

# Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

## Canada's "Reckoning": A Qualitative Content Analysis of Canadian News Media Coverage on Unmarked Graves of Residential School Children

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CANADA'S "RECKONING": A QUALITATIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS OF CANADIAN  
NEWS MEDIA COVERAGE ON UNMARKED GRAVES OF  
RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL CHILDREN

by

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## **An Introduction to *Canada's "Reckoning"***

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On May 27th, leadership from the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc First Nation announced that ground-penetrating radar had revealed the graves of 215 Indigenous children that had been dispersed throughout the grounds of the former Kamloops Indian Residential School in British Columbia, Canada. This finding quickly came to the forefront of both national and international news media—with evidence pointing to human rights violations against Canada's Indigenous population as a direct result of residential and day schools. While this news has caused shock and horror among many non-Indigenous Canadians, it has simultaneously re-awakened old wounds and traumatic memories for survivors and their families. It has further confirmed what Indigenous communities have known for generations, and have warned the government, to no avail, that a now incontrovertible number of Indigenous children who had been taken from their families, and forced to attend these church- and state-run institutions, had never come home. With subsequent findings of unmarked graves being discovered across Canada, the call Indigenous communities have made to "bring [their] children home" has only just begun (Martens, 2021, para. 3; see also Sasitharan & Draaisma, 2021, para. 2; Talaga, 2021). Similarly, calls have been renewed for the government to fulfill the (2015) *Truth and Reconciliation*

*Commission's Calls to Action*, "as though the truth of what was revealed at the *Commission* has only now become visceral" (Erna, 2021, para. 7). Using two of Canada's most prominent news broadcasting networks, *CBC News* and *The Globe and Mail*, as well as *APTN National News*—to include a uniquely Indigenous news broadcaster—the purpose of this research is to conduct a qualitative content analysis on how this ongoing, historic moment of the discoveries of children who never came home from residential schools is being portrayed by Canadian news media.

The Government of Canada has taken *some* steps in acknowledging widespread harms inflicted by the Indian Residential School System, beginning with the historic compensation agreement and the 2008 formal apology. Faced with hundreds of lawsuits by survivors, the government settled these claims with those who could prove their attendance at the boarding schools. The 2007 *Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement* included the Common Experience Payment (CEP) for eligible survivors who attended Residential School and an Independent Assessment Process (IAP) for claims of serious physical and sexual abuse (Government of Canada, 2019). This provided residential school survivors with a total of over \$1.6 billion from the CEP by 2016, and \$3.19 billion through IAPs (Government of Canada, 2019, p. 5). In 2008, former Prime Minister Stephen Harper provided survivors with a formal apology for the wrongs caused by the residential school system. However, Harper contradicted his apology one year later during the 2009 G20 Summit in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where he

claimed Canada had “no history of colonialism” (Fabian et al., 2014, p. 246). Almost a decade after the formal apology, the (2015) *Truth and Reconciliation Commission* (hereafter, *TRC*) released a 6-volume report including testimonies from “more than 6,000 survivors affected by residential schools” (p. 5).

The *TRC* (2015) concluded that Canada had committed “cultural genocide” against Canada’s Indigenous population through assimilative strategies that stripped Indigenous, Metis, and Inuit children of their cultures, languages, spiritual practices, ties to their families and communities, their land and their sense of identity (p. 1). One of the *TRC*’s (2015) reports, titled *Canada’s Residential Schools: Missing Children and Unmarked Burials*, even identified well over 3,000 children known to have died, and estimated another 3,000 could have been forgotten and left in unmarked graves spread across the grounds of residential school sites (p. 125). The *TRC* (2015) ultimately detailed 94 *Calls to Action* aimed at government sectors, religious institutions, and the private sector. *Calls* numbered 71-76 ask the government to fund a nationwide search for unmarked graves and for Indigenous peoples to be consulted at every point of this process (*Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, 2015, p. 8-9). Since then, only 12 out of 94 *Calls* have been answered (First Nations University of Canada, 2022), and no residential school sites had been searched. That is, until late-May, 2021, when leadership from the Tk’emlúps te Secwépemc First Nation announced that ground-penetrating radar had revealed the graves of 215



Indigenous children. In spite of these vital steps forward, it has taken the discovery of hundreds (and now, thousands) of graves across the country for Canada to begin waking up to the horrors faced by survivors and Indigenous communities. Nonetheless, the recognition of these historical and current truths has emphasized the demand for concrete action by Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians alike.

News media has played an instrumental role in keeping up with this momentum and ensuring Canadians are updated with the latest efforts made in relation to this moment of reckoning. Other than social media, both online and print news media remain dominant sources for 86% of Canadians, with the majority (95%) accessing their news digitally (News Media Canada, 2022). As such, online news media was utilized because of the credibility of journalists and established news organizations that provide reliable discourse to capture this historical and potentially pivotal moment. However, the purpose of this research is not to solely describe the events that have unfolded since late-May, 2021, and continue to unfold, but to analyze them in accordance with the following research questions:

How is this historic moment of the discoveries of children who never came home from residential schools being portrayed by Canadian news media?

- i. How has this moment of reckoning amplified the truth about darker moments of Canadian history?

- ii. What calls for justice are being sought by Indigenous, Inuit and Métis communities who continue to feel the trauma and long-term effects of residential schools?
- iii. How are calls being framed around the roles and responsibilities of governments—federal and provincial—the church, and the rest of the Canadian public?
- iv. With thousands of graves of Indigenous children being unearthed across Canada, how has this reshaped the debates surrounding a genocide against Indigenous peoples?

By answering these questions, this research seeks to represent this historical moment, and provide an update in current literature regarding Canada's complex relationship between Indigenous peoples and the government. Efforts to answer the research questions will also assist in capturing ongoing efforts to reconcile with Canada's residential school legacy. Prior to engaging in such an endeavour, due to the subject matter at hand, it is important to position myself as the researcher.

Linda McDowell (1992) mentions the importance of “decolonizing research...[by] recognizing and taking account of our own position...and writing this into our research practice” (Deliofsky, 2017, p. 409). As a caucasian male with ancestral ties to the colonization of Turtle Island stretching back to the early 17th century, it is not only necessary to acknowledge my identity, but to recognize that had it not been for the resiliency and bravery of so many residential school survivors—or rather, “warriors” (Hobson, 2021, para. 1; see also Germano,

2022, para. 2)—none of this research would have been possible. It is also important to note that this research has been conducted on the traditional, spiritual and unceded territories of the Coast Salish peoples of the Semiahmoo First Nations. As someone who strives to advocate for issues regarding injustices and intergenerational trauma faced by Indigenous peoples, I want to utilize this research to conduct a qualitative content analysis that, in turn, captures this potentially pivotal moment in Canadian history whilst analyzing what that means in the journey toward reconciliation and ongoing efforts to recover the bodies of Indigenous children who never came home.

