

Edited by
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Knowing the Past, Facing the Future

INDIGENOUS EDUCATION
IN CANADA



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INTRODUCTION

Sheila Carr-Stewart

The future of our people looks truly bleak. [We need to]
reclaim our right to direct the education of our children.

– Harold Cardinal, *The Unjust Society*, 1969

The late Harold Cardinal, in *The Unjust Society: The Tragedy of Canada's Indians*, sought to bring to the forefront the “shameful chronicle of the white man’s disinterest ... trampling of Indian rights ... and cultural genocide.” This history, he argued, had “atrophied our culture and robbed us of simple human dignity.”¹ Cardinal was reacting, in part, to the Liberal government’s 1969 *Statement of the Government of Canada on Indian Policy*, also known as the White Paper, which proposed to abolish the Indian Act, close the Department of Indian Affairs, and transfer all responsibility and programs for “Indians” to the provinces.² Treaties negotiated and signed by the Crown and First Nations peoples would be abolished because, the federal government argued, they did not benefit First Nations people: “A plain reading of the words used in the treaties reveal the limited and minimal promises which were included in them.”³ The government stated that the treaties’ ability to meet “the economic, educational, health and welfare needs of the Indian people has always been limited and will continue to decline. The services that have been provided go far beyond what

could have been foreseen by those who signed the treaties.”⁴ The goal of future policy would be elimination of “Indian status” and assimilation.

Opposition to the White Paper brought First Nations people across the country together in a united front. Leaders argued that the government was simply absolving itself of historical promises and responsibilities, including the treaty right to education, which were enshrined in specific treaties and legislation, including the Indian Act. The Indian Chiefs of Alberta presented their own paper, *Citizens Plus*, often referred to as the Red Paper, to the prime minister in Ottawa in June 1970. *Citizens Plus* in turn led the National Indian Brotherhood to produce *Indian Control of Indian Education* in 1972.⁵ The policy paper was the work of Chiefs and Band Councils from across Canada. It sought to change the existing education system and “to give [Indigenous] children the knowledge to understand and be proud of themselves and the knowledge to understand the world around them.”⁶ The education system as it existed then had been formally established at the time of Confederation, when the federal government, through the 1867 BNA Act, became responsible for the education of Indigenous peoples: Status Indians and some Métis would attend schools on reserves; non-Status Indians and some Métis would attend provincial schools. In response to resistance to the White Paper from First Nations, the federal government withdrew it and accepted *Indian Control of Indian Education* in principle. Canada committed to transferring control of education to Band Councils, which would work in partnership with the federal government.⁷

These promises were made decades ago, yet the provision of a quality education for Indigenous people remains an ongoing struggle. Despite its promise, the federal government failed to initiate new legislation relating to First Nations schools, and on-reserve schools suffer in comparison to their provincial counterparts. The Indian Act barely contains two pages dedicated to education, and there are no formal policies on administration, standards, school building requirements, curriculum, student support, teacher well-being, or

the involvement of parents, guardians, and communities. Nor is there adequate funding. The funds being provided do not support curriculum development, professional development, leadership training, or counselling.⁸ Teachers in First Nations schools are paid less than their provincial counterparts. The result has been a well-documented education gap between Indigenous students and non-Indigenous students in terms of graduation rates and entry into the labour market.

In response, some First Nations have opted out of the Indian Act. In 1998, the Mi'kmaq in Nova Scotia created their own educational system through legislation passed by both the provincial and federal governments. By all measures, it is an excellent system.⁹ In 2016, twelve First Nations in Manitoba formed a school division, which has an expanded jurisdiction and receives additional funding from the federal government. In 2018, the four First Nations of Maskwacis joined their eleven schools together into a Cree-based school board governed by the Maskwacis Education Commission. It is funded by the Alberta and Canadian governments. From the Atlantic Ocean to the Prairies, First Nations are taking control of education for their children and communities.

