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Reconciliation and Reckoning:

Contesting Canada's Past, Framing Its Future

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LETTERS

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INTRODUCTION

THE PAST — CONTESTED AND CONTROVERSIAL — CONTINUES TO SHAPE OUR PRESENT AND FUTURE

RANDY BOSWELL

Randy Boswell is an associate professor of journalism at Carleton University and a former reporter and editor with the *Ottawa Citizen*. He is also a former national writer with *Postmedia News* specializing in stories about Canadian politics, history and culture. He continues to write frequently about these subjects in various Canadian publications, and has guest edited several previous, history-themed editions of *Canadian Issues/Thèmes Canadiens*. Boswell has published scholarly articles on aspects of Canadian environmental history and on an ancient Indigenous burial ground across the Ottawa River from Parliament Hill that has helped inform the understanding of First Peoples' enduring occupation of today's national capital area. A column he wrote in December 2020 prompted the City of Ottawa to rename the Prince of Wales Bridge spanning the Ottawa River the Chief William Commanda Bridge to honour the memory of a revered Ottawa-area Algonquin leader.

The spark of inspiration for this special edition of *Canadian Issues/Thèmes Canadiens* was the controversy that ensued after the governing council of the Canadian Historical Association issued a statement on Canada Day 2021 formally announcing that "the long history of violence and dispossession Indigenous peoples experienced in what is today Canada" should be called genocide.

"We recognize that historians, in the past, have often been reticent to acknowledge this history as genocide," the CHA, which represents 650 professional historians in Canada, said in the statement. "As a profession, historians have therefore contributed in lasting and tangible ways to the Canadian refusal to come to grips with this country's history of colonization and dispossession. Our inability, as a society, to recognize this history for what it is, and the ways that it lives on into the present, has served to perpetuate the violence. It is time for us to break this historical cycle. We encourage Canadians to recognize this history for what it is: genocide."

The CHA statement was released in the months following the discovery of hundreds of unmarked children's graves at former residential schools in

Canada. But there was — and remains — sharp disagreement with the association's statement among some Canadian scholars. A number of them issued an open letter acknowledging the gravesite revelations as "tragic evidence" of the Canadian government's attempted assimilation of Indigenous children into the broader society. But they rejected the CHA's claim of a "broad scholarly consensus" that this history amounted to genocide, and further argued that the CHA should not be issuing statements "in support of a particular interpretation of history," adding that by "insisting that there is only one valid interpretation, the CHA's current leadership has fundamentally broken the norms and expectations of professional scholarship."

Just before the summer 2021 uproar over the CHA's statement, New Democrat MP Leah Gazan — a member of Saskatchewan's Wood Mountain Lakota Nation — tried and failed to gain unanimous consent in the House of Commons for a formal declaration that the Canadian government should recognize what happened in the country's residential schools as genocide. Then Pope Francis came to Canada in July, and the pontiff commented to reporters at one point that "genocide" is indeed the right term to apply to the horrors perpetrated against Indigenous communities by Canada's residential schools.

In late October 2022, Gazan amended her House of Commons declaration to reference the Pope's statement about genocide. This time, the motion passed with all-party support.

History, of course, only happened once. But what exactly happened, what it means, which historical figures were heroes, which were villains and many other questions about the past — including what words should be used to describe certain events and policies and individuals and eras — continue to be hotly contested and subject to new information and evolving perspectives.

At a time when scholarly and popular narratives about this country's history are being challenged and rewritten with unprecedented vigour, the Association for Canadian Studies invited a range of contributors to share their thoughts on what might be described as this country's contemporary battleground over history, heritage and public memory of the past.

Several recent events have intensified the struggle over Canada's history, including the 200th anniversary of the birth of Sir John A. Macdonald in January 2015 and the release later that year of the multi-volume final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada — which, in fact, kickstarted the "genocide" debate long before the CHA weighed in on the matter last summer.

Then came the 150th anniversary of Confederation in 2017, accompanied by impassioned critiques from Indigenous leaders who insisted the sesquicentennial was no cause for celebration and reminded Canadians that the First Peoples of this land have been here for at least 150 *centuries*.

In 2020, further deep reflection about Canada's history was spurred by a North America-wide racial reckoning that followed the U.S. police killing of George Floyd, an unarmed black man in Minneapolis. The Black Lives Matter protests that reverberated in cities across Canada created waves of controversy over certain public tributes — in the names of buildings, streets and towns — to historical

figures who had owned slaves and resisted the abolition movement of their own time.

Finally, in the spring of 2021, the fresh revelations about unmarked graves at former residential school sites in British Columbia and elsewhere fuelled the movement to re-examine Canada's history, intensifying efforts to tear down tributes to figures such Macdonald, Father of Confederation Hector-Louis Langevin, Egerton Ryerson and others who played a role in the creation of the residential school system.

As one sign of how profoundly the ground is shifting beneath us in these tumultuous times, this publication was initiated when the namesake of Ryerson University was still honoured on that Toronto campus; today, the contentious statue of the 19th-century Upper Canada educator whose ideas helped create Canada's residential school system is long gone from the place now called Toronto Metropolitan University.

This volume of essays and transcribed interviews features a range of voices, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, reflecting on such changes, and how the past — often contested and controversial — continues to shape our present and future.

BEAR DRUM
Jared Tait

SECTION I

CONTESTING CLIO'S CRAFT: ACTIVISTS, TRUE PROFESSIONALS AND THE DEBATE OVER GENOCIDE RECOGNITION IN CANADA

STEVEN HIGH

Dr. Steven High is a professor of history at Concordia University and a founding member of the Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling. He is an interdisciplinary oral and public historian with a strong interest in transnational approaches to working-class studies, forced migration, community-engaged research, as well as oral history methodology and ethics. He is currently President of the Canadian Historical Association (2021-23). He has published extensively on deindustrialization and the postindustrial transformation of North American cities. His first book, *Industrial Sunset: the Making of North America's Rust Belt* (UTP, 2003), won awards from the American Historical Association, the Canadian Sociology and Anthropology Association, and the Federation of the Humanities and Social Sciences.

"While it is crucial to better understand how Indigenous peoples were affected by these genocidal systems, over the course of more than a century, it is also essential to acknowledge that settler Canadians have benefited from these colonial policies. We are all embedded in the structures of Indigenous dispossession in what is now known as Canada and we understand that while these tough conversations need to be had, it will be our actions that define who we are and what kind of communities we want to build and strengthen and what kinds of histories we research."

— Canadian Historical Association, "The History of Violence Against Indigenous Peoples Fully Warrants the Use of the Word 'Genocide," (1 July 2021).[1]

When I was asked to contribute to this special edition of Canadian Issues on "Reconciliation and Reckoning: Contesting Canada's Past, Framing Its Future", it was suggested that a "notable manifestation" of these debates was the Canadian Historical Association's 2021 recognition of the genocide of Indigenous peoples in Canada: mainly because it resulted in a "high profile dispute among scholars." It therefore seemed to dovetail other recent controversies over the toppling of old statues, the renaming of streets or schools, and the ongoing debate about how history should be taught in our schools. History

wars are essentially debates over public memory: the past, like the present, divides us as well as unites.[2]

I think the CHA statement from our governing council is crystal clear, grounded as it is in recent historical scholarship as well as the definition of genocide found in the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. Nor were we the first to draw this conclusion. The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls as well as Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission on residential schools both concluded that genocide occurred, though the TRC couched this in terms of "cultural genocide" — a distinction that does not exist under the UN definition.

Even so, it is no easy thing to recognize genocide in one's own country. It is far easier to recognize it in some distant place, historically perpetrated by somebody else. Nobody here batted an eye a year earlier when the CHA wrote a strong statement in support of a Canadian-based historian of Poland who was being prosecuted in that country for telling an uncomfortable truth about complicity in the Holocaust that enraged nationalists there.

Fundamentally, our responsibility, as professional historians, is to ask the difficult questions and speak the hard truths even when they make people feel uncomfortable.

And yet, the 53 signatories of the open letter published in *The Dorchester Review* protesting the CHA's Canada Day Statement took strong exception to the recognition of the genocide of Indigenous people in Canada, suggesting that we had somehow violated the "ethics and values of historical scholarship" and thus "fundamentally broken the norms and expectations of professional scholarship." For them, the CHA was "acting as an activist organization and not as a professional body of scholars. The turn is unacceptable to us." No matter that only five of the signatories were actually members of the CHA. They went on to say that the association "should honour its best traditions and act as a truly professional organization that stands unreservedly for the protection of objectivity, doubt, debate."[3]

This is very strong language, to say the least.

The signatories of the protest letter represent an interesting confluence of Canadian and Québec *nationalist* historians, mostly of an older generation, long retired, with only a few with recognized subject expertise on Indigenous history or settler colonialism amongst them. Many were heavily invested in the history wars of the 1990s which pitted some military and political historians against some social historians. These wars raged mostly before my time in the academy (and I am 54 years old). The signatories are also white, even though the demographics of the history discipline in Canada are changing (albeit belatedly). As always, who is in the conversation matters.[4]

As historians, we regularly look at such patterns to help us understand the underlying logic of what is going on. So, too, here.

My point is not to equate people with sweeping categories; that would be reductionist. But it is essential that we make visible underlying structures of power and exclusion. For example, to help

my undergraduate history students at Concordia understand the deep structures of race in Canadian history, I regularly assign Constance Backhouse's *Colour-Coded* as my de facto textbook.[5] It is a brilliant book and it generates insightful and very thoughtful conversations about the underlying politics of the Canadian state and legal system. One of Backhouse's most effective strategies in showing how the legal system is highly racialized is to identify the race of the lawyers, judges, juries, and politicians each time they are mentioned. In effect, it means being constantly confronted by the whiteness of the system. It can be an abrasive experience for some white students unused to thinking of themselves in racialized terms.

Likewise, it seems to me that the collective profile of open letter signatories helps explain their heavy emphasis on objectivity and scholarly distance. In their bifurcated world of activists and true scholarly professionals, a real historian is detached, dispassionate and far removed from the history being examined. To be in close proximity to that history is to be politically compromised and at risk of being tarred as an "activist" or even worse: "woke" (whatever that means now). Yet nationalist historians in Canada and Québec have proven largely immune to accusations of "activism." That they get a pass is no coincidence.

On the genocide issue, historians of Indigenous origin are thus dismissed as "activists," while white historians are assumed to be disinterested and therefore more objective. These deeply entrenched assumptions need to be challenged for reasons that, I would hope, are obvious. See, for example, the strong response of seven influential Indigenous historians to the publication of the protest letter.[6]

Personally, I believe the ideal of the detached scholar is an illusion that actively suppresses the fact that we are all socially and politically located in one way or another. Historians may study the past but we are part of the present. That is not to say that we don't constantly strive to be true to our historical sources: we do. An essential part of today's scholarship is a commitment to being highly reflexive and transparent about who we are and what we are doing.

And this is the rub. What concerns me most is not so much the contents of the open letter, though I think it misleading and over-the-top, as there is a genuine conversation to be had about the role of a professional association. It is their decision to publish it first on an online platform that has a history of mocking residential school survivors. There is simply no excuse for reproducing old photographs of seemingly happy Indigenous children playing in school yards and claiming that this somehow proves that the underlying violence is fake.[7] It is hateful stuff. As far as I can tell, nobody has owned the decision to publish there or felt the need to distance themselves. Naturally, the *National Post* and other right-wing media outlets picked up the protest letter as it fit right into their long running culture war narrative.[8]

The driving force behind the open letter is Trent University's Chris Dummitt. I like him — he speaks his mind. In fact, I contributed a chapter to his 2009 co-edited volume, ironically entitled *Contesting Clio's Craft: New Directions and Debates in Canadian History*.[9] The premise of the book was that a new generation of historians was shaking up how we understood Canada's past.

Since then, Dummitt has spent a great deal of

time campaigning against the lack of "viewpoint diversity" in the history discipline. He believes that university history departments are stacked with political progressives and this has threatened the academic freedom of those with more conservative political views. Last year, he presented a brief to Quebec's *Commission indépendante sur la liberté académique* where he called for legislation requiring universities to remain politically "neutral."[10] In our polarized times, the result of such a law would be anything but neutral in my opinion.

As I have written elsewhere, I am a firm believer in viewpoint diversity. My PhD advisor was a member of Canada's right-wing Reform Party. Though I did not share his politics, he was a great historian and we enjoyed discussing politics. I have also published across the old battle lines of the history wars throughout my career. But to speak of viewpoint diversity without taking seriously cultural diversity or the ways that the discipline itself is enmeshed in wider structures of power is shallow in my opinion.[11]

This year is the centenary of the Canadian Historical Association, which affords us a unique opportunity to step back and reflect collectively on disciplinary structures, key historiographical and methodological developments, the changing place of theory, and our ongoing relationships with wider publics as well as the communities we study. As Mount Allison University's Andrew Nurse recently wrote, the historian's craft is not frozen in time. Nurse believes we are now seeing "the reconsideration of Canadian narrative frameworks."[12] I agree with him. Across the humanities and social sciences, we are working hard to move beyond the extractive approaches of the past.