When utilizing the term “Indigenous,” it is important to recognize that those who have been on this continent prior to colonization cannot be generalized into one group. Throughout history, the first peoples of Turtle Island have been given several names—many that degrade the people as a whole, and incorrectly refer to them as one group. In reality, there were more than 500 independent nations that had emerged in North America during the pre-contact era (Locks et al., 2022). The terms “Aboriginal,” “First Nations,” “Indian,” “Native,” and “Indigenous” are all used to describe the descendants of the original inhabitants of North America (Neuman, 2014, p. 2). However, there is still a debate that exists among these communities over which term is preferred (Neuman, 2014). But for the purpose of this research, and respecting the Canadian census (Government of Canada, 2021), the terms “Indigenous” or “Indigenous peoples” will be

used to represent the hundreds of Inuit, Métis and First Nations communities across Canada—each of which have their own diverse practices and traditions. To support the use of the generalized characterization of “Indigenous,” I turn to Monchalin (2016) who breaks down its historical conceptualization and meaning.

The term “Indian,” although widely used today in the *Indian Act*, or when referring to “Indian status,” is what Monchalin (2016) refers to as a “historical farce,” because at the end of the 14th century—when Christopher Columbus first arrived on Turtle Island—he believed his boat had landed in the Indies (p. 2). It wasn’t until the (1982) *Constitution*, that section 35 adopted the term “Aboriginal” to describe the first peoples of Canada (University of British Columbia, 2009). Despite the term “First Nations” being commonly used during the same period—and, since there was no legal definition for “First Nations”—the term “Aboriginal” was used more often than the latter (University of British Columbia, 2009). Since then, “Indigenous peoples” has become more widely accepted, because it encompasses the large number of diverse communities of Inuit, Métis and First Nations peoples across Canada (Monchalin, 2016).

Whereas in the international community, when referring to the “First People” from across the world, the word “Indigenous” has been adopted since the early 1970s (University of British Columbia, 2009). Therefore, while the word “Indigenous” is still a colonial term, for the purpose

of this research the term "Indigenous" will be used when referring to the incredibly diverse range of communities from across modern day "Canada."

Throughout the data selection portion of this research, the terms "discoveries" and "recoveries" have been used interchangeably whenever mass graves have been located across the country. And while the exact location of the 215 gravesites in Kamloops, B.C., for example, was unknown until the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc First Nation had announced their "finding" on May, 27, 2021, knowledge of graves of children in or around residential school sites has been held by government, religious and Indigenous peoples alike for well over one hundred years (Pruden et al., 2021; see also Alhmidi, 2021; Slobodian, 2021; Hager, 2021; Piapot, 2021; House, 2021; Martens, 2021). The term "discover" means "to find information, a place, or an object, especially for the first time" (Cambridge Dictionary, 2022). Thus, while the various "discoveries" of mass graves that have been located across certain residential schools in Canada can be considered "finding something...for the first time," it is important to acknowledge that knowledge of these graves of Indigenous children are not new, and therefore are not "discoveries." Still, since the terms "discoveries" and "recoveries" have been used interchangeably throughout online news discourse, I have adopted the same terms and rationale behind the use of these terms throughout this research.

The final term that must be clarified is the use of “reckoning” throughout the following study. The term “reckoning” first appeared in the early 14th century to describe “a narration” or “an account” (Online Etymology, 2022). Throughout the 14th century, it acquired additional meanings, including “a settling of accounts” in the mid-14th century, and “a bill of changes” by the late 14th century (Online Etymology, 2022). By the 16th century, it included a much stronger meaning and was commonly used in religious settings as the “Day of Reckoning,” or rather the “Day of Judgement” (Online Etymology, 2022). Since then, while its use in a religious context has continued, it is more commonly used in secular discourse, according to Nelson (2009), to describe a “settlement, restitution, healing, and the end to war” (p. 33). Within this particular context, I plan to utilize the term “reckoning” to describe the country coming to terms with the darker parts of Canadian history—and ultimately, a time to finally “settle rewards or penalties” for the harms suffered by Indigenous peoples.

The following study begins with a comprehensive analysis of the relevant literature, with the first discussion providing conceptual background of “genocide”—a claim that has increased as Canada continues to reconcile with the darker parts of its colonial history. This chapter also provides a brief history of residential schools, the horrors that occurred there for well over a century-and-a-half, and various reparations that have been made since their closure. The literature review then concludes with a discussion of the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission's*

findings of cultural genocide, followed by calls for action that have been outlined by survivors and their communities—each of which has been purposely designed to be answered by federal (and subsequent) government[s], religious entities, Canada's education and child welfare sectors, public media corporations, other members of the private sector and civil society.

The next chapter outlines the method and other techniques utilized to execute this study, whilst including the rationale behind each step in this process. This includes how this research was designed, the way in which data has been selected, how themes were extracted, and a description of the sample compiled. The rationale behind using news media articles as historical artifacts will be also explained, followed by how media can contribute to “how issues come to be understood as public issues, reflecting broader cultural, historical and institutional affinities” (Saraisky, 2015, p. 28). With examples of how the data was coded and analyzed near the end of this section, this chapter seeks to establish a clear pathway from the conceptualization to the implementation of this research.

Once the method and various techniques of this study have been outlined, themes that emerged from the data collection process are described and analyzed. This begins with a discussion regarding how the discoveries have brought truth to many Canadians—truth about what Indigenous communities have gone through for 150 years, and truth about the legacy of residential schools. The discoveries have caused an “outpour of grief” for many residential

school survivors and their families (Pruden et al., 2021, para. 5), but at the same time, a resiliency and courage among those same communities as they continue to push forward in pursuit of the truth (Warick, 2021; see also House, 2021; Cardoso, 2021). Truth-telling will also be analyzed within the context of public ignorance, unknowing and denial—each of which has followed residential school history since the 1907 denial of Dr. Bryce's report which exposed high rates of tuberculosis and alarming rates of deaths within these institutions across Canada (Bergen, 2021). In addition to a national awakening of truth, the discoveries have brought with them attention on the world stage. While this *has* placed pressure on the government to right this wrong, it has also been used against Canada, with countries calling out Canada for its historical mistreatment of Indigenous peoples in residential schools (MacDonald, 2021; see also Alhmidi, 2021).