Yet the work is only beginning, as became clear when the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) presented its final report in 2015, calling on governments, educational and religious institutions, civil society groups, and ordinary Canadians to take action to overcome the legacy of residential and industrial schools – the government-sponsored boarding schools that began to appear in 1880 with the goal of assimilating Indigenous children to Euro-Canadian culture by separating them from their parents and communities.¹⁰ Because of the TRC, Canadians are becoming more aware of their country's long-term lack of commitment to First Nations education and of the history of broken promises and misguided experiments that has led to the current state of affairs. They are now more aware of how residential schools affected the 150,000 Indigenous people who attended them and the families of the more than 3,200 children

who died in them.¹¹ They are now more aware of the intergenerational trauma caused by the schools and how it has contributed to the current marginalization of Indigenous people.

The TRC issued ninety-four calls to action to advance reconciliation. Items 6 to 12 relate to education and include the following:

8. We call upon the government to eliminate the discrepancy in federal education funding for First Nations children being educated on reserves and those First Nations children being educated off reserves.
10. We call on the federal government to draft new Aboriginal education legislation with the full participation and informed consent of Aboriginal peoples.¹²

The TRC also called for commitments to improve curricula and the success rates of Indigenous students, to protect the right to teach and learn Indigenous languages, and to enable parents to enjoy the same responsibilities and level of accountability as parents in public school systems.¹³ Item 11 called on the “federal government to provide adequate funding to end the backlog of First Nations students seeking a postsecondary education.”¹⁴ Item 12 called on “the federal, provincial, territorial, and Aboriginal governments to develop culturally appropriate early childhood education programs for Aboriginal families.”¹⁵

Following the release of the commission’s final report, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau stated: “We need nothing less than a total renewal of the relationship between Canada and Indigenous peoples ... We will renew and respect that relationship.”¹⁶ Thus, nearly a century and a half after Confederation and the introduction of the Indian Act, Canadians are being called upon to address the lack of commitment to Indigenous education across the country and, ultimately, the genocide inflicted on Indigenous people through more than a century of Western educational policies and practices. In response to this call, *Knowing the Past, Facing the Future* traces the arc of Indigenous education since Confederation and draws a road map of the obstacles that

need to be removed before the challenge of reconciliation can be met. Part 1, “First Promises and Colonial Practices,” explores the colonial landscape of education, including the treaty right to education and the establishment of day, residential, and industrial schools. Part 2, “Racism, Trauma, and Survivance,” addresses the legacy of the schools, experienced by today’s generation of Indigenous peoples in the form of intergenerational trauma and internalized racism but also in the form of persistence, survival, and revitalization. Part 3, “Truth, Reconciliation, and Decolonization,” explores contemporary issues in curriculum development, assessment, leadership, and governance and the possibilities and problems associated with incorporating traditional knowledge and Indigenous teaching and healing practices into school courses and programs.

First Promises and Colonial Practices

Long before Europeans arrived to colonize North America, Indigenous peoples lived and prospered and had their own approaches to education. As self-determining nations, each with their own language, culture, and governance and leadership systems, they adapted to changing environments and “evolved and grew within the spiritual traditions given to them by the Creator.”¹⁷ As Cree scholar Verna Kirkness has written, Indigenous education was “an education in which the community was the classroom, its members were the teachers, and each adult was responsible to ensure that each child learned how to live a good life.”¹⁸ Children met and overcame the challenges of living off the land, and the environment, in the words of Evelyn Steinhauer, “imposed a discipline that produced resilient, proud, and self-reliant people.”¹⁹ As explained by Chief John Snow of the Stoney First Nation, education was interwoven into life, with each member passing on valuable knowledge through the spoken word.²⁰

Indigenous knowledge and systems of education were simply ignored when European governments, in their quest for territorial expansion, began to colonize North America. When the French began

to explore and settle territory along the St. Lawrence in the early sixteenth century, missionaries played an integral role in colonialism as Catholic priests and nuns sought to convert Indigenous peoples to the Christian faith and to “civilize” them through schools structured on European models.²¹ After the British conquered New France in 1760, Protestant missionaries were slow to arrive, but in the early nineteenth century they began to settle in Indigenous communities, where they too sought to Christianize Indigenous people and to change their “manners and sentiments.”²² By the time of Confederation, the Catholic and Protestant churches were engaged in a competition for souls that stretched across the nation and included fifty Western schools for Indigenous students. The majority of church-run schools were funded exclusively by the churches, which paid minimal, if any, salaries to teacher-missionaries. Although the missionaries often learned Indigenous languages in order to communicate with potential converts, they did not recognize Indigenous forms of education and taught within the Western system of education.²³