In part, this is a reflection of social movements forcing Canadians to reckon with the past in the present. It is also a product of changing demographics within the history discipline itself. A more socially diverse professoriate unsettles the kind of normalized assumptions about scholarship and the scholar's place in society that underpin the particular viewpoint expressed in the open letter.

We are living in a time of extreme political polarization, when history itself has become weaponized. Now more than ever, I am convinced that historians, working individually and collectively, have a wider role to play. We do not suddenly stop being true "professionals" when we step out of our ivory towers or heritage institutions and go public with our findings. Specialists in genocide studies, settler-colonialism, and Indigenous history in Canada are providing urgently needed context and depth.[13] So, too, are those studying other subjects of pressing public concern.

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THE BEGINNING OF AN ERA: REFLECTIONS ON THE #CANCELCANADADAY MOVEMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF NORTHWESTERN ONTARIO

NICOLE LEE & ASHLEY WILKINSON

Nicole Lee is a second-year Master of Science in Kinesiology student at Lakehead University in Thunder Bay, Ont. She plans to complete her PhD in Health Sciences to further understand and explore the experiences of Indigenous peoples in Northwestern Ontario. As a person of First Nation descent, Nicole takes pride in learning and advocating for her own people. She is passionate about the health and wellbeing of all people, including the Indigenous population.

Ashley Wilkinson is a Health Sciences PhD student at the University of Northern British Columbia. She also holds a Master's degree in Health Sciences with a specialization in Indigenous & Northern Health from Lakehead University. She has three years of experience in health research related to community health and social issues for marginalized groups across diverse urban, rural and remote geographies. She is passionate about health equity, anti-racism and the health of Indigenous communities.

INTRODUCTION: THE NORTHWESTERN ONTARIO CONTEXT

Northwestern Ontario is the largest region in Ontario, stretching from the north shore of Lake Superior, west to Manitoba, and north to Hudson Bay. The region is known for its breathtaking wilderness, including several provincial parks, and outdoor activities such as fishing, hunting, hiking and camping. In addition to urban centres which serve as hub communities for the north, such as Thunder Bay and Sault St. Marie, the region is home to several First Nations and reserve communities. Some of those closest to Thunder Bay include Fort William First Nation, Red Rock Indian Band and Pays Plat First Nation (Figure 1). Several First Nations and reserve communities are considered fly-in only, or are otherwise hard to access.

When looking at the region, it is important to

FIGURE 1. ONTARIO FIRST NATIONS MAPS

Source: Government of Ontario.
Available at: https://files.ontario.ca/pictures/firstnations_map.jpg

consider how legislation impacted its development. In October 1763, the British government issued a document commonly referred to as the Royal Proclamation of 1763. The intention behind this document was to provide guidelines for settlement of Indigenous land across North America. Specifically, the document aimed to control the pace of colonial expansion and maintain the commitments that the British had made to Indigenous Peoples during the Seven Years' War, and explicitly acknowledged Indigenous Peoples' rights to the land (Indigenous Foundations, 2009). Future legislation did not acknowledge this. The Robinson-Superior Treaty and Robinson-Huron Treaties of 1850 provided access to the northern Great Lakes region for settlement, including a schedule of reserves, and guaranteed hunting and fishing rights. However, they also included ambiguous escalator clauses (Hele, 2020). This clause stated that if the Crown earned more than projected from the extraction of natural resources, it would increase annuity payments to the First Nations. But this was not obligatory. In 1892, An *Act to Amend the Act for the Protection of Game and Fur-Bearing Animals* was also passed by the Ontario legislature (Calverley, 2009). This Act set aside thousands of kilometres of land for the creation of game preserves and banned all hunting and trapping on this land. However, the creation of one such preserve — the Chapleau Game Preserve — prohibited members of the New Brunswick House Reserve in Treaty 9 territory from accessing their traditional hunting territories, prompting numerous complaints to Indian Affairs officials. These represent a few of the numerous examples of Indigenous rights being overlooked in favour of federal and provincial policy.

Of course, it would be a significant oversight not to discuss the *Indian Act* and the Residential School system in the context of the region. The *Indian Act*, enacted in 1876, is the primary legislation used by the federal government to administer almost every aspect of Indigenous Peoples' lives. It allows the government to control Indian status, land, resources

and education, as well as outlining governmental obligations to Indigenous Peoples (Parrott, 2006). Following the implementation of the *Indian Act* in 1876, the federal government opened its first industrial residential school in Battleford, Saskatchewan in 1883 (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, TRC, 2015a). Over the next several decades, the Residential School system expanded across the country, including several schools in Northwestern Ontario: Fort William Residential School, the Fort Frances School, Cecilia Jeffrey, and Shingwauk Indian Residential School (TRC, 2015a). The impacts of both the *Indian Act* and the Residential School system, including intergenerational trauma, disconnect from culture, familial instability and more continue to be felt by Indigenous Peoples in the region.

Overall, these examples represent some of the many ways that Indigenous Peoples in Northwestern Ontario have been abused and had their rights impeded by legislation. Needless to say, these examples provide the foundation for a complex relationship with the government and the concept of "Canada".

#CANCELCANADADAY & INDIGENOUS RESISTANCE

On May 28, 2021 in Kamloops, British Columbia, the beginning of the world knowing the harsh reality Indigenous peoples of Canada have faced came to light. It began with the discovery of 215 presumed unmarked graves at the site of the former Kamloops Indian Residential School. As of June 9, 2022, 2,301 suspected unmarked graves were reported at former Residential School sites throughout Canada (Engels, 2021). In Ontario, there are 18 former Residential School locations, where currently 12 presumed unmarked burial sites have been found. However, more are expected (Engels, 2021). According to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015b), 426 children were reported deceased while attending these residential schools, but there are an unknown number of children still missing.

In Northwestern Ontario, celebrations of Indigenous culture bring immense pride to Indigenous communities throughout the year. With the news regarding the Kamloops discovery coming just about a month before Canada Day, these celebrations were to be put on pause. This is where the "Cancel Canada Day" movement began. For many, it felt wrong to celebrate a country that had stolen the lives of so many children. Instead, it was proposed to honour the lives lost and reflect on what can be improved. The Indigenous resistance movement, Idle No More, called on Canadians to come together and "disrupt the celebration[s]" that traditionally mark Canada Day (Idle No More, n.d.). They stated "we will not celebrate stolen indigenous land and stolen indigenous lives. #Cancelcanadaday". This movement was to honour all lives lost to the Canadian state, including Indigenous lives; Black lives; Migrant lives; Women, Trans, and 2Spirit lives. Organizers asked Canadians to take part in banner drops, sit-ins and round dances as well as ceremony disruptions, marches and rallies (Idle No More, n.d.). This looked different across the country, but in Northern Ontario, many celebrations were cancelled or altered to create a day of honour, learning and reflecting on the truth of Canada's history. But what happened on July 2?

For most people, this was just another day; back to work, back to school, or getting ready for the long weekend. For Indigenous Peoples, this was another

day of mourning, but without feeling the support from the rest of Canada. The #CancelCanadaDay movement gave Indigenous people the hope that Canada was standing behind them and that things may begin to change. But for many Canadians, this was just a one-day movement — not unlike Indigenous Peoples' Day or Orange Shirt Day. Indigenous Peoples then began wondering about the point of the Cancel Canada Day movement if no initiative was going to be taken afterwards. Events like this highlight the need for continuous action towards reconciliation. There have been steps taken such as national holidays and acknowledgements made by the government, but these have only occurred after numerous requests from Indigenous Peoples. This is perhaps the most unfair aspect of what's happening; Indigenous Peoples should not be required to carry the burden of responsibility for reconciliation.

A second movement, Every Child Matters, started soon after the discoveries of so many presumed unmarked graves. There were orange flags across the country and Canadians wearing orange, which is still something seen today. This movement in particular included thousands of Canadians showing their support through a sea of orange, protests over the Residential Schools system, policies and violence (Millions, 2021). These events received a lot of media coverage and ended with the toppling of the 117-year-old statue of Queen Victoria at the Manitoba Legislature. In addition to its toppling, the statue was covered in red handprints and orange flags. Some media, however, then turned this and the idea of Every Child Matters into a controversy over the statue and how the toppling of it was "vandalism" and "violence" (Millions, 2021), perpetuating common stereotypes used against Indigenous Peoples (McCue, 2014). Unfortunately, this media coverage detracted from the real story, and many Canadians became focused on fixing the statue. This again demonstrated how hard it is for authority figures to engage in the hard truth behind Residential Schools, and how Indigenous resistance movements can be misrepresented and/or overlooked in the media.

In Northwestern Ontario, where the Indigenous population is very high, there are many places still sharing the message: Every Child Matters. This shows that Canada is slowly moving towards reconciliation with Indigenous people. However, it is difficult to know the extent to which the country's non-Indigenous population is starting to understand the harmful effects of the past and how these events continue to affect Indigenous Peoples in the present day. It is hoped that this does become the case, but there is still significant progress to be made.

RECONCILING HISTORY & MOVING FORWARD

As the push towards reconciliation continues, it is important for Canada to understand that it will not happen overnight, and that is OK. Indigenous Peoples have been fighting this battle for generations and want others to be made aware in order to facilitate change. Instead of highlighting these issues on individual days through #CancelCanadaDay or Every Child Matters events, meaningful change must occur over time. It can begin within individuals making small changes, and being mindful of the historical and ongoing impacts of colonialism every day. These small changes can include reading books on Residential Schools and reconciliation, supporting Indigenous artists, musicians and filmmakers, attending cultural events and being an ally.

For someone who is not Indigenous, beginning to understand the ways of Indigenous Peoples and understanding the past can help begin the process of reconciling Canada's history and moving forward together.

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THE MAJORITY OF CANADIANS DON'T KNOW THE MEANING OF DECOLONIZATION AND SETTLER COLONIALISM: DOES IT MATTER?

JACK JEDWAB

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Settler colonialism is described as a distinct type of colonialism that operates through the replacement of Indigenous populations with an invasive settler society. This implies that there are two types of people living in Canada: the rooted indigenous population that first arrived on the land(s) and the others — the non-Indigenous population.

The term settler colonialism has been employed for several decades and has taken on greater importance in global conversations about indigeneity. Its use has been especially widespread amongst academics in the social sciences and humanities disciplines and it is very much at the centre of the field of colonial studies.

Debates around settler colonial studies have not been without controversy Critics have pointed to the tendency among some scholars to assume settlement is inevitable and in doing so absolve settler societies and states of the responsibility of reconciling with Indigenous peoples. Those thinking that settlement is inevitable tend to place the burden for reconciliation on Indigenous peoples.

But perhaps the most contentious areas in the conceptualization and discourse around settler colonialism are the debates about identities to which the term gives rise. Particularly controversial is the view that oppressed or marginalized communities are complicit in settler colonialism and

thus are among those responsible for the historic injustices committed towards Indigenous peoples. Some have difficulty reconciling the view that a "forced migrant" is a "complicit" settler. Should descendants of enslaved individuals be considered settlers in the settler-indigenous dichotomy? In a response to the question, respected Indigenous leader Bob Joseph contends descendants of slaves didn't have a choice to come here and hence "wouldn't be settlers in the strict sense" of that term. For her part, Chelsea Vowel, a leading expert on colonial studies, states that: "...originally I used a binary wherein settlers were all non-Indigenous peoples. However, that approach is reductive, and in some cases, actively harmful in my opinion. I specifically refer to settlers as '...the non-Indigenous peoples living in Canada who form the European-descended sociopolitical majority — aka white people.' "

Vowel adds that: "...other people can come here and 'settle' on these lands, and be folded into the settler-colonial project that is Canada, BUT settler colonials, by definition, occupy lands and impose their legal orders on everyone. Immigrants from Somalia, for example, do not do this. It's not a bright line definition."

She concludes that, "the descendants of enslaved Africans absolutely cannot be considered settlers. Enslaved peoples could not consent to being brought here, and their presence cannot confer upon their descendants acceptance into the settler colonial system."

The dichotomous identities framing that underlies the settler colonial concept is important towards understanding the process of reconciliation as it offers a lens via which to categorize the participants. The "us and them" identity framing of settler colonialism simplifies the otherwise wide range of settler identity-based historical narratives — that is, their migration stories and/or their trajectories. Doing so may help reaffirm the collective responsibility of non-Indigenous persons in pursuing efforts at reconciliation.

The exception or nuance provided to the settler-Indigenous dichotomy that is respectively offered by Joseph and Vowel in the case of persons who are descendants of enslaved people may partly explain the confusion on the part of many Canadians when asked about the meaning of settler colonialism. Evidence for the confusion is offered in a February 2022 public opinion survey conducted by the firm Leger Marketing for the Association for Canadian Studies, which reveals that some two in three Canadians do not regard the term settler colonists as appropriate when referring to non-Indigenous Canadians.

