secured by means of a very steep stairs attached to the rear of the school. The dimensions of this room are 12 ft. by 31 ft. with a ceiling height varying from 5 ft. 6 in. at the sides to 7 ft. 8 in.

²⁶⁹ LAC, RG10 Volume 6417, File 849 1-4, “Stikine Agency,” Mflm C-8750, Letter Neary to Arneil, 4 July, 1949

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

at the centre. TWENTY-TWO [his emphasis] youngsters are taught in this room. Conditions of sanitation and of fire hazard are unbelievable.²⁷¹

In a review of attendance figures supplied by the teachers and agent Sampson, Graham stated that 79 children had been enrolled in 1948, with an average attendance of 77. Two teachers were employed, “neither of whom have had any teacher training.”²⁷² Estimating the school attendance for the following year, Graham believed that 104 pupils would attend grades one to eight. He reported that “at present, 25 children are wards of the Indian Department” and he expected this number to double in five years, “which would indicate that the Indian Department should be involved in the financing of any school construction undertaken.” Graham recommended that a three-room school be built to accommodate all the children and estimated the cost of construction to be close to \$100,000.²⁷³

In July, 1949 R.F. Davey, District Inspector of Indian Schools in British Columbia, attended a meeting in Victoria with the Deputy Minister of Education; in a second meeting two weeks later, he met with agent Sampson and provincial school inspector Graham.²⁷⁴ After the meetings, Davey wrote a lengthy memorandum which summarized the situation at Telegraph Creek based on Graham’s report, and followed with recommendations to Indian Affairs.²⁷⁵ On August 2, W.S. Arneil forwarded Davey’s report to Ottawa. In his cover letter, Arneil was careful to mention that he had no

²⁷¹ LAC, RG10 Volume 6417, File 849 1-4, “Stikine Agency,” Mflm C-8750, Report, S.J. Graham to F.T. Fairey, Deputy Minister and Superintendent of Education (Victoria, BC), 4 July, 1949.

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ Ibid.

²⁷⁴ LAC, RG10 Volume 6417, File 849 1-4, “Stikine Agency,” Mflm C-8750, Memorandum, R.F. Davey, District Inspector of Indian Schools in BC, 26 July, 1949.

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

knowledge of the fact that, “Indian children of both religious denominations had been attending the Provincial School for some years.”²⁷⁶

Davey’s memorandum attempted to explain the particular circumstances at Telegraph Creek wherein he acknowledged that Catholic and Anglican Indian children had attended the provincial school at Telegraph Creek for a number of years. He seemed somewhat perturbed that this arrangement was not going to continue:

Now apparently because a new building is to be constructed, a segregation is to take place which will deny the right of attendance of the Catholic group of this Band, which is doubly unfortunate in that it will also segregate part of the Indian population from the white group. This is because the Indian Affairs Branch will not assume the responsibility for the cost of educating the Catholic children in this Provincial School, although it does so at other points. The reason for this is apparently that at some later date there is likely to be a request for the construction of a separate school for the Catholic children.²⁷⁷

As the historical record indicates, Indian Affairs had paid tuition fees for the status Indian children enrolled at the Telegraph Creek school, regardless of their religious affiliation, for over four decades. They had also paid tuition for the Indian children who had attended the Anglican mission day school at Tahltan, and the seasonal schools administered by the Oblates in remote regions of the Stikine agency. The provincial grant given to the local school board was based on a minimum required enrolment number; whether a child was Protestant or Catholic was of no consequence. However, as Davey correctly pointed out, the Catholic children at Telegraph Creek were to be segregated from the Protestant population.

²⁷⁶ LAC, RG10 Volume 6417, File 849 1-4, “Stikine Agency,” Mflm C-8750, W.S. Arneil to Indian Affairs Branch, 2 August, 1949.

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

Did provincial education authorities see this action conflicting with the federal government's policy shift from segregated to integrated schooling for Indian children? Perhaps politicians in British Columbia were anticipating that the proposed changes to the *Indian Act* would result in decisive federal legislation on the schooling issue transferring power to the provinces/territories and thus weakening the political influence of the churches to affect policy?