Along with missions, treaties were an integral part of the colonization process, and the conventions for treaty making in Canada go all the way back to the Covenant Chain of the early seventeenth century. The first era of treaty making ended with the Conquest, when the King of England, George III, issued the Royal Proclamation of 1763, which laid out the principles of treaty making between Indigenous people and the British Crown. The proclamation stated explicitly that Indigenous people reserved all lands not ceded or purchased by them. Although the Royal Proclamation created a constitutional framework for the negotiation of treaties, Indigenous peoples and the Crown approached the treaties differently.²⁴ Representatives of the Crown sought clear access to the land and the elimination of all Indigenous claims. First Nations, by contrast, wished to share their land with the newcomers. While treaty commissioners spoke English and had been educated in Christian, Western schools, Chiefs and Counsellors spoke Indigenous languages and had been educated in holistic education

systems that had served their people from the beginning of time. At the treaty meetings, the two groups met for days, sometimes weeks. When they separated, the treaty commissioners returned to Ottawa, where they prepared the written treaty document, which was then sent to each Chief. By contrast, First Nations Elders or oral recorders kept the words of the treaties alive in their communities, and the nation's understanding of the treaty was passed along orally from generation to generation until the present day.²⁵

When Canada entered into Confederation in 1867, the BNA Act gave responsibility for education to the provinces, but the federal government was responsible for “Indians, and Lands reserved for the Indians.”²⁶ The Indian Act, a consolidation of previous legislation passed by Parliament in 1876, became the main legal instrument through which the federal government administered “Indian” status, local First Nations government, and the management of reserve land and monies. The act also outlined the federal government's obligations, including education, to First Nations.

The new nation of Canada, which only included Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Quebec, and Ontario at the time of Confederation, expanded quickly as Sir John A. Macdonald pursued his vision of a country that stretched from sea to sea. The federal government purchased Rupert's Land from the Hudson's Bay Company, and the territory became Manitoba and the North-West Territories in 1870. In 1871, British Columbia joined Confederation on the promise of a transcontinental railway, and Prince Edward Island was added in 1873. Before it could build the railway and fill the Prairies with settlers, however, the federal government was required to enter into treaties with the Indigenous peoples who occupied the territories. Between 1871 and 1921, it negotiated a series of eleven treaties, known as the Numbered Treaties, and each one included a statement relating to the provision of schools, which was discussed in detail by Chiefs, Headmen, and the treaty commissioners at the meetings. Chiefs and Headmen had an understanding of Western education based on

decades of interaction with explorers, entrepreneurs, missionaries, representatives of the Crown, and early settlers.

As the first of my contributions to this volume shows, Indigenous people knew what they wanted when it came to schools. Chapter 1, “One School for Every Reserve: Chief Thunderchild’s Defence of Treaty Rights and Resistance to Separate Schools, 1880–1925,” explores how one of the Cree Chiefs in the Treaty 6 area of present-day Saskatchewan defended his vision for a community school that would support both an Indigenous and Western education. Treaty 6, which was signed in 1876, states that “Her Majesty agrees to maintain schools for instruction in such reserves hereby made, as to her Government of the Dominion of Canada may seem advisable, whenever the Indians of the reserve shall desire it.”²⁷ Each of the Numbered Treaties promised First Nations a Western education, one that would not affect their own language and culture but would instead provide a second level of instruction in addition to what they learned from Elders and parents. However, as the evolution of schools at the Thunderchild Reserve shows, the federal government had no desire to administer or pay for education as a treaty right. For the most part, it ignored the Numbered Treaties and instead governed according to the Indian Act, which restricted the role of Chiefs and Councillors in the education of their people and left Indigenous education in the hands of religious organizations, which continued to compete for souls and for meagre federal government funds, often on the same reserve. Although the federal government failed to keep its promise to build and maintain schools, policy-makers made sure that the schools built by churches followed the same rules, norms, and processes as provincial schools and, in Saskatchewan, that meant supporting denominational or separate schools. (In Canada, education is defined as a provincial responsibility. Saskatchewan, Alberta, and Ontario have publicly funded provincial schools that are either Roman Catholic or Protestant.) Although Chief Thunderchild wanted one community school for his nation and cared little whether it was Catholic or Protestant so long as