As observed in Table 1, however, there is an important generational difference in the degree to which the term settler colonist is deemed to be applicable to non-Indigenous individuals. The majority of respondents under the age of 25 are most likely to agree that the term is applicable while those over the age of 35 are far less likely to concur.

But while the Leger-ACS survey's youngest cohort believes the term settler colonist is applicable to non-Indigenous people, a clear majority of Canadians between the ages of 18 and 24 do not consider themselves settler colonists. The generational difference seen in Table 1 diminishes considerably when Canadians are asked whether they regard themselves as settler colonists. (See Table 2)

TABLE 1. SETTLER COLONIALISM IS DEFINED AS A FORM OF COLONIALISM THAT SEEKS TO REPLACE THE ORIGINAL POPULATION (I.E., INDIGENOUS PEOPLES) OF THE COLONIZED TERRITORY (CANADA) WITH A NEW SOCIETY OF SETTLERS. SOME OBSERVERS USE THE TERM 'SETTLER COLONISTS' TO DESCRIBE CANADIANS WHO ARE NOT INDIGENOUS. DO YOU THINK THAT THIS TERM IS AN APPROPRIATE TERM TO DESCRIBE NON-INDIGENOUS CANADIANS?

	TOTAL	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65 +
YES	34%	56%	42%	29%	28%	25%	31%
NO	66%	44%	58%	71%	72%	75%	69%

Source: Leger for the Association for Canadian Studies, February 4-6, 2022

When asked whether they regard themselves as settler colonists, some three-quarters of non-immigrants and immigrants reject the label. Place of birth doesn't appear to be a consideration when it comes to the designation of settler colonists in Canada. There is also little discussion as to whether newcomers to Canada should be classed as settler colonists regardless of the migrant's trajectory/pathway. (See Table 3)

TABLE 2. DO YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF TO BE A SETTLER-COLONIST IN CANADA?

	TOTAL	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65 +
YES	27%	39%	30%	26%	21%	26%	26%
NO	73%	61%	70%	74%	79%	74%	74%

Source: Leger for the Association for Canadian Studies, February 4-6, 2022

TABLE 3. DO YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF TO BE A SETTLER-COLONIST IN CANADA?

	BORN IN CANADA	BORN OUTSIDE OF CANADA
YES	28%	24%
NO	72%	76%

Source: Leger for the Association for Canadian Studies, February 4-6, 2022

DEFINING DECOLONIZATION

Underlying the seeming ambiguity in the public discourse when it comes to settler colonialism and settler identification is a widespread lack of knowledge about the meaning of decolonization. Decolonization can be defined simply as ending colonization, but this raises a question about the meaning of "colonial." According to one source: "Colonization involves one group taking control of the lands, resources, languages, cultures, and relationships of another group."

But the majority of Canadians admit to not knowing

what is meant by the term decolonization, as the Leger-ACS survey has 60 per cent saying they don't know what the term is supposed to imply. Once again there is a generational difference with at least one in two respondents under 35 saying they know what is meant by decolonization compared with about one in three over the age of 35 who say they don't know.

Not surprisingly, those survey respondents saying they don't know the meaning of decolonization also disagree with the view that settler colonist is an appropriate term to describe non-Indigenous Canadians. More surprising is that the majority of survey respondents who purport to understand the meaning of decolonization do not agree that settler colonists is an appropriate term to define non-Indigenous Canadians. (See Table 4 and 5)

Several definitions of decolonization establish the connection with indigenization and as one source observes, if "...decolonization is the removal or undoing of colonial elements, then Indigenization could be seen as the addition or redoing of Indigenous elements."

How do those Canadians saying they understand the meaning of decolonization actually define the term? The February 2022 Leger-ACS survey asked respondents to explain their understanding of decolonization. As observed below, the responses vary with some simply saying it is undoing colonialism and yet others properly acknowledging the connection decolonization has with Indigenization and reconciliation. (See Table 6)

CONCLUSION

Writing in the *Washington Post*, Ottawa-based columnist and political scientist David Moscrop says that "as always, many say they want indigenous reconciliation but expect to sacrifice little or nothing at all to get there. Many Canadians can't even abide being called what they are: settlers." Indeed, the survey findings cited above reveal that the majority of Canadians reject the label. Some may see the refusal to accept such a designation as an important obstacle to reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. Echoing some of Chelsea Vowel's work, Moscrop adds that "...the project of reconciliation in Canada cannot proceed without an accounting

TABLE 4. SOME OBSERVERS BELIEVE THAT DECOLONIZING CANADA IS THE ONLY SOLUTION TO CORRECTING THE HISTORIC INJUSTICES COMMITTED AGAINST CANADA'S INDIGENOUS PEOPLES. DO YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT IS MEANT BY DECOLONIZATION?

	TOTAL	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65 +
YES	40%	56%	50%	38%	37%	33%	33%
NO	60%	44%	50%	62%	63%	67%	67%

Source: Leger for the Association for Canadian Studies, February 4-6, 2022

TABLE 5.

		SOME OBSERVERS BELIEVE THAT DECOLONIZING CANADA IS THE ONLY SOLUTION TO CORRECTING THE HISTORIC INJUSTICES COMMITTED AGAINST CANADA'S INDIGENOUS PEOPLES. DO YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT IS MEANT BY DECOLONIZATION?	
		YES	NO
SETTLER COLONIALISM IS DEFINED AS A FORM OF COLONIALISM THAT SEEKS TO REPLACE THE ORIGINAL POPULATION (I.E., INDIGENOUS PEOPLES) OF THE COLONIZED TERRITORY (CANADA) WITH A NEW SOCIETY OF SETTLERS. SOME OBSERVERS USE THE TERM 'SETTLER COLONISTS' TO DESCRIBE CANADIANS WHO ARE NOT INDIGENOUS. DO YOU THINK THAT THIS TERM IS AN APPROPRIATE TERM TO DESCRIBE NON-INDIGENOUS CANADIANS?	YES	45.2%	25.8%
	NO	54.8%	74.2%
TOTAL		100.0%	100.0%

Source: Leger for the Association for Canadian Studies, February 4-6, 2022

of the past and present of colonialism. Naming is an important part of understanding. Without understanding, there can be no reconciliation… . One must therefore support naming, including calling "the non-Indigenous peoples living in Canada who form the European-descended sociopolitical majority" what they are.

But the latter statement implies a more nuanced and less reductionist view of who constitutes a settler colonist and potentially exempts certain non-Europeans from the categorization. But as observed above, the larger challenge for "naming" is reflected in surveys of Canadians that make it clear the majority of the population doesn't understand the meaning of either the terms settler colonist or decolonization. And even those who purport to understand the terms do not appear to be as in the know as they may assume. For some, comprehension of the discourse may not be all too relevant as long as key actors understand what it means. The risk of taking such a view is that the critical objective of reconciliation with Indigenous peoples is not a "whole of society" project.

TABLE 6.

CUTTING TIES WITH THE MONARCHY / QUEEN / GREAT BRITAIN	8.8%	RECONCILIATION / ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF ALL THE INJUSTICES / REPARATIONS	3.4%
REMOVAL OF COLONIAL / OCCIDENTAL POWER / CONTROL / POLICIES / SYMBOLS	7.3%	GETTING RID OF THE COLONIAL HISTORY / LOOKING AT HISTORY DIFFERENTLY	3.3%
UNDOING OF COLONIALISM / GETTING RID OF COLONIZATION	6.4%	LEAVE / RELOCATE / MOVING OUT OF THE COUNTRY / CANADA	3.1%
LEAVING IT INDEPENDENT / WITHDRAWING FROM A COLONY / FREEING THE LAND	5.9%	GIVING EVERYONE EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES / RIGHTS / EQUALITY	2.4%
ALLOWING INDIGENOUS TO RECLAIM THEIR LAND / TURNING THE LAND BACK TO NATIVE	5.7%	SEPARATE PEOPLE FROM OTHER / SEPARATION	2.4%
BECOMING INDEPENDENT / INDEPENDENT COUNTRY / NATION	5.4%	UNDOING ASSIMILATION LAWS / RESPECTING INDIGENOUS CULTURE / WAY OF LIFE	1.8%
LETTING INDIGENOUS GOVERN THEMSELVES / NATIVE SELF-GOVERNMENT / DETERMINATION	4.1%	ACCEPTING THE PAST / COLONIAL HISTORY	1.6%
SELF-GOVERNMENT / AUTONOMOUS LEGISLATION POWERS / GIVING POWER TO PEOPLE	3.6%	A NATION DOMINATION OF A TERRITORY / BEING A COLONY / ENLARGEMENT OF COLONIAL LANDS	1.6%
INCREASING INDIGENOUS RIGHTS / POWER	3.6%	STOPPING WHITE SUPREMACY / MAKING IT LESS WHITE / PUNISHING WHITE PEOPLE	1.3%
COLONIES BECOMING INDEPENDENT	3.4%	GIVING EVERYONE EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES / RIGHTS / EQUALITY	2.4%
RECONCILIATION / ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF ALL THE INJUSTICES / REPARATIONS	3.4%	SEPARATE PEOPLE FROM OTHER / SEPARATION	2.4%
GETTING RID OF THE COLONIAL HISTORY / LOOKING AT HISTORY DIFFERENTLY	3.3%	UNDOING ASSIMILATION LAWS / RESPECTING INDIGENOUS CULTURE / WAY OF LIFE	1.8%
LEAVE / RELOCATE / MOVING OUT OF THE COUNTRY / CANADA	3.1%	ACCEPTING THE PAST / COLONIAL HISTORY	1.6%

Source: Leger for the Association for Canadian Studies, February 4-6, 2022

THE SIX DEATHS OF SIR JOHN A. MACDONALD

PATRICE DUTIL

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In 2015, when Canadians were mostly happy to observe (quietly) the 200th anniversary of Sir John A. Macdonald, there were 10 statues dedicated to him.[1] Today, there are two, but they can't be seen. One is on Parliament Hill, behind the Library of Parliament, but with all the construction going on, it cannot be readily observed. The other (and in my view, the best one) sits at the southern tip of Queen's Park in Toronto, and it is also screened from public view.

The statues have been killed off, in large cities and in small communities, from Victoria to Charlottetown. The rage against Macdonald and what a few people think he stood for easily reached a 5 on the hurricane scales for hot air, and the only statues that have been able to withstand it are the ones under the constant guard of parliamentary precinct police.

A worthy history will someday be written of this sudden demise but, while the wait is good, a few observations seem in order to help classify the murderous tools.

DEATH BY INNUENDO

The assault on Macdonald's reputation was galvanized by the publication of James Daschuk's *Clearing the Plains: Disease, Politics of Starvation, and the Loss of Aboriginal Life* in 2013. No book in Canadian history has ever had such an impact.

There actually was little that was new in Daschuk's book, as it was almost entirely drawn from secondary

1 From East to West: Charlottetown, Montreal, Kingston, Toronto, Hamilton, Picton, Ottawa (2), Baden (Wilmot County, Ont.), Regina and Victoria.

sources that had amply documented the health conditions in Indigenous peoples in the plains in the last half of the nineteenth century. It had the merit of a *longue durée* approach, reaching back to the early 1300s to speculate about the health of the Indigenous peoples who lived in the northern part of the hemisphere. It was never an easy life as communities were struck by waves of disease and starvation, but, according to Daschuk, that was nothing compared to what happened after the government of Canada took possession of Rupert's Land in 1869. He never used the word "genocide" in the book and Daschuk provided no figures that would justify the term, but many readers looking to nail the first prime minister pointed to Daschuk's vague allegations to label Macdonald's policies as nothing less. *Clearing the Plains* provided all the innuendo necessary to mount a campaign of hate against Canada's first prime minister.

The Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, published two years later, had remarkably little to say specifically about Macdonald. It had to point to his government's 1883 legislation that created Indian Residential Schools, but it also fully described the origins of using schools to assimilate Indigenous kids dating back to some of the earliest contacts. Regardless, it left no doubt that the villain in the story was Macdonald. In the opening paragraph of its preface, it presented Macdonald not as a mere prime minister but as the leader of "the culture of the legally dominant Euro-Christian Canadian society." That dubious claim made Macdonald the lightning rod for every condemnation of Canada and the notion was cemented that if he had not been "the leader," everything would have turned out all right. And yet Macdonald was mentioned only once in the 535-page *Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*. The 1,025-page *History, Part 1: Origins to 1939* cited Macdonald 14 times. Remarkably, he is never cited as expressing the wish to see the Indigenous population physically harmed (he had no qualms in showing that he wished it to be assimilated, however).

The revelations in late May 2021 that there were 215 unmarked graves near the Kamloops Residential School (located on the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc First Nation) had the most devastating impact on the Macdonald statues. Over that summer, all the remaining monuments were removed, based on the association between Macdonald and the schools. It was innuendo in full force. No "hidden" graves have actually been identified.