The findings transition into a discussion of debates revolving around human rights abuses, including crimes against humanity, atrocities, and genocide—a strong claim made by various experts, scholars, survivors and their families (Coates, 2021; see also Forester et al., 2021; Pruden et al., 2021; Faust & Heffernan, 2021; Piapot, 2022; Ballantyne, 2021; Bergen, 2021). Whilst powerful, evocative commentary was *not* hard to come by when it came to the genocide claim: patterns in the analysis revealed that there were those who reject the use of genocide in the context of residential schools, others who substantiated genocidal intent, and



even those who discussed genocide in the context of colonialism (Pruden et al., 2021; see also Ballantyne, 2021; Stranger, 2021; Quenneville, 2021; Steele, 2021; Barrera, 2021). Following these claims were opposing views on whether there are grounds for a criminal prosecution, who is liable for the implementation and enforcement of residential schools—something that is older than Canada itself—and steps that should be taken to determine such decisions. Although there were no clear, concise answers to these complex questions, there was an overall acknowledgement that Indigenous peoples need to be at the table when these matters are being discussed, and when decisions are being made.

The final focal point within the findings chapter is on memory sites, memorials and monuments. This multifaceted discussion will elucidate details about how protests destroyed colonial monuments, mysteries around burnt churches, and other acts of vandalism that have taken place against residential school memorials. Additionally, suggestions around what to do with residential school sites are discussed, including the call to demolish them, and the call to renovate the buildings so that they may be used as information centres and places of healing. Finally, this section explores ways in which Canada is being called to decolonize colonial institutions, and what this might mean for Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians alike.

In proceeding, it is important to remember that, while the darker parts of Canadian history can be difficult to confront—just as it may be difficult to hear about the countless harms

suffered by survivors and their families—it is vital their stories are being told across the country. It is Indigenous peoples who these issues affect the most, and thus, the solutions must come from them—but righting this wrong is a responsibility for *all* Canadians. The journey ahead remains an arduous endeavour, but as residential school survivor and member of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation, Jessie Dawson, says, “I see a bright future...[and] I invite you all to see that bright future too” (Connors, 2021, para. 18).

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## Literature Review

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### Introduction:

As the number of graves containing Indigenous children who attended the church- and government-run schools continues to grow with ongoing recovery efforts, Canadians are being called to reckon with the history and legacy of residential schools. Meanwhile, governments are being asked to fully commit to the recommendations outlined by the (2015) *Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action*. Each grave site located confirms what Indigenous peoples have known for generations, and what has been available to the public since the TRC's release in 2015—that mass graves were located somewhere near the very institutions that forcibly removed Indigenous children from their families for well over one hundred years. Still, the recent “discoveries” have come as a shock to most Canadians (and the world) who, when hearing of the mass graves, quickly became inspired to join in the fight toward change and reconciliation for Indigenous peoples. That is, however, not the case for all, since the discoveries have also revealed a significant portion of those who deny any negative connotations associated with residential schools.

Each grave site located has concurrently revived the discussion of genocide, and whether Canada is guilty of utilizing residential and day schools in such a manner that resulted in the deaths of over 6,000 Indigenous children. This genocide debate has been triggered a number of times throughout recent Canadian history since the closure of residential schools—each time sounding louder than the last as citizens begin to wake up to the reality of assimilative tactics perpetrated against Indigenous communities for hundreds of years.

The objective of this chapter is to discuss a number of concepts pertaining to the research questions so that a deeper analysis can be made when interpreting the data—keeping in mind the overarching question of: What is next for Canada after the recent discoveries of mass graves found near residential schools across the country, and how is this historic moment being portrayed by popular news discourse? Literature to assist in answering this question surrounds different moments throughout recent history where Canada has had to reckon with the impacts and legacy of residential schools. To answer subquestions one through three, the literature provides a brief overview of residential schools, what happened there, and how they were enforced. For subquestion four, I rely on various scholarship and historical documents from the international community surrounding genocide law.

To further outline this chapter, I begin with an overview of genocide by providing a brief history of the conceptualization and implementation around the “crime of crimes” (Moon, 2011,

p. 49), as well as details about the process of how it came into international law. Canada's position and influence during the drafting stages of genocide will also be noted, being that it is vital in understanding why Canada has only adopted a fraction of the international law. Then genocide will be discussed in the context of colonization, as outlined by scholarship—something which had been originally intended by Raphael Lemkin, the creator of the international law of genocide (Power, 2002; see also Mako, 2012; Monchalin, 2016; Starblanket, 2018).

Thereafter, a brief history of residential and day schools is examined utilizing literature by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars, followed by survivor testimonies. As the closure of these institutions is then documented, various settlements and reparations are discussed, as well as where government and religious entities have fallen short in fulfilling such commitments. Here, the main focus is on the 2015 *Truth and Reconciliation Commission* and how it requested the nation-wide search for mass graves of Indigenous children, and ultimately concluded that the use of residential schools amounted to “cultural genocide.” Finally, ways societies have managed to physically reconcile with their past through memorialization and education is also discussed, leaving an effortless transition to today's reckoning in an attempt to capture this pivotal moment in Canadian history.

Genocide:

The concept of genocide was coined by Raphael Lemkin who searched for a name to describe the mass extermination of at least one million Armenians between 1914 and 1917, as well as the events that took the lives of over six million Jews from 1941 to 1945—including his own family (Power, 2002). He later survived the Holocaust by leaving his family behind, who refused to come, and eventually fled to the United States of America. Lemkin made it his life-long mission to make atrocities committed by the state prosecutable on an international level (Power, 2002). Lemkin spent decades searching for a term that would describe assaults “on *all* aspects of nationhood—physical, biological, political, social, cultural, economic, and religious” (Power, 2002, p. 101). He eventually settled upon a word that combined the Greek word “geno,” meaning “race” or “tribe,” with the Latin derivative “cide” meaning “killing” (Power, 2002, p. 104). Power (2002) further highlights how because of the word’s “lasting association with Hitler’s horrors, it would also send shudders down the spines of those who heard it” (p. 104). Lemkin, however, did *not* intend for genocide to solely apply to the physical extermination of a particular group—which is typically linked with standards set by the Holocaust. Instead, he understood the importance of “preserving” the cultural existence of groups and thus wanted them to be protected on an international level (Power, 2002, p. 60). In

Lemkin's (1944) *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe: Laws of Occupation, Analysis of Government, Proposals for Redress*, he makes it quite clear that:

Genocide does not necessarily mean the immediate destruction of a nation, except when accomplished by mass killings of all members of a nation. It is intended rather to signify a coordinated plan of different actions aiming at the destruction of essential foundations of the life of national groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves. (p. 79)