it provided a Western education to his people so they could participate in the new economy, he instead got two poorly funded denominational schools that not only sought to Christianize and Westernize children, eliminating the children's mother tongue and culture in the process, but also created divisions in the community. The day schools established at the Thunderchild Reserve ultimately failed. This failure, which occurred in First Nations communities across the country, was blamed on First Nations people rather than on inadequate funding and the government's failure to meet treaty promises. The failure of day schools set the stage for mandatory attendance at residential and industrial schools in the 1880s.

The Indian Act gave the Department of Indian Affairs authority to arrest and fine parents for not sending their children to schools, and it gave the governor-in-council the authority to create residential and industrial schools. In Chapter 2, "Placing a School at the Tail of a Plough: The European Roots of Indian Industrial Schools in Canada," Larry Prochner traces the idea for residential and industrial schools back to their roots: Philipp Emanuel von Fellenberg's farm school for the poor at Hofwyl, near Berne, Switzerland. At the school, teacher and pupils lived together as a family, and the underlying premise was class-based: the rich would attend grammar schools while the poor would work the land to develop the mind. Egerton Ryerson visited Hofwyl before he made his report on schools in Upper Canada in 1847, which led to the opening of a few industrial schools in Ontario.

As Prochner outlines, however, the idea of industrial schools was revived in the 1870s when Nicholas Flood Davin made his *Report on Industrial Schools for Indians and Half-Breeds* in 1879. Davin had been appointed by the government to investigate American schools, also influenced by Hofwyl. In addition, the federal government's interest in the schools stemmed from its failure to support reserve farming. Rather than providing agricultural training for First Nations, the government sought to isolate children in institutions where they would learn manual labour. The turn to residential and industrial schools

in the 1880s reflected a policy shift from assimilation to segregation.²⁸ The first two Indian industrial schools in western Canada – the Church of England’s Battleford Industrial School and the Roman Catholic Qu’Appelle Industrial School – opened in the early 1880s. Within a decade, there were more than twenty industrial schools in the West. But the schools deviated from Fellenberg’s original model and were quickly seen as a failure because of the “appalling quality of education ... harsh treatment of children by staff, and ... inadequate food and living conditions.”²⁹ They also cost the federal government too much money.

In response, Sir Clifford Sifton, the superintendent of Indian affairs, decided to support cheaper, church-run boarding schools located on or close to reserves. In my second contribution to this volume, Chapter 3, “The Heavy Debt of Our Missions: Failed Treaty Promises and Anglican Schools in Blackfoot Territory, 1892–1902,” I draw on mission reports from the Diocese of Calgary to show how these shifts in federal policy affected the provision of educational services in the Treaty 7 area. The churches were left with “the burden of educating Indian” children with limited federal funding. All of the schools established in Treaty 7 territory were initially day schools; however, over time all the denominations established boarding or residential schools. The federal government usually only paid half the cost of school construction, leaving the remainder for the churches and First Nations communities, a clear violation of the Crown’s treaty obligation to provide schools and teachers. To make up the difference, churches relied on donations and grants from their adherents in Canada and Europe.