DEATH BY MEDIA

And yet, to this day, the CBC website still features a story that "the remains of 215 children were found buried" at Kamloops. I'll leave it to others to comment on social media's role in spreading misunderstanding of Macdonald, but the mainstream media has been remarkably negligent in questioning extraordinary claims. The choice of words and the way the "revelations" in Kamloops and, later, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, have been presented left no doubt that the villain was Macdonald.

DEATH BY STARCHAMBER

Many mayors and city councils were now terrified to be associated with Sir John A. Macdonald. In Victoria, B.C., it was the mayor who led the charge in 2018 to remove the statue that had been erected in 1982 and eventually City Council voted 7–4 to

remove it. The general wave of statue busting that swept North America in the summer of 2020 claimed more Macdonalds. In June 2020, by a vote of 4–2, the councillors of the Township of Wilmot removed the recently sculpted Macdonald statue that stood in front of township offices in Baden, Ont., near Kitchener.

The monument to Macdonald and Sir George-Etienne Cartier that greeted arrivals to the Ottawa airport was also removed by the managers of the terminal because it was an "emotional trigger" for Indigenous peoples and quietly hauled into storage in August 2020. It may one day appear in the Canadian Museum of History.

The May 2021 "revelations" in Kamloops convinced more city governments. In Kingston, where Macdonald lived most of his life (when not in Ottawa), the city council put it to a vote and only one of the 13 councillors voted to keep the statue. That iconic monument, which had been erected at City Park in 1895, was taken down later that summer. The city council of Charlottetown — the P.E.I. capital that has long prospered on spinning the tale about the Charlottetown meeting of 1864 (that was given all its significance by Macdonald) — voted unanimously to remove its statue of Macdonald, also in light of the Kamloops findings. In none of the cases were hearings held or public debate on the question heard. The decisions were all made internally.

Perhaps the most tragic case was the one in Picton, Ontario. After years of fundraising and awareness-building, a group had convinced the town to erect a monument to honour the site of Macdonald's first court case in time for the bicentennial of his birth. It was vandalized five years later and placed in storage. At one point, the council of Prince Edward County voted to reinstate the statue, and then proposed to place it in a museum. The pro-Macdonald activists have considered the compromises to be insulting and have refused the offer. The handsome monument, a creation of renowned sculptor Ruth Abernethy, will be in hiding for a very long time. (It's worth pointing out that the nearly 130-year-old monument to Egerton Ryerson, the long-time Superintendent of Education in Ontario, was destroyed in Toronto in the summer of 2021 in reaction to the Kamloops event.)

DEATH BY PRINCIPAL

In the summer of 2017, the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario adopted a resolution to urge school boards to remove Macdonald's name from schools. Now, across Canada, four schools formerly bearing the name of Sir John A. Macdonald have changed their identities.

The first to move was actually in Nova Scotia. In April 2021, Sir John A. Macdonald High School in Upper Tartallon changed its name to Bay View High School. In Brampton, Ont., an elementary school changed its name from Macdonald to Nibi Emosaawdang, complete with a ceremony led by Indigenous elders, in April 2022. It is not clear that there was an actual vote on the name change, but the Peel District School Board was careful to indicate that consultations with the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Credit River Métis, the Peel Indigenous Network of Employees, the Indigenous Network and the Credit River Métis Council had taken place. The consultation was laudable, but hardly complete, or democratic. It is worth noting the Indigenous

population in the Peel Region is estimated at one percent of the population.

In Pickering, it was decided in early 2022 that Sir John A. Macdonald Public School will be replaced with *Biidassige Mandamin* for the 2022-23 academic year. This was approved by the trustees of the Durham District School Board by a vote of 7-1.

And Waterloo Region re-named its Sir John A. Macdonald Secondary School, the area's largest, to Laurel Heights. In all cases, the initiatives were led by the school principals, not by calls from the community.

DEATH BY DISMEMBERMENT

This had happened before in Montreal, but never with such rage. In August 2020, following a rally to defund the police, the anger among demonstrators was so intense that a massive 126-year-old statue of Macdonald was pulled to the ground from its high pedestal and its head rolled off. The police simply watched the act of public vandalism and then moved in.

The Macdonald monument that stands in Gore Park in downtown Hamilton had also been vandalized many times, but the city council has steadfastly chosen to support it. In July 2021, council voted 12-3 to keep the monument where it has been standing since 1893, but democracy could hardly offer much protection. On Aug. 14, 2021, the statue was toppled during an Indigenous Freedom Rally.

DEATH BY A THOUSAND CUTS

The hack can come in one swift blow, but the thousand little excisions in school programs across the country have been just as effective. The teaching of Canadian history is starving and Sir John A. Macdonald has essentially been cut from the curriculum diet. Students are in Grade 7 (and 12 or 13 years old) when they encounter Macdonald for the first and only time in their school years. The message, according to a quick sampling of curriculum guides, is that Confederation happened, then Louis Riel led the insurrection against Canada three years later. Fifteen years after that, Riel was put to death by Macdonald.

Students will not revisit Macdonald again in their academic lives. (It's worth noting here that most provinces do not require a credit in Canadian history to graduate from high school, with the exceptions of Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec, and that high school Canadian history, where it is taught, focuses entirely on the 20th century.)

Who is to blame for this intellectual poverty? Look no further than the premiers, from Left to Right, who fail to invoke history to explain the direction of their province and of Canada and never say a word about the history curriculum.

This is not a trivial change in the political culture. Sir John A. Macdonald is probably the only Canadian that is recognized across the country because his accomplishments were so grand. Beyond his remarkable efforts to create a consensus around the idea of Confederation, he oversaw the linking of territories to the West and the incorporation of British Columbia and Prince Edward Island into the project of Canada. Beyond that, he was elected a member of Parliament six times and led government for almost 20 years. Most of the time,

his party won close to half the vote of Canadians. He offered to give the vote to women, gave it to Indigenous men who met the qualifications white men were subjected to, and increased the number of voters by 40 per cent.

Few can deny that Macdonald deserves respect as the principal architect of a country that is the envy of the world. One can hardly imagine any community in the United States changing the name of George Washington from a school (San Francisco tried in 2020 but faced a firestorm of opposition) or Charles De Gaulle's name being removed from schools in France in order to be trendier. Monuments to their achievements are protected by a general sense of memory and gratitude.

Macdonald was equally a product of democracy who worked to deepen its quality. His contemporaries recognized that. The statues in Montreal, Kingston, Toronto and Hamilton were the result of small donations from thousands of citizens. They were unveiled before audiences of tens of thousands. They were the product of some sort of democratic will.

That popularity has understandably been dulled by time and by the fact that Macdonald has not been taught in school. Yet a Léger public survey conducted for Postmedia in the winter of 2022 showed that support for the first prime minister was surprisingly high (except among young adults) and that respondents were categorically opposed to seeing his name removed from public spaces. No less than 350 people attended a gala in honour of Macdonald at the Royal York Hotel in January 2015, and when the monument to Macdonald was unveiled in Picton on Canada Day 2015, close to 1,000 people were there to witness it.

In contrast, Macdonald's deaths in the 21st century were carried out by whispers, closed meetings and acts of terrorism. Decisions made by elected officials in offices that typically attract little attention will erode faith and trust in those institutions as the governing class seems intent on undermining the sense of belonging of most Canadians. The ghost of Macdonald may haunt politics for much longer, in a way neither he nor most people would want.

ON SOME OBSTACLES TO MULTIPERSPECTIVITY: INDIGENOUS HISTORY AND PERSPECTIVES WITHIN HISTORY TEACHING IN QUEBEC

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The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's calls to action have given new impetus to include the history of Indigenous peoples in curriculums, from kindergarten to post-secondary levels. To better understand how this effort is taking shape in Quebec's educational institutions, we conducted interviews with 45 individuals responsible for teaching the history of Quebec and Canada both in high school and at university. This research project[1] aims to identify progress and resistance to the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives in Quebec and Canadian history.

A SINCERE COMMITMENT TO THE INCLUSION PROJECT

When asked, the professors and teachers interviewed were supportive of the current movement to include Indigenous history and perspectives within history lessons. It is a matter, they specify, of the historical truth, insofar as the history of Quebec and Canada has for too long been written according to the sole interests of the Euro-Canadian groups. Additionally, some people consider it essential to learn more about the history of Indigenous peoples in order to combat persisting stereotypes. By tackling a conflicting history head-on, they hope to free themselves from the heavy legacy of the colonial past in order to build a more serene, peaceful, even reconciled future. Thus, their wish to approach Indigenous content derives from a moral and political duty, because it is necessary, in the words of one individual, to "repair the broken pots" (HUF17fr).

This openness reflects profound changes within Quebec society as a whole. In August 2020, a Léger poll conducted on behalf of the Assembly of First

Nations of Quebec and Labrador revealed that eight out of 10 Quebecers have a positive opinion of First Nations and nine out of 10 believe that they are subject to discrimination or racism. “The opinion of Quebecers, declared the Chief of the AFNQL, Ghislain Picard, has greatly evolved.[2]” Moreover, compared to the average for the rest of Canada, it is in Quebec that we find the highest proportion of people who support the land claims of Aboriginal peoples and who believe that the Canadian government should do more to resolve disputes with Indigenous peoples.

MAIN OBSTACLES TO INCLUSION

There are still many obstacles on the road to reconciliation.

The point that comes up most regularly in the comments of those with whom we met during our research is the lack of personal knowledge and educational resources. They underscore how the material for classroom teaching is incomplete and how the Ministry of Education does not provide the tools necessary for the integration of specific knowledge within the curriculum's topics. Admittedly, in Quebec, elements of Indigenous history have been added to various chapters covered by the *History of Quebec and Canada*, taught in secondary 3 and 4. However, beyond these additions, no particular help is granted to history teachers who are already overwhelmed by a heavy workload, and cannot by themselves respond to the calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

We find ourselves facing a vicious circle: if the state of knowledge on Indigenous history and perspectives among teachers is incomplete, it is partly due to the deficiencies of textbooks and school programs that were used during their training.[3] However, the fear remains that the current generations will reproduce, for lack of truly adequate training, the past dynamic by adding only a few ornamental Indigenous elements to their perspectives.

This poor preparation is exacerbated by the view that Indigenous history has yet to be written, either because Indigenous people have not left enough traces (archaeological, written, oral), or because the established historiography has for too long neglected this field of study. More profoundly still, according to history teachers (especially those working in universities), Indigenous history teaching suffers from the fact that the "Western-centric" theoretical framework is not adequate for thinking about non-Western experiences, namely Indigenous histories. The necessary dialogue between Indigenous knowledge systems and Western epistemologies[4] seems to them a difficult exercise. Many non-Indigenous have also said that they do not feel entitled to speak about Indigenous history.[5]

Other people with whom we met (particularly those who work in secondary schools), caring about the well-being of their classes, are looking for a way to teach delicate content without arousing a feeling of guilt or horror. They try to give the full measure of the violence perpetrated against Indigenous peoples (for example, the topic of genocide), while still accounting for the sensitivity of their students. They believe that, like any sensitive subject, colonial history needs to be “cooled down”, which in turn makes it a complicated subject to broach.

Some people also admit to feeling ill at ease vis-à-vis a movement that they consider raises too many

political demands, similarly to the movement for women's history or that for history of the working class in previous eras. They consider that there is a “do-gooder” element to the project of including Indigenous history and perspectives in history lessons, and this perceived whiff of political correctness tempers their desire to do more. We noticed within them a certain ambivalence: the enthusiasm for the issue of an inclusive history is real, but the motivations for the latter arouse a certain reluctance. While affirming that a sense of justice must form part of the teaching of history, they are wary of too much moralization within the historical narrative. It is therefore, rather paradoxically, the very reasons for a commitment to teaching that take into account Indigenous realities that sometimes nurture a certain caution among our interviewees.

Finally, some interviewees believe that it is not only necessary to identify the "blind spots" of colonial history, not to say “colonialist history”, in order to add content, but that it is also necessary to rewrite the common narrative from new reference points. This raises an issue for some Francophones, insofar as Indigenous history undermines the principle of a single overarching Quebec national framework.

In the project we conducted, almost all of the respondents said they advocated integrating Indigenous history into the narrative currently taught in schools and universities. The segments when “Indigenous content” is added by the respondents to their courses mainly concern the pre-colonial era, the colonial period of New France, the reserve system, residential schools, the capitalist experience of the 19th century , the colonization of the West, the formation of the Métis people, the *Indian Act*, contemporary issues, constitutional debates and the Oka Crisis. These are all moments when Indigenous history is grafted onto the conventional narrative framework of the history of Quebec and Canada.