Knowing full well that Indian Affairs was bound to the terms of the existing *Indian Act*, Davey took a pragmatic route with officials in Ottawa and Victoria. Based upon his projection of the school-aged population, he saw no reason why the Anglican and Catholic children could not be accommodated in a three-room provincial school until 1952, when an extra room would be needed for the increase in the Indian population,

This addition would have to be financed by our Department... Since the Catholic and Protestant Indian children have been attending in the past years there does not appear to be any very good reason why such a separation would be any more difficult at that time than at the present.²⁷⁸

Davey noted that the Catholic Indian population was “increasing more rapidly than the Protestant group” and recommended that Indian Affairs permit the admission of Catholic and Protestant children in the new public school:

and if necessary provide a separate school for the Catholic population in about three years' time when we would undoubtedly be approached by the Province to bear the cost of an addition made necessary by the increase in the Indian population. This will mean that the Indian Affairs Branch would bear 55% of the cost of construction.²⁷⁹

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ Ibid., 5.

In November 1949, a new three-room school was opened in Telegraph Creek.²⁸⁰

On March 1, 1950 a formal agreement was made between the federal Minister of Citizenship and Immigration and the Telegraph Creek School District. There is no evidence that local Tahltan families were consulted in advance of the agreement. An Order-In-Council (OIC) was signed by federal Minister of Indian Affairs, W.E. Harris and local school board members on August 4, 1950. The preamble to the agreement read in part:

WHEREAS the Minister is obliged under the present circumstances to furnish adequate school accommodation for the Indian children of the Indian Reserves near Telegraph Creek, B.C.; and WHEREAS the Telegraph Creek School District has just erected a new school to provide educational facilities for both White and Indian children of the area; and WHEREAS the amalgamation of these two racial groups would work for the benefit of both in making possible the provision of better facilities, staff and school accommodation.²⁸¹

After four decades of providing the minimal treasury funds to assist the Telegraph Creek School as per the terms of the *Public School Act*, the province indeed benefited from the legal “amalgamation” of Indian and white children in 1949. The school board received the greater percentage of funding for the new school’s construction cost and the Department of Education maintained control over curriculum, teachers, and administrative personnel.²⁸² Indian Affairs agreed to pay the larger share of construction costs, the annual tuition fees of the status Indian children, and were expected to:

“maintain a standard of health, cleanliness and clothing among these Indian pupils such

²⁸⁰ ARPS, 1949-50.

²⁸¹ BCA, British Columbia. Provincial Secretary GR-1955, Mflm. B06497, Order-In-Council #1749, 4 August, 1950, 1.

²⁸² Ibid. The total cost of the new school was \$40,322.61. Indian Affairs agreed to pay \$22,177.43 and the province \$18,145.18, which represented the 55% - 45% split Davey had recommended in 1949.

as would be comparable to that of White children attending the school.”²⁸³ In the entire text of the OIC, there is no reference made to the religious affiliation of pupils and certainly no hint of the discriminatory actions taken by education authorities, which in reality had shaped the cost-sharing agreement.

At the national level, federal and provincial authorities were actively promoting Indian social integration after the *Special Joint Committee* hearings in 1948; yet, provincial and Indian Affairs officials did not mention the term, “integrated” during negotiations for the new school in Telegraph Creek. More importantly, no government official raised an objection to the plan of segregating the Catholic Indian children in a separate school at a time when racial integration was the official policy of the Indian Affairs Branch.

In 1951, the federal government in partnership with the OMI opened a residential school at Lower Post to serve the Catholic Indian children of the Stikine and Yukon agencies. The Tahltan Catholic children in Telegraph Creek, no longer had the opportunity for “educational equality” that Minister Straith had promised in 1950. It should be recalled that in 1951, schooling was compulsory for Indian children between the ages of 6 to 16 under the terms of the federal *Indian Act*, the *Family Allowance Act*, and British Columbia’s *Public School Act*. If Catholic parents wished to continue their children’s schooling, they were compelled to send them to a segregated school 240 miles (388 kilometers) away from home or renounce their Catholicism.

The provincial and federal governments and the Catholic and Anglican churches acting in their own self-interests, implemented a policy which enforced segregated

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, 3.

schooling for Indian children in the northwest. The residential school at Lower Post remained open until 1974.