The end result was a system in which Indigenous children were forced to attend poorly financed schools run by missionaries who were paid less than their counterparts in provincial schools and who could barely afford to clothe and feed and maintain the health of their students. Children often spent ten years in residential school, where they were given new clothes and names, separated from their parents and often their siblings, forbidden to speak anything but English, and

spent a great part of the day performing manual labour or religious observances. Resistance was met with excessive punishment and physical abuse. If they were fortunate enough to survive the regular outbreaks of disease that plagued the schools, children returned to the reserve stripped of traditional knowledge and with skills they couldn't put to use. By 1930, the residential school system included around eight schools, most of them in western Canada and the territories. It wasn't until the 1940s, that both the churches and the government accepted that the schools were ineffective. Following the Second World War, the Senate and the House of Commons appointed a committee to look at the Indian Act, including education. In 1951, the churches were removed from administering First Nations schools, and all teachers in them were subsequently hired by the federal government. However, they continued to be paid less than their provincial counterparts. Faced with resistance from Indigenous communities at the time of the White Paper, the Department of Indian Affairs took over the system in 1969 and decided to phase out the schools. Some stayed open, however, under the control of Indigenous bands. The last closed in 1996.

Racism, Trauma, and Survivance

In a speech made on May 28, 2015, Supreme Court Chief Justice Beverley McLachlin stated that Canada had attempted to commit “cultural genocide” on Indigenous peoples and that it was “the worst stain on Canada’s human rights record.” Sir John A. Macdonald’s goal at the time of Confederation had been to “take the Indian out of the children,” which was, “in the buzz word of the day, assimilation; in the language of the twenty-first century, cultural genocide.”³⁰

In his contribution to this volume, Chapter 4, “If You Say I Am Indian, What Will You Do? History and Self-Identification at Humanity’s Intersection,” Jonathan Anuik ties the past to the present by exploring how the federal government’s Indian policy and the Indian Act, by defining who and what an “Indian” is, struck at the very heart

of Indigenous identity. For instance, when the law was changed so that “Indian” children had to attend residential schools in 1920, the government determined eligibility by looking at whom it had registered as Status Indians under the Indian Act. When these “Indian” children entered the schools, instructors assumed they were dirty, lacked knowledge of science, and were irreligious; they assumed that they, not the children’s parents, could best prepare them for the future. Staff, Anuik argues, “conflated being ‘Indian’ with being damaged by their communities, and they sought to heal wounds inflicted by what were considered to be irreligious and illiterate parents.” They instead inflicted new wounds. To overcome this legacy, Anuik stresses that teachers need to be aware of the importance and history (or lack of it) of self-identification. The assignment of labels by governments, schools, and teachers, he shows, continues to affect how students are treated in the classroom and how they think about their own abilities. By showing how he addressed the issue of outside labelling in his own classroom, Anuik offers educators a tool to build learning environments that accurately represent the peoples whom they educate.

In Chapter 5, “Laying the Foundations for Success: Recognizing Manifestations of Racism in First Nations Education,” Noella Steinhauer likewise connects the past to the present by showing how historical disparities between provincial and First Nations schools are reflected in negative attitudes towards “rez” schools among some First Nations students and families. Much like substance abuse or violence, these attitudes, she reveals, are manifestations of internalized racism, which includes feelings of “shame for being associated with a population of people who were relegated to reserve communities, where all aspects of their lives were legislated by the government.” The first step on the path to success, she argues, is overcoming internalized racism (an individual problem) by viewing it instead as appropriated racial oppression (a sociocultural problem). In order to do this, Steinhauer, along with other contributors to this volume, sees the need for educators to carve out what Willie Ermine refers to as ethical spaces, places where dialogue that respects different worldviews can take place.³¹

In Chapter 6, “Iskotew and Crow: (Re)igniting Narratives of Indigenous Survivance and Honouring Trauma Wisdom in the Classroom,” Karlee Fellner draws on the story of Iskotew and her experience working as a psychology intern with Indigenous children in schools to show that overcoming the past also depends on creating new counternarratives of survivance, resilience, and resurgence. She illustrates how educators can draw on Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing, particularly storytelling, to move classrooms and communities from the dominating system, which is rooted and steeped in colonial narratives and labels of deficit and pathology, towards Indigenous approaches that honour trauma wisdom. From an interconnected Indigenous perspective, trauma is not an indication of a pathology; rather, symptoms and behaviours may indicate that an ancestor is trying to communicate a message about how balance, wellness, and healing are needed in a given environment.