AVENUES FOR MULTIPERSPECTIVITY

In general, the approaches proposed in the interviews we conducted concern the adding of content to existing programs. They do not fundamentally or very significantly call into question the Euro-Canadian outlook. Attachment to the national framework still seems solid and reflection on other ways of conceiving history and the past are in very early stages. The French-Canadian ethos seems particularly strong among Francophone respondents, both in high school and at university. The cognitive imperialism denounced by Battiste and Youngblood Henderson[6] thus seems to still be very active in Quebec’s history classrooms.

There is an openness to making room for Indigenous voices, but we did not truly witness any questioning of the means of writing or teaching the history of both Quebec and Canada. It is particularly respondents who identify as Anglophones who seek to move beyond the Quebecois national framework to better reflect Indigenous experiences and perspectives.[7] One of the individuals we met favored a Canadian narrative, but whose framework concerns notably the struggles of minorities and Indigenous peoples to further the recognition of their rights and dignity. Another respondent ventured into the sphere of a transnational history that follows human groups and their activities rather than sticking to the arena of facts associated with national development. These avenues are not

representative of the general results of our investigation, but they do show that other options and perspectives are also possible.

It seems to us, for our part, that the inclusion of different historical experiences in the teaching of history can be done by adopting the prism of multiperspectivity, that is to say not only by adding content specific to the cultures and worldviews of minority groups and through the inclusion of sensitive themes (such as colonization, persecutions, genocide, slavery), but also through the questioning of national narratives and their functions. The unique experiences and perspectives of minority groups need to be better recognized.

Interesting leads were offered by a few individuals who participated in our project, who mentioned the need to integrate the voices of Indigenous peoples into a pluralized narrative. To do this, these people favor the use of testimonies and documents produced by Indigenous peoples themselves (including oral history, particularly with community leaders). They also propose a different reading of the historical sources, through a lens that is conscious of the experiences specific to Indigenous people. In short, they invite us to vary the sources and to question the traditional way of constructing historical narratives. This multiperspectivity seems to us to be a particularly promising approach for the future.

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ALONG THE RIVER
Jared Tait

CANADIAN LYNX
Jared Tait

SECTION II

WHAT WE'VE BEEN TAUGHT IN OUR HISTORY BOOKS IS NOT REAL

ALBERT DUMONT

Albert "South Wind" Dumont is an Algonquin spiritual adviser, storyteller and activist from Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg. The traditional, unceded territory of the Algonquin people includes the National Capital Region, and Dumont is currently the City of Ottawa's English-language Poet Laureate. He has authored several poetry collections — including *With the Wind and Men of Dust* (2012) and *Sitting By The Rapids* (2018) — co-written and performed the play Bloodline (2022) and published many essays and articles. He is spearheading a campaign in Ottawa to pressure the National Capital Commission to rename the Sir John A. Macdonald Parkway.

The following is an edited transcript of an interview with Albert Dumont conducted in July by journalist and Carleton University professor Randy Boswell, guest editor of this volume.

Q. What are your thoughts about the contemporary debate happening around statues, place names and other commemorative landmarks in Canada, including how it intersects with the reconciliation project and your own experiences in the Ottawa area? Is this an important part of reconciliation?

A. Reconciliation to me is being open-minded and sensible about historical facts involving Indigenous Peoples and, in the end, feeling at peace and wishing all people well. But first we need to reflect on Canada's creation story. Canadians call the architects who constructed the first laws and policies that formed the foundation this country the "Fathers of Confederation". These so-called Fathers of Confederation also put together the *Indian Act*. They were all white men; women had nothing to do with it. White women themselves were being oppressed at that time in Canadian history. Nobody of colour had anything to do with the *Indian Act*. What is more oppressive, more against humanity, than the *Indian Act*? Yet a lot of these men who created the *Indian Act* have statues erected in their honour. To me this is deplorable. When children in Residential Schools died, I don't think Sir John A. — "kill the Indian in the child" — Macdonald shed a tear for them. People today say: "Get over it." But that's because all of the dead youngsters were Indigenous

children. If they had been white children, the White People of this country would want something done about it. They'd want justice. To have compassion or empathy, you need to see the world through the eyes of the people who have been oppressed for many generations. It hurts my heart every time I see a statue of John A. Macdonald. I know there are a lot of people who adore Canada's first prime minister. They think he should be forever honoured by Canadians. That's not how I see it. It really offended me when they took a roadway alongside the Great River of the Anishinabe Algonquins and called it the John A. Macdonald Parkway.

[Ed. Note: The former Ottawa River Parkway in Ottawa was renamed the Sir John A. Macdonald Parkway by the federal Conservative government in August 2012.]

Some of those who resist changes to the commemorative landscape say it's "erasing history." What are your thoughts about that?

It's a simple question to answer for me because it's false. It's a lie. The history as it's written, what we've been taught in our history books and classrooms, is not real. It's a history that should be erased because of the fact that it's one-sided — the big lie, as they say. These people who are portrayed as heroes, they should be erased… Whenever we think about Canada's history, we see what is responsible for pushing the worldview Canadians have that the Indigenous people at the time of contact with Europeans were useless and stone-age, and if not for the settlers we would have died miserable deaths.

How important do you think historians and others who educate people about the past are in changing this mindset? When it comes to reconciliation, do you feel it's possible to weave together the narratives of different people who now live in this country to create a full, truer story?

Definitely it could happen. It needs to start with the generation now starting school — Grade 1 or even kindergarten… Historians cannot record history just to suit whoever is paying them their wages. They need to be broad-minded about it and state the facts about the great wealth of this land and how the Fathers of Confederation recognized it. Their thoughts were, "We need to get into that bank vault." But they also knew that in order to rape and pillage the riches of the land they had to first oppress the country's original inhabitants. The settler communities and their elected officials even went so far as attempting genocide upon the Indigenous Peoples. They (settler communities) were driven by greed. Students need to be taught about it in their classrooms.

I was doing a forest walk a few years back with teachers. We came to a place at Pink Lake [in Gatineau Park]; the landscape was rocky, topsoil was sparse. Yet in that rocky space stood a big pine tree proud and strong. There was also a cedar tree, a yellow birch, a white birch and a balsam fir in close proximity to the pine. All the trees were growing on this rocky landscape. I said to the teachers, "We know that the roots of these trees cannot go very deep because of the rock. Therefore, the roots of the trees are all reaching out and interlocking their roots with that of their neighbours. A big storm could come through and the trees won't topple over because they're being supported by their neighbours." And that's the way Canada should be: Indigenous roots interlocking with settler roots. Some are pine trees, some are cedar trees, some are birch trees, some

are balsam fir. And that's the community. That's the people of the land. And no storm will knock us down as long as we're honourable, show respect for each other's roots. We can still be our unique selves — a pine tree is not a white birch tree, and vice versa. That kind of wisdom needs to be what we aim for.

Tell me about the campaign you've been leading to rename the Sir John A. Macdonald Parkway in Ottawa, and the success you've already seen in the renaming of the Sir John A. Macdonald Winter Trail along the Ottawa River.

At the time [in 2012], when a debate about renaming the [Ottawa River Parkway] was taking place, I would have been happy with it being called the 'Anishinabe Parkway'. My thoughts at the time were that the Anishinabe had fought alongside of the British military to keep the Americans out of Canada in the War of 1812. There should be some kind of recognition that honours the warriors. Naming the parkway in their honour was something I would've embraced. But [then-Conservative cabinet minister] John Baird was able to convince the NCC to name it the 'Sir John A. Macdonald Parkway'. That was hurtful. I hate to see that sign. I try not to look at it. To me it's deplorable. So I started to get people involved, writing letters, making contacts... From what I understand, the NCC is thinking they are going to make the change... but the next Orange Shirt Day, I'm going lead a march to shut down the Sir John A. Macdonald Parkway for four or five hours — and I'm going to do that once a year until the name changes. It's so serious. In Anishinabe Algonquin territory, it's the biggest offence.

You've already had some success with the Sir John A. Macdonald Winter Trail, a popular cross-country skiing route along the parkway that has been renamed the Kichi Sibi Winter Trail after the Algonquin name for the Ottawa River. How did that come about?

The trail manager heard me speak somewhere or saw something I wrote, and it made him do some thinking. He didn't think there was any sense in naming this trail after Canada's first prime minister because it's offensive to the First Peoples. So they changed the name. They had a ceremony — we smudged and did a talk. There was solidarity and handshakes. They were hoping that changing the name of the trail would result in the NCC changing the name of the Parkway as well.

Do you consider that an example of reconciliation?

It is. It's a big example. These are people of European heritage, coming together and saying, 'Let's do what's right.' They're saying it because they respect Indigenous people. And I felt that respect when we did the ceremony. It is reconciliation. I felt in my heart it was a big step in the right direction. I know it's only a trail. But it's used by a lot of people.

There are hundreds of Indigenous nations from the Pacific to the Atlantic to the Arctic Ocean, each with distinct perspectives. But in general, how do you think contemporary Indigenous Peoples feel about Canada, and about their future within this nation-state? Is that even the right way to frame the future?

Just recently I wrote a blog about the flag. With the

Maple Leaf, we see something that symbolizes the hope for reconciliation, respect and honour of all citizens of this country. I see in our flag the heart of Terry Fox, for instance. Whenever I look at the Canadian flag, I see my younger brother who was in the army for three years and served on the battleship Saskatchewan for three years. He would have put his life on the line for Canada — any time, any place, any mission. But he was killed by a drunk driver when he was 25. So, there is goodness in the flag we have today. It really does represent hope that there will be true reconciliation, that there will be an honourable relationship between your everyday Canadian citizen and your everyday grassroots Indigenous person. There are a lot of people who will say they are Algonquin first or Ojibway first and that's how they want to live their lives. There's nothing wrong with that. I don't know all the words to the national anthem. I definitely have never sang it, and I know I never will. But that doesn't mean to say that I don't respect and honour what the honourable people of this country stand for. Because I'm with them... When I stand up for the national anthem. I'm not standing up for Canada's history — the big lie. I'm standing up for those good people. But I don't think anyone is going to object to my right or my feeling that I should stand with my nation first before I identify as a Canadian.

HOW DO HOW DO WE LIVE WELL TOGETHER IN THIS PLACE, ON THIS LAND, AT THIS TIME?

DAVID NEWHOUSE

David Newhouse is Onondaga from the Six Nations of the Grand River community near Brantford, Ont. He is a Professor of Indigenous Studies and has been Chair of the Chanie Wenjack School for Indigenous Studies since 1993. He was the first Principal of the new Peter Gzowski College at Trent University. He is also a Professor in the School of Business and Co-Chair of the Trent Aboriginal Education Council. In 2016, he received the Trent Award for Education Leadership and Innovation. He is the founding editor of the *CANDO Journal of Aboriginal Economic Development*, published by the national Council for the Advancement of Native Development Officers. It is the first peer-reviewed academic journal devoted to Indigenous economic development issues. Prof. Newhouse has served as the Science Officer for the Aboriginal Peoples Health research adjudication committee for the Canadian Institutes of Health Research and as National Director for the SSHRC 'Urban Aboriginal Research Network' project. He is the author of *Aboriginal Knowledge for Economic Development* (2013), co-author of *Well-Being in the Urban Aboriginal Community* (2012), and co-editor of *Hidden in Plain Sight: Aboriginal Contributions to Canada* (2011).

The following is the edited transcript of an interview with Prof. Newhouse conducted by journalist and Carleton University professor Randy Boswell, guest editor of this volume. The interview took place during the July 2022 visit to Canada of Pope Francis.

Q. The Pope is in Canada, and has acknowledged the tragedy of the residential schools and the Catholic church's role in the system. He said, "I humbly beg forgiveness for the evil" perpetrated against Indigenous Peoples. Is there a sense of satisfaction that such words have been spoken, finally?

A. Close to it, I think.

He describes the residential schools as evil. And he did ask for forgiveness for the church…

That's very unusual. In Roman Catholic theology, the church can do no wrong — it's the people who

do the wrong. So, for him to ask for forgiveness for the church, and before God, is an incredibly powerful statement.

You have often discussed the use of the Two-Row Wampum as an interpretive and ethical framework for thinking about the history and relationship between Indigenous peoples in Canada, and as a way of approaching reconciliation. Could you talk about that?

Last year, I began to teach a course in Canadian Studies… I'd been struggling with how do I begin to talk about Canada, because the course was designed to talk about Canada, in all of its dimensions. And I decided, well, let's try and take — if I can — an Indigenous approach to it. I'm Onondaga, I'm from the Six Nations of the Grand River. And I grew up in the longhouse in Six Nations. I grew up also in the Confederacy. My father was (a chief) in the Confederacy. And my family has been involved for almost 100 years in terms of working with anthropologists in helping them to understand who we are, and some of our ideas that we bring to the table, that animate our political action. Yeah. And one of those is the idea of *Guswentah*, the Two-Row Wampum. And the Two-Row Wampum is the representation of a relationship — in this case the relationship between the Dutch and the Iroquois, the Haudenosaunee. It has become sort of the symbol or the frame with which one sees the relationship between indigenous people and the Europeans.