Telegraph Creek School, 1956 courtesy BC Archives collections, B-08310

CHAPTER FOUR

Conclusions

Scholars have made important contributions to our knowledge and understanding of the history of Indian Affairs' education policy and the subsequent impact to Indigenous peoples across Canada. National historical surveys by J.R. Miller, John Milloy, and Brian Titley have shown how Indian Affairs in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries consistently under-funded a system of Indian residential and on-reserve day schools which were poorly managed by Christian clergy to the detriment of generations of Indigenous youth.²⁸⁴ Scholars with a specific focus on Indian schooling in British Columbia have reached similar conclusions. Jean Barman, for example, determined that the expansion of the church-state network of Indian schools in the 1880s and the racist attitudes of a rapidly expanding Anglo settler population were to blame for the shift in British Columbia's public education policy from one of Indigenous inclusion to that of exclusion. By the beginning of WWI, according to Barman, some Indigenous children continued to attend public schools but these were exceptions and not the rule.²⁸⁵

Regional studies however, have shown that federally supported Indian schools were few and far between in some parts of the province, particularly in the isolated northern portion. If Indian children happened to live near a settler community, they sometimes enrolled in the provincial rural school but more often were schooled in seasonal camps or mission day schools. As Ken Coates's research illustrates, in the

²⁸⁴ As previously noted in this study, see: J.R. Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision: A History of Native Residential Schools* (1997); John Milloy, *A National Crime: The Canadian Government and the Residential School System, 1879–1976* (1999); Brian Titley, *A Narrow Vision: Duncan Campbell Scott and the Administration of Indian Affairs in Canada* (1986).

²⁸⁵ Barman, "Schooled for Inequality," 62.

northern-most parts of British Columbia and the Yukon, federal authorities felt that Indians were “best left as Indians” —only the Christian missionaries, meagerly supported by Indian Affairs, provided some Indian children with rudimentary schooling. Until WWII instigated the construction of military transportation routes to connect the northwest region to the south, Indian Affairs showed little interest in advancing education for Indians who posed no threat to resource development and settler populations. Many Indian children did not receive any form of schooling prior to 1944 when the federal *Mother’s Allowance* program encouraged families to relocate from isolated villages to towns where schools were established.²⁸⁶

When WWII came to an end, politicians came under pressure from social advocacy groups to provide improved health and welfare services and support for returning veterans, including Indians. As John Leslie has observed, changes in Indian Affairs policy and the amended social benefits that were extended to Indians were not made until the “related concerns of the majority” came under scrutiny.²⁸⁷ After the *Special Joint Committee* hearings concluded in 1948, federal and provincial education authorities appeared to embrace the recommendation to integrate the public schools. The demand for good quality teachers and more day schools on reserves that the majority of Indians had requested in briefs and testimonies to the *Special Joint Committee* were ignored.²⁸⁸

²⁸⁶ As previously noted, see: Ken Coates, *Best Left as Indians: Native-White Relations in the Yukon Territory, 1840-1973* (1991).

²⁸⁷ Leslie, “Assimilation,” 87.

²⁸⁸ Raptis and Bowker, “Maintaining the Illusion,” 8-9.

Milloy argues that Indian Affairs officials were keen to shut down the residential system as quickly as possible not only for financial reasons but to hasten the acculturation of Indian children through exposure to white children in their formative years.²⁸⁹ While the federal policy of segregated Indian schooling was seen as a failed strategy in the late 1940s, Miller agrees that the policy shift to integrated schooling and the government legislation which enabled it left the “assimilative purpose of the school system unchallenged.”²⁹⁰

Whether or not Indian children attended integrated or segregated schools, provincial and territorial curricula were not modified with respect to Indigenous cultures and values.²⁹¹ In the post-war era, Indian and immigrant children alike were expected to learn and adopt the Canadian liberal values claimed essential for citizenship.²⁹² Hugh Shewell believes that the strategy to educate Indian children alongside non-Indian children was intended as part of the state’s broader economic agenda to bring an end to the reserve system, welfare dependency, and ultimately Indians’ special status in Canada, “if Indians could be made to feel an attachment to Canada, their spontaneous consent to civil society would follow.”²⁹³

After two World Wars and the intervening Great Depression which decreased parliamentary appropriations to Indian Affairs, Indian residential and day schools by the

²⁸⁹ Milloy, John. *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (Indian and Northern Affairs, 1996)* Volume 1 - Looking Forward Looking Back - Part Two: False Assumptions and a Failed Relationship - Chapter 10 - Residential Schools: 1.2 Changing Policies www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/webarchives/20071115053257/http://www.aincinac.gc.ca/ch/rcap/sg/sgmm_e.html (retrieved August 25, 2012).