Truth, Reconciliation, and Decolonization

While the chapters in Part 2 emphasize the need for educators to understand how the past continues to resonate in the present, influencing everything from how Indigenous students are labelled to how they view First Nations schools, the chapters in Part 3 open a dialogue on how Indigenous peoples and educators can “move beyond memories of the past to begin a journey towards a curriculum based on a shared future.” In Chapter 7, “Curriculum after the Truth and Reconciliation Commission: A Conversation between Two Educators on the Future of Indigenous Education,” Harry Lafond, a Cree educator and politician, and Darryl Hunter, a white educator, engage in a conversation that identifies potential paths and pitfalls for curriculum over the next few decades. Noting that discussions of curriculum have moved away from trying to figure out how to adapt the current system to meet the needs of Indigenous students, they join others in arguing that Indigenous students need to go out on the land with parents, teachers, and Elders, that they need to experience immersive

classrooms so that they can truly understand their cultural values. Decolonizing the current system in order to focus on Indigenous culture, content, worldviews, and belief systems, they warn, will require educators to unearth and explore assumptions and to move beyond the Western paradigm, which focuses almost exclusively on the textbook. Seeing education as a spiral progression, Lafond argues that a school curriculum that respects and honours Indigenous people should be developed at the local level in consultation with Elders, and it should begin with a strong sense of place and connection to the land, moving outward from that “point as youth mature emotionally, spiritually, physiologically, and intellectually in stages.” Whereas history is about representing the past, “curriculum is about representing spirit, emotion, thought, and behaviour for the future.”

In Chapter 8, “Indigenous and Western Worldviews: Fostering Ethical Space in the Classroom,” Jane Preston argues that one of the first steps towards building a curriculum based on a shared future is understanding each other’s worldviews, the “lens through which one perceives and interprets life.” Because our core values and norms are embedded within us and frequently prevent us from understanding others, in order to improve and renew education, we need to create ethical spaces “where different views, cultures, and life experiences are recognized equally within a mutually respected, balanced team of diverse people.”³² Within the educational world, Preston says, teachers and administrators need to recognize the underlying assumptions of the Indigenous and Western worldviews, which she outlines in a general way, to stimulate greater respect for cultural diversity at all levels of the system, from ministerial teams and school boards to parent-teacher associations and student sports teams. Only then will people accept that for Indigenous people the learning process is the experience of life itself. It is hands on and experiential; it promotes independence, self-reliance, observation, discovery, and respect for nature; and it can’t be confined to the classroom.

Community-based initiatives and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada are already fostering change. In Chapter 9,

“Supporting Equitable Learning Outcomes for Indigenous Students: Lessons from Saskatchewan,” Michael Cottrell and Rosalind Hardie relate the lessons learned from key initiatives in the province to close the so-called educational gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. They argue that the term *educational gap* should be viewed as a label that causes more harm than good. It should be seen instead as evidence of an educational debt owed to Indigenous people after more than a century of broken treaty promises. Following the recommendations of the Joint Task Force on Improving Education and Employment Outcomes for First Nations and Métis Peoples, they break down the steps that need to be taken on three fronts: fostering dignified mutual relationships in ethical spaces, reducing poverty and the prevalence of racism, and recognizing First Nations and Métis cultures and languages.

In Chapter 10, “Hybrid Encounters: First Peoples Principles of Learning and Teachers’ Constructions of Indigenous Education and Educators,” Brooke Madden draws on interviews and observations of early career teachers in Vancouver to show the benefits and drawbacks of trying to include Indigenous content and approaches to learning in the classroom. In this case, the teachers were applying the “First Peoples Principles of Learning,” published in British Columbia by the First Nations Education Steering Committee, in the classroom. Although the teachers felt that the principles helped them to embed Indigenous knowledge and worldviews in the curriculum in authentic, meaningful ways, Madden found they overrelied on the document as a support for and authority on Indigenous education. Rather than drawing on the knowledge of local First Nations, they interpreted the perspectives from within the Western paradigm, resulting in pan-Indian or Eurocentric projections of Indigenous knowledge and worldviews in the classroom.