So, it's referring to a relationship that began with the colonization of what I think of as the New York City area by the Dutch?

That's right. So, it has origins. Robert Williams, who is a Native American scholar, talks about *Guswentah* and the Two-Row Wampum, as being the common early Indigenous political philosophy. So, I've taken this idea and said, OK, can we think about Canada through the lens of *Guswentah*. Why? Because *Guswentah* says, these people come together in a relationship — there are two parallel rows that represent the two parties, and there is a series of beads between the two rows that represent a set of values — peace and friendliness and respect and other various interpretations of them. But what they do is they create an ethical space, or a relationship. They also present the guiding ethical principles for a relationship. And then, so, that's how I began to see Canada — Canada as this ethical space, that is in each of its various dimensions, and been trying to ask what I call this *Guswentah* question: How do how do we live well together in this place, on this land, at this time? And so, we're working out the answer to that question over and over and over and over again.

Someday, we'll get it right — or probably not — but we keep asking and thinking about it. So, then, Canada then becomes this series of spaces in which we talk about the question of, you know, multicultural space, queer spaces, gay and lesbian spaces, gendered spaces, celebratory spaces, historical spaces, etc. And so, what I began to see was that Canada was, in fact, a *Guswentah* space. We have a set of values that are interpreted variously, but they're always about how to live well together… And so, in the course, I asked this question, how do we begin? How do we answer this question in the various spaces — in the multicultural space, the gay and lesbian space or the queer space? And so the relationship that is Canada, then, is multi-dimensional, multi-spatial. And we're all in

this together. I mean, the Supreme Court says that we are not going anywhere, none of us are going anywhere. So, we have to sort it out… And reconciliation is a way in which we try to answer this question again. How do we live well together?

It does fit, doesn't it?

Yeah. (In teaching a previous course on reconciliation) I found this series of lectures from the (U.S.) Smithsonian Institute on reconciliation. Native Americans from across North America came together in about 2013, talking about reconciliation. And in listening, it suddenly became clear to me that indigenous people were talking about reconciliation in terms of relationship, and something that was ongoing, and they were talking about building nations. And non-Indigenous people were talking about reconciliation as an event that was going to occur right at one particular point… What I also found was that when I went and talked to corporate leaders about reconciliation, and began to ground that talk in colonization, the conversation stopped. They had no idea how to come to terms with colonization, or what it meant. So what I did was I changed the language. And so now I talk in terms of the 'long assault' and the 'great healing'.

And thinking about time — thinking about two historical periods. A lot of the assault was the attempt by Canada that started in 1851, and continued to 1971 — about 150 years — in which Canada tried to dispossess us of our lands or territories or languages and our spirituality, our knowledge — all the things that we see, and a good part of that was Indian residential schools and the damage that they've done. So when I spoke about 'an assault', then the corporate leaders and officers began to understand. I mean, they're mostly male. And so they understand the physicality of an assault, and also how long it takes to recover. So I talked about the recovery period — the 'great healing' that began in '71 and the forced withdrawal of the (Trudeau-Chrétien) White Paper… So I found a way to talk, then, about what happened in a way that people could feel about it. And the next step was now to begin to talk about a way in which they could find a place for themselves in reconciliation. And so, I talked about reconciliation comprising four elements. One focus (is) upon equity, that is improving the life circumstances of Indigenous people so that they become similar to other Canadians, right, in education and income, all that sort of stuff. The second one was what I call the harmony, that is, focusing upon improving race relations — using that frame, or improving cultural relations.

And the third one was restoration and rebuilding of Indigenous nations. That is, trying to ensure that self-determination and sovereignty were part of the conversation. And the last one was what I call critical conversations about Canada. That is then talking about, OK, what does Canada look like if you have it comprised of Aboriginal nations?… So, I had to try to find a way to help people to find a place for themselves in this national conversation. And I characterize it as a national project, because it's characterized as the largest project since the building of the railway. But it starts from an Indigenous premise, an Indigenous idea, a set of ideas that comes from our own intellectual heritage.

And which doesn't see reconciliation as a one-time thing, a moment of handshaking.

That's right… an ongoing process.

You've referred to flashpoints that arise on a regular basis, such as what we've been witnessing today and over the past year and a half or so around the residential schools. It's also been connected to controversies over commemorative landmarks and statues, and debates within the Canadian Historical Association. How do you see those controversies and disputes within this long context that you've described?

I think about it in two ways. The first one, I guess I look at it through my sociological lens. I can talk about turbulence, turbulent times. I think of it as the struggle for a 'good mind'. We have this concept in Iroquoian philosophy or psychology called a good mind. And a good mind is a mind that has balance of reason and passion, and is always desirous of peace, is always trying to work for peace. And so when you do that, what happens is you bring people together, and they have different ideas, they have different powers. And so what is happening is that for the first time, Indigenous ideas are coming to the table, and Indigenous conceptions about what the relationship ought to be are coming to the table. And so you have the 500-year history of Europeans doing things largely based upon the doctrine of discovery. And so what you have now is a period of turbulence that's going to last for half a century or so as we as we grapple with how to rebalance, how to restore. Sometimes it's going to be civil. Sometimes it's going to be violent. Sometimes it's going to be challenging, right? Sometimes there's going to be points of agreement. Sometimes there's going to be points of disagreement. But it is going to be a period of intense debate, deliberation, conversation. And something new is going to emerge out of it, as well.

One reaction, which tends to have the effect of shutting down conversations around these issues, is to talk about knocking down statues and renaming landmarks as "erasing history." It's an argument aimed at resisting change. What are your thoughts about this conception of the issue?

We have to remember that historical markers and other monuments came out of a particular perspective, but do not include an Indigenous perspective. So they were intended to memorialize or honour particularly for people who did — in many cases — good things, or in some cases, also contributed to the destruction of Indigenous peoples, lands and territories. So it's that part of the story that is not presented in the monuments. And so the question is, how do you then present that part of the story? You need both parts of the story. That's where the debate is occurring. I think about Duncan Campbell Scott. So we need to find ways through that. We need to understand that history is a set of stories that we tell ourselves. It is not one single story.

But statues tend to be one single object, don't they?

That's right — and so the representation of a particular viewpoint, and a particular set of powers. Right. And people grow very attached to them... A group of us went to New Orleans. We took the train down from Chicago. That was quite the trip. I have a friend who lives there. She took us to see the Ninth Ward, and the destruction occurred from the floods. Yeah. But she also took us to see a few of the sites where the statues were being removed — and told us what happened in terms of the removal. They had to remove these statues — which were largely Confederate generals and soldiers — in the middle of the night. They had to have snipers on the buildings surrounding them, in order to remove

them. Right? People were strongly attached to the view of history that those monuments represented. And changing them, in their view meant, erasing their history and denigrating their history. So we have to somehow find a way to negotiate that space. I looked at some of the monuments and some of the plaques that were there. They did not always speak to the slavery that occurred. We went to the site where they were the largest slave market occurred, and there really wasn't anything — there was no plaque, there was nothing. We did go to the Whitney Plantation. And I think the Whitney Plantation did something which I really liked, which was the desire to focus upon the slaves. And so you entered the plantation not through the big house, but through the slave quarters. You only came to the big house at the end of about a two-hour tour. And so you saw the plantation through the eyes of the slaves. That was a good way of balancing what was occurring. It didn't ignore the plantation owners, but you place them in the background, and you foregrounded the slavery history, the slave experience. So you created a much more complex understanding and history of the plantation. You can't help but be moved.

YOU CAN'T ERASE HISTORY — YOU LEARN FROM IT

CLAUDETTE COMMANDA

Claudette Commanda is an Algonquin Anishinaabe elder from Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg First Nation in Quebec. An alumna of the University of Ottawa faculties of Law and Arts, she has dedicated the last 35 years promoting First Nations people, history, culture and rights in various capacities as a University of Ottawa student, professor, member and chair of the Aboriginal education council, and via public speaking events. She has served as elder-in-residence and special adviser on reconciliation in the university's law faculty. In July, after previously serving on uOttawa's board of governors, she was appointed to a four-year term as the university's first Indigenous chancellor, and will begin her role on November 9th. Ms. Commanda has taught in uOttawa's Institute of Women's Studies, Faculty of Education, Faculty of Law and Indigenous Studies Program, including courses on First Nations Women, Native Education, First Nations People and History, Indigenous Traditions and Decolonization.

She is the chief executive officer of the First Nations Confederacy of Cultural Education Centres, a national organization that protects and promotes First Nations culture, languages and traditional knowledge. She is the CEO of the McLean Day Schools Settlement Corporation, which manages a $200-million legacy fund created as part of a $1.47-billion settlement between the federal government and the survivors and descendants of those who were forced to attend government-run Indian Day Schools. She was inducted into the Common Law Honour Society, served two terms on the board of governors for the First Nations University of Canada and three terms on the Kitigan Zibi band council. In March 2020, she received the 2020 Indspire Award for culture, heritage, and spirituality.

The following is the edited transcript of an interview with Claudette Commanda conducted in July by journalist and Carleton University professor Randy Boswell, guest editor of this volume. The interview took place during the visit to Canada by Pope Francis, during which he said: "I humbly beg forgiveness for the evil committed by so many Christians against the Indigenous Peoples."

Q. What do you think about the Pope being here, and about what he said this week?

A. First, I want to clarify that I'm not a residential school survivor. And the Pope was here to apologize to residential school survivors. I am a day school survivor. But I am also an Algonquin woman, a First Nation person of this land called Canada — or what we know as Turtle Island — and to be honest, the Pope's visit here, to me, didn't make a difference — whether he came to Canada or not, whether he apologized or not. However, I know there are some residential school survivors who needed to hear this apology. And I know there were many residential school survivors who felt, like, why? Among survivors in my own family, the Pope coming here and this apology just opened up so many wounds, so many memories, so much hardship and pain… I don't even call them schools. They were institutions of genocide and assimilation and abuse and torture… The number one goal was to annihilate language and culture and spirituality. And what better way to do it than to attack the children?

Protecting and restoring Indigenous languages and cultures is very much at the centre of the work you do. Can you talk about that?

Absolutely. Because where did survivors find their healing? Where? It was returning back to the source of what the Creator has given us: our languages, our laws, our spirituality, our ceremonies. That's where our people found their peace and found their healing. Trauma is like grief. You never get over it; you live with it every day of your life. But you learn how to cope… Then there are triggers. The memories will always be with you. When I was listening to the Pope and watching the audience, I felt so numb and raw. I really had to hold back tears, because I could really feel what my people were feeling — even those that have gone on to the spirit world…

As you know, there's a debate happening around statues, place names and other commemorative landmarks in Canada. This has intensified over the past year — changes happening, resistance, controversy. In particular, Fathers of Confederation like John A. Macdonald and Hector Langevin, and other 19th-century "patriarchs" like Egerton Ryerson have been targeted because of their association with the Residential Schools system. How do you see this issue?

I have to start by commenting on the patriarchy. That's the problem right there — how Europe came here, invaded and imposed its patriarchy on our people. We've always been a matriarchal society. We've always included our men; but our women were always revered. Then they come here and put up all these statues to the 'Founding Fathers.' Excuse me? What did you find? We were not discovered. We've been here since time immemorial… From the First Nations perspective, we've always had our own forms of governance, our own systems of law and order, our own leaders — whether male or female.

You can't erase history. You learn from it. Those statues of Macdonald, for example. First of all, don't put him anywhere on our Indian lands — number one. He is not our saint. Let's say you're going to keep those statues. Canadians will say: "Oh, he's our first prime minister. Oh, he's the founding father of Confederation." Well, that's true. Canada was created in 1867, even though this land — Anishinaabe land — was here long before 1867. But you have this

statue of Macdonald, quoting his part in history. But right beside that has to be something else. It has to say: "He was the author of residential schools." And this is what they were all about. You've got to tell that truth, too. Don't erase history — learn from it. Some people might say, 'Claudette, why are you saying to keep those statues there. Why? Are you colonized?' No. As a matter of fact, I want this to be used as a teaching tool for all Canadians and the world to know what the hell he's done, this man, and Duncan Campbell Scott, and so on.

But as far as changing the names of streets and schools — yes. They should not have any schools or streets named after them. You're glorifying them. You're adoring them. You're giving them homage. No. These were evil men. If they were true at heart, they would never have done that to First Nations people... If Canada wants to maintain its prestigious, precious image in the international world — we're going to give you peace and freedom, we're going to take care of you. Really? Well, you'd better start taking care of the First Peoples of this land first and foremost. And you'd better atone for your history...

And I want to start seeing more statues of my people, of First Nation heroes. At the Canadian Museum of History, there's now a statue of one of the greatest Algonquin chiefs — Tessouat. I want to see statues of Pontiac, of Tecumseh. I want to see statues of all those great First Nation leaders who contributed to this country.

Your late grandfather, the Algonquin chief William Commanda, has been the focus of public recognition in various landmarks in the national capital recent years — a building, a street a bridge. What does that mean to you and your people?