²⁹⁰ Miller, *Shingwauk’s Vision*, 389.

²⁹¹ Raptis, “Implementing Integrated Education,” 137. Coates, *Best Left as Indians*, 205.

²⁹² Milloy, *A National Crime*, 196-198.

²⁹³ Shewell, *Enough to Keep Them Alive*, 166.

late 1940s were in a state of decay and disrepair. British Columbia's rural public schools had fared no better over the same time period when the Department of Education's budget allocations favoured the maintenance and expansion of schools in the heavily populated urban centres of the province.²⁹⁴

Helen Raptis's case study of the implementation of integration policy in the historic town of Port Essington on the northwest coast illustrates how decisions made by federal and provincial policy-makers, far removed from local contexts, were shaped by the short-sighted consideration of economic efficiencies and savings to the public purse. There was little thought to the long-term viability of individual livelihoods and the overall well-being of a small community. As Raptis discovered, the integration of Indian children from the Methodist Indian day school into the Port Essington elementary school, took place for reasons that were rooted in the economic demise of the community itself and certain war-time decisions made at the federal level.²⁹⁵ The decline of the fishing canneries in the 1930s, combined with the removal of Japanese residents (almost half of the town's population) to internment camps during WWII, made it economically unfeasible to sustain two elementary schools in the town.²⁹⁶ Although Tsimshian people represented the majority of Port Essington's population in the late 1940s, Raptis found no evidence that government officials asked for their input in advance of integrating the children into the elementary school. Raptis concludes, "although human rights concerns

²⁹⁴ Wilson and Stortz, "The rural school problem," 56. Urban centres with a greater number of property tax payers per school district, always received more attention from provincial education officials prior to post-war policy changes.

²⁹⁵ Raptis, "Exploring the Factors," 541-543.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 539.

shaped the integration discourse at the federal level, there is no evidence to suggest that such matters played a major role in developments at Port Essington.”²⁹⁷

Reflecting similar findings to Raptis, the story of government integration policy and the school at Telegraph Creek magnifies the short-sightedness of policy-makers in Victoria and Ottawa who demonstrated little historical knowledge or understanding of the community’s efforts to school both Tahltan and settler children. When the Alaska Highway paved the way between British Columbia’s north and south, government authorities awakened to the untapped potential of the region’s rich natural resources. To encourage business interests and attract a more stable work force in the area, provincial politicians realized the value of improving the region’s rural schools. After the *Special Joint Committee* hearings concluded in 1948 and recommendations were made to school Indian children together with white children, Department of Education officials were quick to see the advantage of sharing costs with Indian Affairs to replace the rural schools including the overcrowded and crumbling Telegraph Creek school.

When provincial school inspector Graham arrived in Telegraph Creek in 1949, he was shocked at the physical condition of the school; yet the fact that the provincial school had integrated a community of settler, mixed-heritage, and Tahltan children for over four decades seemed to be of no particular importance. Instead of holding up the school as a model for integrated education, which provincial politicians could well have used to political advantage, education officials focused on a division of the Indian children by religious affiliation to justify the larger proportion of expenditure Indian Affairs was responsible for. The same year, British Columbia amended the *Public School Act* to

²⁹⁷ Ibid., 520.

legalize agreements between school districts and Indian Affairs for the tuition of Indian children. Simultaneously, provincial education authorities did not challenge the separation of the Catholic children assigned to the residential school at Lower Post in 1951.

Although Indian Affairs authorities were bound to the terms of the *Indian Act* which stated that “no [Indian] child whose parent is a Roman Catholic should be assigned to a school conducted under Protestant auspices” without parental written approval, they did not make the argument that the school at Telegraph Creek was a non-sectarian public school. The school was not conducted under Anglican or Catholic auspices; therefore, the attendance of children of either denomination at the Telegraph Creek school did not legally conflict with the terms of the *Indian Act*. From the viewpoint of the Catholic Bishops however, Indian Affairs was legally responsible for the provision of schooling for Catholic Indian children; and, amendments made to the *Indian Act* in 1927 (and in 1951) protected the right of Catholic Indian children to receive a Catholic education.

Paradoxically, Indian Affairs had never built a separate facility for Catholic Indian children in the Telegraph Creek vicinity, or in any part of the Stikine Agency. The Oblate Fathers had long-since demonstrated their commitment to teaching at least a rudimentary form of elementary education in seasonal schools in the most remote areas of Stikine country; consequently, Bishop Coudert maintained significant influence over Indian Affairs officials participating in the 1949 cost-sharing negotiations for the new school at Telegraph Creek.