It was only one year later, in 1945, that the United Nations Security Council was formed in response to World War II with the intention to form "a world organization for the preservation of peace" (Lowe et al., 2008, p. 64). Lemkin knew that the only way for groups to be protected against such destruction was if the international community were to adopt a policy that required states to protect vulnerable civilian populations (Power, 2002, p. 100). Mako (2012) highlights the Draft Declaration's Article 7, which stated:

Indigenous peoples have the collective and individual right not to be subjected to ethnocide and cultural genocide, including prevention of and redress for: (a) any action which has the aim or effect of depriving them of their integrity as distinct peoples, or of their cultural values or ethnic identities; (b) any action which has the aim or effect of dispossessing them of their lands, territories or

resources; (c) any form of population transfer which has the aim or effect of violating or undermining any of their rights; (d) any form of assimilation or integration by other cultures or ways of life imposed on them by legislative, administrative or other measures; (d) any form of propaganda directed against them.

If this *was* included in the Convention, every country with a history of colonialism could potentially be guilty of genocide. As a result, whilst 143 states were in favour of these protections for Indigenous peoples, four states, including Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the United States of America, voted against the Declaration, and demanded several changes be made (Mako, 2012; see also Power, 2002; Starblanket 2018). Canada's position was to also remove the terms "cultural genocide" and the "dispossession of lands, territories or resources," and to solely equate genocide with "mass physical destruction" (Starblanket, 2018, p. 51). In disputing this change, Lemkin argued that the diversity of cultures "was as important as the physical integrity of a nation" to the extent that "if the diversity of cultures were destroyed, it would be as disastrous for civilization as the physical destruction of nations" (Starblanket, 2018, p. 47). Throughout several different stages of drafting, Canada maintained its perspective that the Convention "would be weakened by placing cultural and physical genocide on the same level" (Starblanket, 2018, p. 48), and should thus be avoided. Mako (2012) argues this was



because of their fear of “prosecution for their treatment of minorities” (p. 180), which becomes obvious when considering the fact that countries like Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the United States of America, who voted against the Declaration at this stage, all have colonial histories of assimilation, the displacement of Indigenous peoples from their lands, including banning their culture, and stealing their children. To avoid potential persecution were these acts to be included in the UNGC, these countries simply refused to sign on to the Convention. After rigorous drafting and revision, and any indication of cultural genocide was removed from the Convention, the UN General Assembly (1948) finally agreed upon the following definition of “genocide” in Article II as:

Any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such: (a) killing members of the group; (b) causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; (c) deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; (d) imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; (e) forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

The UNGC’s official Article 2, however, leaves out quite a bit of what had been originally intended by Lemkin. Today, while the international law prevents state perpetrators

from committing mass murder, according to what has been deemed genocide (i.e., by standards set by the Holocaust or other recognized genocides), unless a genocide occurs within a fixed state, by a clear set of perpetrators, states are hesitant to label similar events as “genocide.” Additionally, there is a common hesitation held by developed nations to admit when a genocide occurs not solely because of fear of prosecution, but also because of the requirement to intervene. Outside the requirement for states to protect their own citizens from genocide, states that have adopted and ratified the law are also required to intervene when a genocide is happening elsewhere (United Nations, 2005).

MacDonald (2015) points out that “forcibly transferring children,” which *is* covered under international law, “is *not* considered genocide in the Canadian Criminal Code, which recognizes only two of five elements of the UNGC” (para. 6). The sole reason for this is Canada’s knowledge that adopting such a clause would have increased the likelihood of persecution, since both the government and Catholic church had been, at the time, engaging in the forced removal of Indigenous children, as young as 3 years-old, from their homes for well over a century (MacDonald, 2015).

Recent scholarship has analyzed genocide with a lens closer to what was noted by Lemkin’s *Axis Rule*—attacks that slowly dehumanized a group, hidden by state laws and policies that don’t just attempt to exterminate, but strip away a group’s culture. In particular, genocide has

been looked at in the context of colonization and ongoing colonial processes as a way to better understand crimes and injustices against Indigenous peoples across North America. Patrick Wolfe (2006) refers to genocide as a “structure, not an event,” because it “enables us to appreciate some of the concrete empirical relationships between spatial removal, mass killings and bicultural assimilation” (p. 403). Using both the closure of the frontier in Australia and the U.S.A., as well as the Soviet victory on Nazi Germany’s eastern front, as examples, Wolfe (2006) explains that when there is “no space for removal...mass killings or assimilation become the only eliminatory options available” (p. 403). It is under these specific circumstances that the resort to mass killings “can reflect the proclaimed inassimilability of the victim group...as in the case of Jews in relation to the ‘Aryan’ blood stock” (Wolfe, 2006, p. 403).

Wolfe (2006) was also among the first to acknowledge the difficulty of categorizing settler colonial conduct as genocide because it has both negative *and* positive dimensions through the creation of a new society “at the cost of the dissolution of Indigenous societies” (p. 388). In short, Wolfe (2006) argues that, because what he refers to as the “positive dimension” of colonialism, that is, the creation of a new society, it is difficult to acknowledge as genocidal. However, since the creation of that new society came “at the cost of the dissolution of Indigenous societies” (p. 388), the new society would have *caused* the dissolution of Indigenous peoples, therefore inherently genocidal. In order for colonization to *not* be considered inherently

genocidal, one would have to prove that a society can actually be created *without* the dissolution of communities that are already established in that area.

Kauanui (2016) extends the notion of genocide as a structure, as opposed to an event, calling it an “ongoing process...[rather than] an isolated historical moment of catastrophe” (p. 4). From the beginning of settler colonialism, and throughout several successive governments, there have been countless treaties and policies that have come at the expense of Indigenous communities. This began with the dispossession of land and resources that forced Indigenous communities to resettle on uncultivable lands. Then came the forced infliction of smallpox, scalping bounties offered by various Canadian governors, and a number of other assimilative tactics, such as the implementation of residential schools, to fix the “Indian problem” (Tvochanel, 2019). Each of these policies affecting Indigenous communities were carefully crafted, some more than others, throughout hundreds of years, each with the same goal, and carried out by the same structure—the federal and subsequent governments.

“Structural genocide,” Kauanui (2016) notes, avoids the question of degree and allows an “understanding of the relationships between spatial removal, mass killings, and biocultural assimilation” over time (p. 1). It also assists in understanding that the logic of elimination adopted during settler colonialism was not merely about the domination of land, or eliminating a group of people, but about the “elimination of the native *as native*” (Kauanui, 2016, p. 1). In

other words, this type of colonial genocide “is not perpetrated against just any racial, ethnic, or religious other, but quite specifically against an Indigenous other” (Chalmers, 2016, p. 185).