It's validation. It's recognition. It gives us pride. And from a nation perspective, it gives us pride and honour to know that one of our own is respected and honoured that way. It raises our people up. We're not just an afterthought, or a token. We are given equal value as any other Canadian. It serves as education. And it helps build a relationship and dialogue. My grandfather was a firm believer in that. He said all people need to be validated. It validates who he was as an Algonquin person. As chief of our reserve. As the Supreme Chief of North America — he held the title. As our wampum belt carrier. As our grand elder of the Algonquin nation. It gives validation in who he was in bringing forth racial harmony and justice. And a world leader, in the same way as Nelson Mandela. That's beautiful and powerful. And for the family, we're very honoured. And we always reflect back on our grandfather's words and teachings. My grandfather was a man of peace and justice. But he also said: "Don't take me for granted. Just because I'm opening my circle here and including everyone, doesn't mean you can come here and take over. And it doesn't mean I'm giving you my land, because this will always be our land, and our rights."

How important do you think history and historians are to the project of reconciliation?

First and foremost, historians have to be telling the truth. If you look back in the past, the historians who have written our history, look at how they have portrayed my people — in a very negative way. Unfortunately, the government uses these historians, and so do the courts, to justify and develop policies that greatly impact First Nation peoples' lives. The taking of our lands and resources, to walk away from their obligations regarding aboriginal rights

and treaty rights and our inherent rights. There's been very harmful history.

It's time now that historians have to tell the truth. And non-Indigenous historians have to be working with First Nations people. We have our own historians. We always did. And those are our knowledge keepers. They learned and kept our oral histories and passed it on to the next generation. We shouldn't rewrite history in the sense of erasing it. But we need to write a new history, to learn from the past. And historians always need to work with First Nations people. We need to change the history books. We need to write a new curriculum. It's time now that "our" story replaces "his" story.

When it comes to steps being made toward reconciliation, are you optimistic or pessimistic about the future of the country?

Hope is free. It's a great gift that the Creator has given every human being. And we have to always remain hopeful. And I am hopeful. But a small part of me still remains cautious. It's based on lived experience of oppression and racism and trauma. And you have to continue to be cautious — to say I have hope, but let's wait to see what your actions are. If you're not going to do the right actions, then it's all for naught. There's a difference between good intentions and right intentions. You have to do things in the right way… We have to educate the younger generation. The more dialogue we have, the more opportunities we have to tell our stories, the more opportunities for the truth to be told — in articles, or panel discussions, or circles, or any kind of forum — change will come. But there is still racism out there. And there are still cruel people out there… Sometimes it's very hard to be hopeful… We're still dealing with Helen Betty Osborne. We're still dealing with J.J. Harper. We're still dealing with Neil Stonechild. We're still dealing with Colten Boushie. We're still dealing with Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women. We're still dealing with the child welfare system. We're still dealing with the loss of our lands and natural resources. And the list goes on and on and on. When you hear some Canadians saying, "Well that's not our problem. We didn't do that." Well, you're part of Canada now. And this is your history. I don't care if you came here 500 years ago or five days ago, this is your history now. And you all have a responsibility for reconciliation.

WHOSE HISTORY DO WE COMMEMORATE IN PUBLIC SPACES?

DUNCAN McCUE

Award-winning journalist Duncan McCue is host of Kuper Island, an eight-part podcast on residential schools for CBC Podcasts. He's been with CBC News for over two decades. In addition to hosting CBC Radio's Cross Country Checkup, he's been a longstanding correspondent for CBC-TV's flagship news show, The National. McCue was part of a CBC Aboriginal investigation into missing and murdered Indigenous women that won numerous honours, including the Hillman Award for Investigative Journalism. In 2017, he was presented with an Indspire Award for Public Service. McCue teaches journalism at the UBC Graduate School of Journalism and Toronto Metropolitan University. He's the author of a textbook, *Decolonizing Journalism: A Guide to Reporting in Indigenous Communities*. He was awarded a Knight Fellowship at Stanford University in 2011, and a Southam Fellowship at Massey College/University of Toronto in 2020. Before becoming a journalist, McCue studied English at the University of King's College, then Law at UBC. He was called to the bar in British Columbia in 1998. He holds an honourary doctorate from the University of King's College. McCue is Anishinaabe, a member of the Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation in southern Ontario.

Duncan McCue spoke with Randy Boswell, the guest editor of this edition of Canadian Issues, in July.

Q. What are your thoughts about the contemporary debate happening around statues, place names and other commemorative landmarks in Canada in the wake of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the Black Lives Matter movement, and the ongoing discoveries of unmarked children's graves at former residential school sites across the country?

A. I completely understand the concerns that people have raised. It really raises the essential question of whose history do we commemorate in public spaces in particular. That's the key question: Whose history is it? I cannot divorce myself from the fact that I'm Anishinaabe, and that when I look at the history of the city that I live in right now, Toronto, I don't see evidence of my people's presence here for millennia — since time out of mind. There are, for those who are particularly astute, that one of

the main thoroughfares — Spadina — comes from (Ojibwa) *ishpadinaa*, which is "high hill, or ridge"; we know that Mississauga, Etobicoke, Oshawa — these all come from Anishinaabemowin. But the average resident in the GTA doesn't know that, that those were placenames that were crucial to my people long before settlers arrived. Our history has been erased from the land here in the city. So likewise, with the questions that you then ask about what are the names of the streets, what are the statues that we see? Well, they have for the most part been settlers — whether it's Dundas, or the university that I'm a visiting journalist at, which was named for Egerton Ryerson. Now it's known as Toronto Metropolitan University as a result of this reckoning. On the one hand, Ryerson was being celebrated for his role as an educator. But put yourself in the shoes of an Indigenous student who was coming there and is an intergenerational survivor and learns the role that Egerton Ryerson played in helping design the Residential Schools policy. So, it goes to this question of whose history do we commemorate in public spaces, and it's totally understandable to me that BIPOC folks want there to be better representation.

What about the argument from critics that traditional Canadian history is being erased?

I don't think many people are proposing the erasure of the history. I think what they're objecting to is the commemoration of it, the celebration of it. And who is celebrated in this country — whose narrative is celebrated. I understand that change is difficult. For the most part, people don't spend a lot of time thinking about the street names; they walk past the statues and don't give them much of a notice. But that's because they've become just so ubiquitous in our lives, and we've accepted that narrative. I understand that change is difficult for anybody and that's part of the tension point, when we have heated discussions — battles even — over history.

What role do you see history and historians playing in the quest for reconciliation?

I think historians play a crucial role. You often hear: "No truth, no reconciliation." Truth is an important, critical part of what the TRC hoped would become reconciliation. And the reality is that many Canadians don't know the history of just Residential Schools, for example. Or the history of the contributions of Black Canadians, for example. Or the history of Asians in creating this country, etc., etc. It's been hidden. And in many cases, those histories have been actively hidden for a reason. With regards to Residential Schools, it's because Indigenous people have been dispossessed of our lands and so erasing their history from the lands was an important part of that process. The challenge for historians is that there are many versions of history. In journalism, we always talk about how there's two sides to a story. Well, that's actually simplified. There are many sides to a story... And there are many different versions of history. And so that's the challenge for historians — going through an evidence-based process to try to determine a narrative that has some kind of (comprehensive) basis to it.

When it comes to reconciliation, do you think it's possible to reconcile/weave together Indigenous and non-Indigenous historical narratives about the people and places in what became contemporary Canada?

I think we have to. To quote the Supreme Court

of Canada decision in Delgamuukw — which is a critical aboriginal title case — there was a very simple line, but a profound one, at the end of that decision: "We're all here to stay." So if you accept that notion, settlers aren't getting back on the boats and leaving, and I don't think there are many Indigenous people that asking for that either. But I think we have to try to figure out, historians have to try to figure out how to weave together the narratives. Speaking from an Indigenous perspective, when contact happened, from the perspective of many of my ancestors, they say that weaving being possible. They certainly saw coexistence being possible.

What they didn't expect was to have the Indigenous narrative erased. When you talk about having to intertwine historical narratives between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in this country, I do think it's possible. But what needs to happen is that the balance needs to be restored. That's what my ancestors anticipated when they came up with the wampum belt — which was two canoes going on the same river — or the treaties, which were a sacred and reciprocal relationship. The balance has tilted to one side — the settler side, and particularly the British/Eurocentric vision of the world. What people are asking of historians is to try to restore the balance between Indigenous and non-Indigenous viewpoints on the world.

Who would you say is responsible for repairing the relationship, and for the historical injustices committed against Indigenous people? For example, does blame today lie to a greater degree with descendants of settler-colonists of the past who disrupted and displaced Indigenous communities, sometimes violently? Are Black Canadians responsible for pursuing the project of reconciliation? Are displaced Jews from Europe after the Second World War? These are questions, in a sense, that revolve around definitions of a "settler".

I'm not going to weigh in on the definition of settler because I think that by itself is a complex question. But I will say that I think all Canadians have a role. It's not just white men that need to make reparations in this country. I often use the treaty example because I am a treaty Indian. There are a large group of Indigenous people who are not; they have unceded land in this country and they haven't signed treaties. But my analogy is this: We're all treaty people. If you want to understand the history of this country, you need to understand the treaty obligations. And the obligations aren't just for Indigenous folks. They are for all Canadians. So if you are an immigrant to this country, you have a responsibility as a treaty partner to learn the history and acknowledge the role of Indigenous people in this country. It doesn't matter what colour you are, or whether your ancestors were part of displacing Indigenous people or whether you just got off the plane at Pearson yesterday and are hoping to become a citizen.

How do you think contemporary Indigenous Peoples feel about Canada, and about their future within this nation-state? Is that even the right way to frame the future?

I think on this there is a lot of difference of opinion amongst Indigenous Peoples. We're not homogenous by any stretch of the imagination, either culturally and certainly not politically. If you talk to a Mohawk from Akwesasne, then they may have very different feelings about their place in Canada — or whether they're even Canadian.

There are many Haudenosaunee people who do not consider themselves Canadian. On the other hand, there are plenty of Indigenous people who fought in the war on behalf of Canada, who proudly wear Team Canada uniforms to compete in the Olympics on our behalf. I think the vast majority of First Nations people don't see themselves as separating from the country, but they do see themselves as having rights to self-determination.

You've pioneered protocols for "Reporting In Indigenous Communities" through the RIIC website and spoken often about how media coverage frequently reflects journalists' poor grasp of Indigenous history in Canada. In the years since the Truth and Reconciliation Commission specifically identified what the news media and journalism schools should do to help remedy these failings, do you see signs of progress?

Here's where I can be quite positive, because I do see there is progress being made. That's in part a reflection of the length of time that I've been in the industry. I am almost 25 years a reporter now, and when I broke into the industry there were very few Indigenous journalists. And I remember a time when we had to fight tooth and nail just to get any Indigenous content on the air at all. To use Residential Schools as an example, we would pitch Residential School stories and the reaction would be: "Well, we had a Residential School story last year, do we really need this one? What's new about Residential Schools?" I can trot out many examples of that. So, is there progress? Yes — demonstrably, evidence-based. In the past decade, we're seeing Journalists for Human Rights, for example, tracking the media reportage of Indigenous issues in Ontario, and slowly but surely we are seeing an increase in the quantity of content. And it seems that the quality of content is also improving. Not enough — we're still underrepresented in the mainstream media. But it's improving. There are efforts to create fellowships for young Indigenous journalists. There is an award for reconciliation journalism. I think all of these things are positive steps. But it's two steps forward, one step back in many ways. I can also point to atrocious headlines that have appeared in my own media outlet that are full of stereotypes and tropes, and we wish that those journalists knew better. But unfortunately, they don't. And we still see that equity in the newsrooms at CBC and elsewhere is still far below where it needs to be for Indigenous journalists and Indigenous news managers.

Even professional historians are at odds over complex, contentious questions like whether Indigenous nations in Canada have faced genocide, cultural genocide or neither. Journalists, typically working under time and space constraints, are often tasked with contextualizing news events and issues with deep historical roots. How can they improve what they're doing?

The short answer is that I feel for journalists. I've been there — in fact, I'm there today. I'm on deadline. And I know what it's like to be on deadline trying to become an expert on a topic and report it to the rest of the country — and the rest of the world now in an internet age — and to be factual and to get it right. I know how tough that is. I have a great deal of sympathy because we're called upon every day to become experts in a wide variety of topics. And we're good at it. We've got processes in place to try to check our biases, to try to do our best to make sure what we report is factual and balanced. But

that said, we all have unconscious biases. But this is a topic — Indigenous Peoples in this country — which is so essential that we have to be teaching it to journalists, just like we teach white-balancing [for TV camera colour calibration] and how to write a lead. Because the damage they can do if they don't do it properly is grave, and we've seen it over and over again. So that's a long way of saying I don't expect every journalist to become a wise sage of Indigenous culture and history and politics. But I do think that every journalist should be at least introduced to the basics of Indigenous history in this country so that they have some knowledge because every journalist in this country is going to interact with Indigenous people at some point in their career — and they can do damage if they get it wrong.