Finally, in Chapter 11, “The Alberta Métis Education Council: Realizing Self-Determination in Education,” Yvonne Poitras Pratt and Solange Lalonde bring the volume full circle by showing how the federal government’s and courts’ ability to define who is Aboriginal

or Indian has affected the educational experiences of the Métis, who were “recruited into and excluded from residential schooling on an irregular and erratic basis.” The Métis, they argue, have been prevented from speaking with a collective voice, and they outline the steps that have been taken by the Alberta Métis Education Council to assert that voice, and the Métis right to self-determination, in educational programming. Viewing *the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* and the TRC as guiding frameworks, they advise us to view the places where Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledge traditions meet not as problem areas but as places of hope and possibility where a truly inclusive model of education can be built.



Since 1867, Canada has supported or been involved in a number of studies and reports that have focused on Indigenous education. At times these reports have created a stir, but the educational landscape of this country has changed very little from colonial times. Western paradigms still reign in the classroom, and self-determination in the realm of education continues to be an unfulfilled dream for many Indigenous people. The report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada and initiatives by Indigenous communities suggest that we are poised at a historic moment of change. *Knowing the Past, Facing the Future* identifies the issues that Indigenous people have faced over the past century and a half, and it indicates the steps that need to be taken before the challenge of reconciliation can be met. At a time when decolonizing Canada's education system remains a struggle, the contributors to this volume reveal the possibilities and potential pitfalls associated with incorporating traditional knowledge and Indigenous teaching and healing practices into school courses and programs. Most importantly, the issue of funding is a thread that runs throughout this volume and the history of Indigenous education to the present day. The federal government needs to heed the TRC's call to initiate new legislation on Indigenous education. Some communities, such as the First Nations schools in Nova Scotia have opted out of the Indian Act

and for twenty years have administered quality schools that turn out successful students. Their example, and the case studies explored in this volume, show that the best education systems for Indigenous peoples will be connected to the land and created from the ground up rather than cobbled together from the remnants of a colonial system that was never committed to maintaining the treaty right to education or putting Indigenous peoples on the path to success.

Notes

- 1 Harold Cardinal, *The Unjust Society: The Tragedy of Canada's Indians* (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1969), 1–2.
- 2 Government of Canada, *Statement of the Government of Canada on Indian Policy (The White Paper, 1969)*, <http://aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100010189/1100100010191>. In this volume, *Indigenous* is used unless specific reference is being made to Government of Canada legal categories, defined by section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982, in which *Aboriginal peoples* refers to the “Indian, Inuit, and Métis peoples of Canada.” In this and in historical contexts, “Indian” is and was used to refer to legally defined identities set out in the Indian Act by the Government of Canada, such as “Status Indian” and “non-Status Indian.” The term *Indian* is now considered outdated and offensive. *First Nations* is used to describe Indigenous peoples who are not Métis or Inuit.
- 3 *Ibid.*, 6.
- 4 *Ibid.*, 7.
- 5 National Indian Brotherhood, *Indian Control of Indian Education* (Ottawa: National Indian Brotherhood, 1972).
- 6 *Ibid.*, 1.
- 7 Jean Chrétien, letter to George Manuel, President, National Indian Brotherhood, February 2, 1973.
- 8 Sheila Carr-Stewart, Jim Marshall, and Larry Steeves, “Inequality of Educational Financial Resources: A Case Study of First Nations and Provincial Educational Funding in Saskatchewan,” *McGill Journal of Education* 46, 3 (2011): 363–77.
- 9 Marie Battiste, *Decolonizing Education: Nourishing the Learning Spirit* (Saskatoon: Purich, 2012).
- 10 *Ibid.*
- 11 Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC), *Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*, vol. 1, *Summary: Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future* (Toronto: Lorimer, 2015).

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