Wolfe and Kauanui (2016) follow a similar position, stating that structural genocide has occurred, and continues to occur, because of elimination tactics, resource extraction, and numerous attempts at ridding Indigenous peoples from their lands, ultimately causing “environmental devastation with genocidal implications” (Kauanui, 2016, p. 4). This framework, therefore, claims genocide—in the case of Indigenous peoples—is an anticipated, or perhaps natural result of the destruction of those resources that are relied upon for survival. Instead of outright extermination, which is both costly and obvious, slowly starving communities of their food, then later of their culture, can be hidden by policy—that is, once dehumanization tactics have been proved successful.

Each of these frameworks add to the ongoing genocide scholarship by providing further insight into settler colonial assimilative practices and ultimately extend the notion of intent outside the limited definition outlined out by the UNGC. Genocide can be understood not only as the physical element, one of the five outlined by Article II (a through e), but a *mental* element as well—the “*intent* to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group...” (UN General Assembly, 1948, p. 1). The *Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court* (1998), ratified by Canada in 2000, stipulates that:

A person has intent where: (a) In relation to conduct, that person means to engage in the conduct; (b) In relation to a consequence, that person means to cause that consequence or is aware that it will occur in the ordinary course of events. (p. 15-16)

Wakeham (2021) notes that genocidal intent is shown through examples like “the destructive intent of the treatment of Plain Indigenous nations,” as well as the “policy of forcible transfer of children into residential schools” (p. 18). Also proving intent, according to Wakeham (2021), is the *Indian Act*'s banning of Indigenous practices and any right Indigenous peoples may have had to protect themselves. Similar legislation was enacted prior to the Holocaust, wherein Nazi and anti-Jewish legislation began stripping Jewish people of rights and property since the beginning of Hitler's dictatorship in 1933, eight years before the physical extermination of Jewish people began (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2022).

Matthew Lippman shares this understanding of a slow-moving genocide that doesn't always consist of immediate extermination, but is a process, or rather, “a series of coordinated acts designed, and intended, to slowly suffocate a group...typically...directed against a collectivity's culture, institutions, language, religion and physical integrity” (Starblanket, 2018, p. 45). Using this interpretation of genocide as a process, Rosenberg (2012) notes, allows us to explore the social phenomenon of genocide “as a process rather than as the outcome of a

process” (p. 16). Although, as Rosenberg (2012) also acknowledges, this steps outside the typical, rigid definition of genocide that has been used to persecute perpetrators for such a crime (p. 17). Furthermore, it allows genocide scholars to analyze “structures of government, political systems, and relevant socioeconomic, cultural, and historical factors” into different *stages* of genocide (Rosenberg, 2012, p. 18).

Further complicating a general consensus is that, while some scholars look at settler colonialism as an inherently genocidal process (Rosenberg, 2012; see also Chalmers, 2016; Kauanui, 2016; Wolfe, 2006), others view this as “too static” (Wakeham, 2021, p. 2). Wakeham (2021) claims that settler colonialism is better seen as a “dynamic process that can erupt into genocidal moments...such as frontier massacres—when other modes of subjugating Indigenous peoples fail” (Wakeham, 2021, p. 2). This framework therefore claims that genocidal “moments” are merely inevitable results of colonialism, which is also disputed by genocide scholars because it disregards elements such as identifying a clear perpetrator and proof of an “intent to destroy, in whole or in part” (UN General Assembly, 1948, p. 1).

Colonialism occurs throughout successive governments, typically over hundreds of years. Even if solely taking into consideration the use of residential schools as “genocidal instruments” (Coates, 2021, para. 4), the parties involved in the implementation includes hundreds of people—stretching from government officials to Catholic priests and nuns. While

there *has* been both individual and class action cases enacted against a number of perpetrators of sexual and other forms of assault, a full criminal investigation into residential schools and what happened to children has never been conducted, thus making any form of investigation or attempt to locate perpetrators of an alleged genocide incredibly difficult.

Mako (2012) highlights how forceful assimilation has destroyed the culture of Indigenous people by “forcing indigenous communities into the national education system and economy, which drastically altered their traditional ways of life...[and enacted laws] that restricted land entitlements” for Indigenous communities (p. 177-178). Mako (2012) further acknowledges that “if governments of settler societies had employed any preventative measures by incorporating cultural genocide or ethnocide within international customary law, they would have helped to avoid Indigenous ‘loss of traditional social cohesion’” (p. 190). Wakeham (2021) notes that forms of cultural genocide included in the first drafts of the UNGC that were removed, “such as attacks directed against cultural institutions or monuments,” do not alone constitute genocidal acts, but “may prove important in establishing the existence of a genocidal ... intent” (p. 17).

Thus, what this scholarship has done is use colonial policies as evidence of intent, being that the laws weren't exactly put in place to help the Indigenous peoples thrive, but to replace them with a new society. Genocide scholarship will continue to grow, especially in the context of colonization and its application to Indigenous populations throughout countries like Canada. As



the discussion progresses, further framing colonization as inherently genocidal also allows for a deeper examination of residential schools, widespread violence, abuse, torture, malnutrition, disease, and deaths at these church- and state-operated institutions—all of which have, in fact, been evidenced to occur. This is also true within the context of genocide scholarship in relating to Indigenous peoples as the graves of Indigenous children continue to be located across both Canada and the United States of America.

#### Indian Residential School System:

Attempts at assimilating Indigenous communities started almost as soon as colonization began. That is, after more harsh measures of annihilation “didn’t work,” such as scalping bounties offered by the governor of Nova Scotia, and the cleansing of the land through starvation on the prairies (Tvochannel, 2019). While the first known residential school, formerly known as the Mohawk Institute, opened in Canada in 1831, it wasn’t until several decades later that the schools became much more strictly enforced throughout the entire country. Sir John A. MacDonald, Canada’s first prime minister, in his 19th century “defence” of Canada’s residential school system, stated the government’s goal to “take the Indian out of the child” (McCarten, 2021, para. 13).