I think that cultural competency is a skill that can be taught to journalists. But it's not just a one-off, either — like take a one-hour workshop and good, we're done. It's a learning journey that newsrooms need to offer to their reporters and journalism schools need to offer to their students and then give them an opportunity to learn that skill and refresh that skill a couple of years later.

Your Kuper Island podcast series encompasses history and journalism on a very front-of-mind issue for many Canadians in a popular storytelling format. Can you discuss some of the challenges mentioned above in the context of this ambitious project?

One is the obvious one, about the history of Residential Schools being obscured and, in some cases, hidden. We've had a Truth and Reconciliation Commission in this country, and one might argue that that history is now freely available to anyone who wants to know it. But the truth of the matter is that the primary documents who want to dig deeper are still very hard to access. The National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation is the keeper of those documents and they are overburdened with requests and under-resourced. So if you actually want to dig in to the primary documents to try to get answers to what happened at over 100 schools in this country, it is very difficult. And in some cases, because the Catholic Church in particular has still not handed over documents, it's impossible. That's thing one. Thing two is something I talk about in the podcast, which is that when you're trying to have an evidence-based dive into the history of Residential Schools, there are two sources of material. There are the official records that were kept by church and government officials who, frankly, had motive to either ignore or hide some of the things that were happening at the schools. And then we have the memories of survivors, who were children when these things were happening to them. They were traumatized. And we know what the brain does when it experiences trauma. So those memories are also potentially fraught. That's another challenge in terms of historians delving into history. The third thing is just the challenge of a podcast. History is often seen as being dry and boring. How do you engage a wide swath of the public in something that's very important in an engaging manner that gets them to learn a history that they may not have learned in their history class. And that's a challenge of narrative and all kinds of other things.

HISTORY IS NOT OBJECTIVE — NEVER HAS BEEN, NEVER WILL BE

NIIGAANWEWIDAM JAMES SINCLAIR

Dr. Niigaanwewidam James Sinclair is Anishinaabe (St. Peter's/Little Peguis) and an Assistant Professor at the University of Manitoba. He is a regular commentator on Indigenous issues on CTV, CBC, and APTN, and his written work can be found in the pages of *The Exile Edition of Native Canadian Fiction and Drama,* newspapers like *The Guardian*, and online with CBC Books: *Canada Writes*. Niigaan is the co-editor of the award-winning Manitowapow: *Aboriginal Writings from the Land of Water* (Highwater Press, 2011) and *Centering Anishinaabeg Studies: Understanding the World Through Stories* (Michigan State University Press, 2013), and is the Editorial Director of The Debwe Series with Portage and Main Press. He won a 2018 National Newspaper Award for his column writing in the Winnipeg Free Press.

The following is the edited transcript of an interview with Dr. Sinclair conducted by journalist and Carleton University professor Randy Boswell, guest editor of this volume.

Q. What are your thoughts about the contemporary debate happening around statues, place names and other commemorative landmarks in Canada?

A. No one would expect someone who's been abused to come into a space honouring their abuser. It's as simple as that. There's a long history in this country of recognizing and honouring individuals who perpetrated incredible harms against Indigenous Peoples and were celebrated for doing so by putting their names on buildings, by making large stone statues to honour them. And these must be changed in order for safe space to be created. Period.

If you expect Indigenous Peoples to come to tables to discuss sharing of land or resource extraction projects or whatever else Indigenous Peoples need to be involved in — which, constitutionally, involves everything in the country — it is inappropriate, offensive and, frankly, racist to expect them to be in a room with the very perpetrator of their genocide.

You mean, for example, having a statue of John A. Macdonald outside of Victoria City Hall, where Indigenous leaders were supposed to be coming for talks about reconciliation?

Yeah, it reminds me a lot of the Lakota-Dakota-Nakota peoples, who have to see — every day, in the most sacred of their sites in the Black Hills — the chiselling of presidential faces, all of whom have perpetrated one harm or another against Indigenous Peoples.

Ah, Mount Rushmore you're talking about... How do you see historians helping to resolve this conundrum that you're describing?

Well, continuing to ignore and deny genocide, which many historians do — particularly retired and so-called emeritus ones — is not the way to do it. It is ironic that people who have made their entire career based on studying, using, engaging Indigenous Peoples, then decide at the end of their careers to stop listening to them and to (deny) genocide... I've had many fights with historians over this, and lost friendships...

The first thing I would say to historians is step aside and stand beside Indigenous Peoples. This is not to be subjective or lose your so-called objectivity (as if that ever existed in the first place.) But it is to recognize that history is something that is created collaboratively, with multiple perspectives, and — most importantly — with the very impacted people who have experienced first-hand the situations and moments you're talking about. It is, frankly, absurd to ignore their perspective on those events, simply because you claim things like, 'Well, is it written down?' or 'Where's the (so-called) factual evidence?' or 'Where is it in the archives?' — when we all know that the archives is one-dimensional, oftentimes written from the perspective of those who are the most inept, and ignorant, and incapable of understanding Indigenous People. There's also the fact that those in power at those times are the most illegitimate sources for what has happened to Indigenous Peoples.

So historians have a really tricky job. But it is a job that should only be filled by the most capable. And, frankly, a long litany of historians are some of the biggest problems of all. They are ignorant and refuse to be educated.

One of the arguments that's often raised is that removing a statue or renaming a landmark is "erasing history." How do you feel about this?

Anyone who thinks removing a statue or renaming a building or giving context to history is erasing history doesn't understand the way history works. Any historian who tells you that removing a statue is somehow harming history is not a historian worth listening to because they're not studying the very field they purport to study. For example, in the City of Winnipeg, the Queen Victoria statue was edited.[1] For decades, grassroots, everyday Winnipeggers had asked for it to be changed. And when the province wouldn't listen to them, even after being asked peacefully for decades, that statue was edited. People said we should have an Indigenous monument with Indigenous

1 On Canada Day 2021, the statue was covered with red paint — including many small, red handprints — and toppled in response to the discovery of hundreds of probable unmarked children's graves at former Residential Schools. Signs about the Residential Schools tragedy were placed against the overturned statue. The head of the Queen Victoria figure was later found in the Assiniboine River. In June 2022, the provincial government said the statue would not be reinstalled or repaired.

Peoples, honouring First Nations people. There is a statue for Métis, but there is no statue that honours First Nations' contribution to Manitoba. Just think about that for a moment. There is no statue on the Manitoba legislative grounds that honours First Nations people. Everybody else is recognized, but not First Nations people. That tells you exactly what First Nations people are thought of on their territories. Literally the birthplace of the country — *Treaty One*. And so, after being asked nicely, kindly, justly, reasonably by Indigenous Peoples — and by non-Indigenous people, as well — the citizens of Winnipeg decided just to take it upon themselves and peacefully and justly edit the statue of Queen Victoria. They put their hands on it to remind this country that Queen Victoria wasn't just a hero (to some) but was also a person who perpetrated incredible harm. That is the full story. Now that is the most accurate statue in Winnipeg history — because it is involving First Nations people, non-First Nations people and tells a complete story. When that statue was edited, the trains didn't stop running through the city. The trains are here because of people like Queen Victoria and Sir John A. Macdonald. I didn't suddenly look out the next morning after that statue was edited and go, 'Oh, the train lines magically disappeared.' So that's a perfect example of how history is still here. History is still amongst us. History is safe and sound when you replace, rename, remake a statue.

As someone who has studied history and taught university classes on many subjects, how do you see the role of educators when it comes to instilling lessons in young people about Canadian history and contemporary Indigenous issues?

The biggest stain and infection in the field of history is the illusion of objectivity. The problem is that I think most historians think they're objective in some way and that their history isn't political — that they don't make choices, and that those choices haven't been made for them in lots of different ways. They've inherited those legacies of racism and power and dominance. I think as more historians realize that they are embedded in a subjective field, they would understand that you can't just simply do history the way that it's been done for 50 years just because it's called tradition, or some illusion of objectivity. Because it's not. History is not objective — never has been, never will be. So therefore, we all have that responsibility to construct that narrative — that story, those so-called facts — together. As we do that, we will come to the fullest form of history that has yet to be written. The responsibility of educators is to read — and not just read from people who look like you and think like you and have the same credentials as you. Read from people who have been ostracized by the academy; people who have never had access to the publishing houses and the research dollars that you had; people who are talking to those you've never talked to. Then let it impact you. Let it come into your heart and your spirit and your mind and your body. Then share that with your students. Share that experience of what that feels like, what that looks like, how that radically changes your perspective and others' perspectives and the so-called historical record. That's how we begin to change the field; that's when we take action. And when we take action, then we take the next step, which is to edit our previous work, to edit others' work, to build a better field.

Historians have a gift-giving role to play. Indigenous Peoples most often want to hear and be

exposed to the research that you have had access to in your privilege and opportunity. I can tell you that working with First Nations communities, they really enjoy when they hear anthropologists and historians and archaeologists have written about our people. They also take great joy in pointing out the inaccuracies of those people who have been distanced from their community and made gross generalizations and un-factual claims. But they do appreciate the idea of a conversation or a dialogue on who they are and why they're here and where they're going. First Nations, Indigenous Peoples really appreciate that there is access to that information because we've been devastated by residential schools. So seeing a ceremony that was written down 150 years ago does help us to re-establish our languages, our cultures, the ways that we teach our children. I use archival records in the work that I do on Ojibway history and culture. That's where the opportunity lies. I think when these actions seep into you, when they impact your everyday — not just the work at the university but with your children in your living room. Then you begin to realize that there's an opportunity here — an opportunity to never seen before — to remake, to recreate and to rebuild or educational institutions in the ways that we see one another.

You can never 'unsee' once you've been taught to see. Territorial acknowledgements are a good example of this. When you see a people or a set of peoples that you have been taught not to see, then you cannot unsee them. That means you now know you share a territory with people you had been taught not to see. But now you have to do something about it. You have to return stolen land. You have to share the vast wealth and resources that certain groups have benefited from and other groups have not. You have to look to see that when people are suffering on the streets or with boil-water advisories, with poverty, with addiction — those are not 'those people,' those are your people.

You're also a journalist, a public commentator. How do you think journalists can contribute to this re-understanding of the country's history and the whole project of reconciliation?

Journalists are under the illusion of objectivity, as well. But I think less so than historians. I think that journalists are fully aware that there is a problem in the industry. A newsroom 25 years ago looked very different than a newsroom today. There are racialized people. There are LGBTQ people. There are people with so-called disabilities in that room. Those perspectives are valued and welcomed... There is a thirst amongst Canadians to hear about multiple perspectives of lives. There is a desire among Canadians to hear about stories they've never heard before from marginalized people — people who had not been in those newsrooms. What newspapers have realized — much more so than academics who don't have a market to respond to — is that it's very marketable to have multiple perspectives. It actually sells more newspapers to have people from different genders and sexualities and races in newsrooms. That is very exciting.

What signs of hope do you see of an evolving approach to history?

The fact that the Canadian Historical Association recognized genocide and had a rebuke by almost universally all of those who had been retired or have been out of the field or irrelevant for decades shows you that they were doing the right thing — that they

have been moving away from many of the problems that have been endemic to history and now they are moving towards a field that is far more inclusive and accurate. I find that history, overall as a field, is far more accurate than it ever has been in the past, where it was full of one-dimensional white men sitting in rooms absent of Indigenous Peoples, never going outside, never talking to Indigenous communities, and then writing these books about us — and then (surprise, surprise) they got it all wrong, or they got it mostly wrong. One of the most encouraging trends I see in history is the increase in the number of women in the field. I find that the women I work at the University of Manitoba are just remarkable historians, remarkable activists. And the rise in Indigenous historians is also remarkable… They are contributing to the field in ways that make for more accurate history, more inclusive history, that tells a fuller story than has ever been told before…

We must be creative with the way histories are told. It's not good enough to write books that two or three people read and go in a library that nobody enters. We must think of history creatively. That's why most of my publications have been in so-called mainstream institutions that are accessible to Indigenous Peoples — online, in things like graphic novels, in places that are accessible like The Canadian Encyclopedia. It seems to me that publishing work in a source that few people read isn't the most productive use of your time as an academic. Yet that is the way we are rewarded as academics. So that means the problem is with universities, not with Indigenous communities. We have to go to Indigenous communities; we can't expect them to come to us, because they've been locked out of the doors until about 20 minutes ago.

FEATURING ARTWORKS BY JARED TAIT

Jared Tait is an Oji-Cree from Sachigo Lake First Nation, and grew up in Thunder Bay, Ontario. He began painting in 2019 under the mentorship of his father, the artist Tim Tait.

Tait paints images inspired from his life experience, in connection with his culture, and began doing so as a way to heal past traumas. Painting for him is the best way to stay connected to his spirit and cultural background.