On the national scene, revisions to the *Indian Act* were still under parliamentary review and 1949 was also a federal election year. Leslie’s research reveals that Liberal

Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent (Mackenzie King's successor) was advised by the Minister of Mines and Resources (responsible for Indian Affairs), to stall passage of the draft legislation to revise the *Indian Act* until after the election (June 1949) so as to not upset either the Protestant or Catholic stakeholders.²⁹⁸

The revised *Indian Act* of 1951 legalized agreements between Indian Affairs and the provinces/territories, religious and charitable organizations, for the tuition of Indian children. The churches were appeased but the lack of political will at the federal level to take full responsibility for Indian schooling by entirely removing denominational organizations from their administrative role served to maintain an ambiguous policy. The government's "muddled approach to integration" as Michael Marker has observed, allowed denominational residential schooling to continue and in some cases, expand.²⁹⁹

The evidence collected within the scope of this study has shaped a micro-narrative which unsettles the more common perception that federal residential schooling policy was the sole contributor to the alienation Indian children faced in post-war society. Combined with the indifference of provincial education authorities, the policy shift to school Indian children with 'white children wherever possible' was poorly implemented in northwest British Columbia. There is no record of consultation with the Tahltan

²⁹⁸ Leslie, "Assimilation," 201-203. After the Liberals were reelected in June, 1949, Colin Gibson the new Minister of Mines and Resources proceeded cautiously with the draft revisions to the *Indian Act*. According to Leslie, it was not in the government's political best interests to offend either the Protestant members of the *Special Joint Committee* or the Catholic clergy. In November, 1949 the Bishops of the Canadian Catholic Conference petitioned Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent directly. Claiming that 50% of Canada's Indigenous peoples were Catholic, the Bishops were "unanimously opposed to any clause which would oblige Catholic children to attend a school other than a Catholic school." Parliamentary debates on Bill 267 to revise the *Indian Act* did not begin until 1950 when advocates for Indian policy reform, including the influential Canadian Legion and the Canadian Federation of Home and School, demanded that the government take action to legislate a revised *Indian Act*. In September 1951, Bill 267 finally passed into federal legislation.

²⁹⁹ Marker, "Indigenous resistance," 764.

families in Telegraph Creek, other than Bishop Coudert's claim that Catholic Indians in the Stikine Agency had repeatedly requested a separate residential school. Did Tahltan loyalties change when their children were forced to attend the Lower Post residential school? Was it possible that the Tahltan community suffered further discrimination from the town's Protestant population after their children were separated? How did former Tahltan pupils who attended the new Telegraph Creek school or the Lower Post residential school remember their school days? These are questions that deserve further research.

Provincial and federal authorities intervening at Telegraph Creek in 1949 missed the opportunity to genuinely integrate all of the Tahltan children into the public school system. More importantly, the Department of Education's tacit support of the separation of Catholic children failed to safeguard them from the abuses they were to suffer in the residential school at Lower Post.³⁰⁰

In British Columbia's remote northwest, the discriminatory educational policies of provincial and federal governments decidedly worked in tandem to alienate Indian families from settler society. The dual system of schooling, established since Confederation, continued well into the 1970s.

³⁰⁰ To date, there is no published historical case study of the Lower Post residential school administered by the OMI from 1951 to 1974 and staffed by the Sisters of St. Ann and federal civil service employees (boys' supervisors). Evidence of abuse to students beginning in 1953 is drawn from a recently published report by Marcel-Eugene Le Beuf, *The Role of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police During the Indian Residential School System, Report on behalf of the RCMP* (Ottawa: RCMP, 2012). The report documents the following information: In 1957, RCMP conducted an investigation of the "Boys Supervisor" at the Lower Post residential school. Forty male pupils were interviewed and four charges of sexual assault were laid. The case was dismissed when witnesses refused to testify. After more complaints were made in the 1980s, RCMP from the Watson Lake (Yukon) detachment interviewed 45 students during a 1990-93 investigation of incidents that occurred at the Lower Post school from 1953 to 1963. Boys Supervisors, B. Garard and G. Maczynski were found guilty on several counts of sexual assault and sentenced to 4 years and 15 months, and 16 years respectively.

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