Shortly prior to this defence, MacDonald had commissioned Nicholas Flood Davin to investigate the industrial schools that were set up across the U.S.A., for Indigenous children—with the goal of finding a solution to what he called “the Indian problem” (Monchalin, 2016, p. 123). Davin’s investigative report ultimately concluded that “not much could be done in terms of ‘civilizing’ adults...[because] they were incapable of learning,” later stating the sole solution was to force children away “from the influence of the wigwam” (Monchalin, 2016, p. 123). Nicholas Davin was to investigate the schools in the U.S.A. specifically because of their “aggressive civilization policies” forcing Indigenous peoples to take up American citizenship and “abandon their tribal affiliations” (Monchalin, 2016, p. 123). By the 1880s, the federal government had adopted an official policy of funding residential schools across Canada (National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, 2022).

In 1920, Duncan Campbell Scott pushed for, and managed to pass, an amendment to the *Indian Act* forcing all Indigenous children ages 5-15 to go to a residential or day school (Eshet, 2015). At the same time, Scott helped pass another amendment to the *Indian Act* “that banned those under its jurisdiction from hiring lawyers (without the DIA’s approval) to represent them in land and rights claims” (Eshet, 2015, para. 1). This prevented Indigenous parents from keeping their children home, and covered up any injustices carried out by those, like the RCMP, who

enforced their removal from their homes—and imprisoned parents who still refused, even when they knew perfectly well what would happen to their children if they were taken away.

In these so-called “schools,” students were stripped from their culture and language under the guise that it was “the devil’s tongue” (Bonneau, 2021, para. 15). Milloy (2017) explains how residential schools were designed to take Indigenous communities from their “savage” state “to that of ‘civilization,’ and thus to make in Canada but one community—a non-Aboriginal one” (Milloy, 2017, p. 3). The explicit intent of these schools was to separate children from their families and ways of life (National Center for Truth and Reconciliation, 2022), using a policy disguised as education (Milloy, 2017, p. 3).

For over 150 years, Indigenous children were forcibly taken from their communities and families, put into residential schools far from their homes, wherein more than 150,000 children attended (National Center for Truth and Reconciliation, 2022, para. 1). Upon arrival, they were stripped and given a number, their traditional hair cut, clothes were thrown out and replaced with uniforms, and they were forbidden to speak their own language, or practice their traditional cultures in any manner (Monchalin, 2016). While a few survivors have spoken positively about their experiences, these accounts are far eclipsed by sad records of physical and sexual maltreatment and disregard of vulnerable youngsters, and their “separation from powerless families and networks” (Regan, 2010, p. 1). Some children, like Glen Anaquod, were promised

they could see their families during the school year, but instead, were locked in cellars for weeks at a time (Wolochatiuk, 2012).

Others, like Lyna Hart, were forced to hold their tongue for hours after speaking their national Indigenous language, and fell ill several times because of the lack of nutritious food (Wolochatiuk, 2012). One night, Lyna followed a sound of young boys crying next to the infirmary, where she found them being molested by a catholic priest (Wolochatiuk, 2012). When the priest caught her spying, he raped her the next day—she was only four years old (Wolochatiuk, 2012). Sadly, this is just one of countless similar accounts suffered by Indigenous children at the hands of Catholic priests and nuns who ran the schools.

On top of the horrendous treatment, nutritious food was also non-existent for those who were forced to attend the schools. Ian Mosby's (2013) academic article "Administering Colonial Science" revealed how "nutritional studies and experiments were performed in Indigenous communities and residential schools in the 1940s and '50s" without informed consent (Tennant, 2021, para. 2). We now know these horrible experiments forced onto Indigenous children "are directly connected to Canada's Food Guide," by starving Indigenous children to see how little they could be given and survive (Tennant, 2021, para. 3).

In 1907, Dr. Peter Henderson Bryce, then Chief Medical Officer for the Department of Indian Affairs conducted a study of the health of students in residential schools in Manitoba,

Saskatchewan and Alberta (First Nations Education Steering Committee, 2015). Known today as the Bryce Report, what he found was startling. The poor conditions of the schools made them the perfect breeding grounds for disease, which is why Bryce had found “extremely high rates of death from tuberculosis in the schools” (First Nations Education Steering Committee, 2015, p. 13). At the time, his report was largely ignored, but Bryce wouldn’t keep quiet and continued to criticize the schools until he was removed from his position (First Nations Education Steering Committee, 2015).

Dr. Bryce was just one of the many individuals who tried to expose residential schools for what they really were. But since most of those people were survivors, and therefore Indigenous, “no one wanted to listen” (Bergen, 2021, para. 8). Nonetheless, with warnings and reports (like that by Dr. Bryce), it becomes clear that the government *ought* to have known the conditions of the schools and the horrors faced by Indigenous children. Since the government ought to have known, and arguably *did* know about the many layers of abuse suffered by children, but did not do anything about it, guilt appears to have grown two-fold—that is, according to the approximately 80,000 survivors that live today (Tennant, 2021).

Finally, on account of the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, and the recognition of Indigenous rights, the last residential school was forced to close in 1996, and the last day school in 1997 (Fabian et al., 2014). Yet, the painful legacy and intergenerational trauma inflicted upon

far too many Indigenous children has prevented them from truly healing—that is, so long as we continue to unveil the truth, which must come to light *before* reconciliation can begin.

There has also been a significant lack of recognition of intergenerational trauma and the impacts of residential schools felt by several generations—which remains a crisis for many Indigenous communities across Canada. Despite the last residential school closing only twenty-four years ago, Bombay et al. (2014) refer to this as historical trauma, which takes the perspective that “the consequences of numerous and sustained attacks against a group may accumulate over generations and interact with proximal stressors to undermine collective well-being” (p. 320). It has been frequently suggested that the absence of “traditional parental role models” among residential school survivors has “impeded the transmission of positive child-rearing practices,” and has even “instilled negative parenting practices” (Bombay et al., 2014, p. 325). Those whose parents or grandparents attended a residential school, compared to those whose parents or grandparents did not attend, reported “greater cumulative childhood abuse, neglect, and indices of household dysfunction (e.g., being raised in a household affected by domestic violence, substance abuse, criminal behavior, and mental illness)” (Bombay et al., 2014, p. 326). With multiple generations suffering from such “household dysfunction,” the link between residential schools and higher incarceration rates (LaForme, 2021), or the overrepresentation of Indigenous children in Canada’s child welfare system (Government of

Canada, 2022), becomes quite clear. Despite only accounting for about 4% of the total Canadian population, Indigenous men represent about 37 per cent of the male prison population, whilst Indigenous women account for an alarming 50 per cent of the total female prison population (Zinger, 2022)—rates which continue to grow each year. Similarly, the latest Canadian census in 2016 revealed that Indigenous children make up 52.2 per cent of those in foster care, despite only making up about 7.7 per cent of the entire population of those ages 0 to 14 (Government of Canada, 2022).

#### Settlements and Reparations:

Since the last Indian Residential School closed in 1996 (Monchalin, 2016, p. 130), and the last day school in 1997 (Fabian et al., 2014, p. 245), there have been efforts made on a federal level to compensate victims of the Indian Residential School system as a direct result of several class action lawsuits. The first reparation was presented in 1998, wherein the federal government provided an apology to victims, as well as \$350 million to “facilitate healing” (Reynolds, 2018, p. 113). Given the many generations of Indigenous peoples who have been affected by the residential school system, matched by the overwhelming number of accounts of physical and sexual abuse that continue to traumatize the lives of victims, what followed were “many hundreds of criminal and civil cases” commenced against the federal

government, “the individuals who abused the children in those schools, and the institutions that operated the schools” (Reynolds, 2018, p. 113).

One of the most renowned cases was *Blackwater v. Plint* (1998) wherein Plint, who was employed by the United Church and worked at several residential schools, was found guilty for sexually assaulting six residential school children by the Supreme Court of British Columbia. The case was soon appealed to the British Columbia Court of Appeal in 2003, where the court found that the United Church was exempted from liability according to the doctrine of charitable immunity (*Blackwater v. Plint*, 2003). Fortunately, the case was appealed once more to the Supreme Court of Canada in 2005, where the court decided that both the church *and* the government were responsible for Plint’s crimes against the children (*Blackwater v. Plint*, 2005). This landmark case set a precedent allowing a multitude of subsequent criminal cases to be filed against the church and government.

Due to the scale of residential school survivors who continued to fight for justice, in 2005, the Assembly of First Nations launched Canada’s largest class-action lawsuit against the federal government, which resulted in a settlement totalling \$3.137 billion (Reynolds, 2018, p. 114). The *Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement* (IRSSA) began on September 19, 2007, and included thousands of residential school children who had survived the schools over the years (Government of Canada, 2021). This led to an initial fund of over \$1.9 billion “and the



creation of the Independent Assessment Process (IAP), designed to provide individualized compensation to survivors" (Assembly of First Nations, 2019). Ultimately, each residential school survivor included in the settlement was awarded with \$10,000 for the first year they had attended a residential school, and \$3,000 for any subsequent year, averaging at about \$26,000 per individual (Starblanket, 2018, p. 26).

However, this was nowhere near enough, as the settlement left out those who were forced to attend day schools, and simultaneously re-traumatized those who *did* attend a residential school in order to prove they were worthy of compensation (Starblanket, 2018). The settlement also left out a number of survivors whose claims were "unverifiable" (Starblanket, 2018, p. 26). Even further, Indigenous peoples continued being denied their true history, no *formal* apologies were made, and no true accountability had transpired. That is, until June 11, 2008, when then Prime Minister Stephen Harper provided an "official formal apology" (Henderson & Wakeham, 2009, p. 2; see also Monchalin, 2016, p. 135). However, this apology was retracted one year later at the 2009 G20 Summit in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, when former Prime Minister Harper seemed to have forgotten the apology, "stating that Canada has 'no history of colonialism' and announcing that we are the envy of the world" (Fabian et al., 2014, p. 246).

Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015):

Still, there was much that needed to come to light regarding the *true* history of Indian Residential Schools, which resulted in the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission's* (hereafter, TRC) release in 2015. This six-volume report collaborated with over 6,500 witnesses and victims (Reynolds, 2018, p. 114), many of whom were forced to relive the horrors they had experienced as children so that, “hopefully, the world would wake up to what has happened to Indigenous peoples, *and* realize the work that must be done before true justice and reconciliation can be achieved” (F. Ens, personal communication, September 28, 2021).

One of the TRC's findings, dedicated to *Missing Children and Unmarked Burials*, revealed alarming estimates of child deaths that occurred in residential schools, identifying 3,200 known and registered deaths (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015, p. 2). Not only did residential school deaths far exceed that of the general child population in Canada, but this portion of the TRC further noted that actual deaths far exceeded what was documented—that is, from what documents were handed over to the *Commission* for investigation, which was a fraction of what is estimated to have been handed over (Alhmidi, 2021). Admitting that tuberculosis was the reported cause of death in 48.7 per cent of registered mortalities (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015, p. 23), the report also shared evidence of a frightening number of cases where children had died while trying to run away from residential schools—

adding to the plethora of evidence regarding instances of maltreatment and neglect faced by Indigenous children. Most importantly, this section of the *Commission* shared witness testimony, and other forms of evidence, about mass graves known to have been hidden on or near residential schools across the country (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015, p. 3). This portion concluded with the importance of establishing searches throughout each residential and day school to not only help find closure for those who lost family members at these church- and state-run institutions, but to also investigate the cause of deaths for an estimated 6,000 children believed to have lost their lives while in attendance (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015; see also Hataley & Leuprecht, 2021, para. 1; Talaga, 2021, para. 8; Stranger, 2021, para. 4).

The TRC (2015) outlines several detailed steps, outside the *Call* to search the grounds of residential schools, to be taken by governments, Catholic officials, and others, to fully reconcile with the horrors caused by the residential school system titled the *Calls to Action*. There are a total of 94 *Calls to Action* aimed at education, child welfare, youth programs, government commitments, media commitments, and more in exactly 11 pages. Âpihtawikosisân (2015) shares their response to the TRC's release:

So often we as Indigenous people are asked, "What is it you people WANT?"

Well, this summary gives concrete answers to that question. We are not asking

that money simply be thrown at us, as is frequently the claim. We are explaining what is wrong, why it happened/happens, and what has to be done in order to create real change. There is no need for further confusion, no need to keep asking what we want. Many of the recommendations echo what Indigenous peoples have been asking for on many levels, for decades and in some cases, centuries. (para. 13)

Despite bringing a mixed set of feelings, the TRC was a remarkable effort that fulfilled the wishes of many survivors, who just wanted their truths to be known, and reparative steps to be clearly outlined. Âpihtawikosisân (2015) was just one of many Indigenous advocates who reacted to the TRC's release, and was optimistic about the report, but felt like words were nowhere near enough (para. 15). Others were disappointed with the TRC for significantly different reasons. For example, Felix Lockhart, chief of the Lutsel K'e Dene First Nation, who *did* attend a residential school, shared his dismay due to unfairness of who was and was not compensated, sharing the story of his wife, who was put into an orphanage by the federal government when she was 11, "where she says she experienced years of abuse and cultural degradation" (Northerners react to Truth and Reconciliation Commission final report, 2015, para. 24), simply because it was not recognized as a residential school. Sandra agreed with her husband's response to the TRC, saying that "it's devastating at many levels to know that the

government made those choices, and then they get to choose which adults will be recognized, and who won't" (Northerners react to Truth and Reconciliation Commission final report, 2015, para. 26).

Beyond reactions to the TRC overall, another piece highlighted by the six-volume report was their finding of "cultural genocide." More accurately, the TRC, using witness testimony and other forms of evidence, concluded that residential schools were a "central element" to Canada's eliminative policies against Indigenous peoples, "which can best be described as 'cultural genocide'" (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015, p. 1). The TRC (2015) then went on to define cultural genocide as "the destruction of those structures and practices that allow the group to continue as a group" (p. 1). Their use of "cultural genocide" created quite a wide response, particularly among Indigenous communities that had long before adopted the term to describe their relationship with the state. Yet, to many of these Indigenous communities, Canada has committed not only a "cultural genocide," but a full-fledged "genocide"—which was eventually claimed by the (2019) *National Inquiry Into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls*.

While the *Inquiry's* main focus was on murdered and missing Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples, it purposefully chose to utilize the genocide claim, referring to not only missing persons, but residential schools, and other colonial policies. Released in 2019, the

inquiry found (and made the case) that “Canada has committed, and continues to commit a genocide against Indigenous peoples” (Reclaiming Power and Place, 2019, p. 50) through murdered and missing women and girls, residential schools, and other assimilative and exterminative measures. The *Inquiry* had reinforced its claim by stating:

Empowered by colonial structures evidenced notably by the *Indian Act*, the Sixties Scoop, residential schools and breaches of human and Indigenous rights, leading directly to the current increased rates of violence, death and suicide in Indigenous peoples. (Reclaiming Power and Place, 2019, p. 50)

This finding gained media coverage for several months, but with the federal election, and the early onset of a pandemic, the discussion was put on the back burner—that is, until late May, 2021, when First Nations leadership announced their finding of 215 unmarked graves located near the former Kamloops Indian Residential School. With both this, and subsequent findings across Canada, discussions around genocide have risen to the surface. This time, there was a stronger case using every unmarked grave found as evidence to human rights violations, and potentially, genocide. Most importantly, these findings help Canadians understand the darker parts of Canadian history and learn about the extent to which the residential school legacy impacts Indigenous communities today.

### Memorialization:

As a country begins to wake up and realize the impacts of colonial structures on Indigenous communities, and learns about the darker truths behind historical characters, colonial monuments are among the first to go—either as a result of protest or petition. Monuments that represent colonialism—like that in Canada and throughout South America, or that represent past ideologies or confederacy like that in the United States of America—are typically called into question whenever an event occurs that forces the public to reckon with their true (and often hidden) history. For example, the 2012 shooting of Trayvon Martin, followed by a number of other “high-profile killings with racial implications,” led to several confederate memorials becoming the “flash points of protests,” often being removed or torn down (Lewis, 2020, p. 44). Other instances fuelled by racist killings in 2017 enabled the tearing down of other confederate figures in Baltimore, New Orleans, and Memphis (Lewis, 2020, p. 44).

*The New York Times* (2020) explains how statues and monuments “that have long honoured racist figures are being boxed up, spray-painted—or beheaded” across the globe as a result of the Black Lives Matter movement’s prominence after the shooting of George Floyd (para. 1). Just in the past few years, the statue of a 17th-century slave trader was dumped into the harbour in England, the statue of a Belgian king who “brutalized Congo” was lit on fire and later removed, a statue in Nashville’s centre of Edward Ward Carmack who endorsed lynching had

been thrown down, protesters in Richmond toppled a statue of Jefferson Davis, depictions of slave traders throughout the UK were either born down or removed by the municipalities, and the statue of King Leopold II in Antwerp was burned (The New York Times, 2020, paras. 3-29).

To some activists, like history professor Karen Cox, the tearing down of such statues and monuments simply means “our society is evolving” into one that is aware of past and current injustices, *and* is ready to incite actual change (Abadi et al., 2020, para. 12). She continued, noting that the action of taking down these types of monuments brings a more “honest evaluation of what these monuments mean and their place on the landscape and the role that they've played throughout history” (Abadi et al., 2020, para. 17).

Another way to reconcile with darker parts of a country's history is to physically reinstate the importance of remembering what happened, through memorialization, to ensure history is not repeated. One of the most renowned locations that has memorialized the extermination of a group of people is that of the Holocaust throughout several countries in Europe. Many of the concentration camps used to carry out the wholesale killing of Jewish people during Nazi rule, today, sit as “memory sites” that are never to be demolished, and always serve as a reminder of the Holocaust and honour the millions of lives lost.

Violi (2012) considers a number of different “memorial museums” that are dedicated to “historic events commemorating mass suffering of some kind,” but has re-categorized memorials



of this type, instead, calling them “trauma sites” (p. 37). They are granted such a term because they are the very places wherein “the traumatic events in question occurred” (Violi, 2012, p. 39), such as the concentration camps throughout parts of Europe. These types of “trauma sites” help visitors—who are located at a very different time than when the genocide had occurred—obtain a direct link with the past that is “activated by the indexicality of the places and objects presented there” because they are literal “traces of the past, [and] imprints on what actually happened there” (Violi, 2012, p. 39). Violi (2012) explains this concept further:

The past they reveal to us is not a reconstruction or a ‘re-evocation’ of what is no more, as is the case in more commonplace museums or memorials, but something much more cogent, something they have directly *witnessed*: these places are themselves *testimonies* of the past. (p. 39)

Even outside the concentration camps, there are several places which memorialize the Holocaust, such as the Yad Vashem in Israel, the Aushwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum in Poland, the Památník Terezín in the Czech Republic, the Montreal Holocaust Memorial Centre in Canada, and 14 other museums and memorials across the world (United Nations, 2022)—all to commemorate, specifically, the Jewish Holocaust. Germany even has yearly memorial ceremonies to commemorate its dark past. In 1996, January 27 was officially declared

Germany's "legal day of remembrance for the victims of National Socialism," where survivors are invited to share their stories or give other speeches (Deutscher Bundestag, 2022).

Meanwhile, in Rwanda, there are also several memorial sites and other ways Rwanda has endeavoured to reconcile and pay tribute to the lives lost in 1994. Across Rwanda, there are 27 memorials, with their main centre located in Rwanda's capital, Kigali (Genocide Archive of Rwanda, 2015). The Kigali Genocide Memorial Center is not only the final resting place for over 250,000 Rwandans, but has several exhibits that both reveal the horrors that occurred, and memorialize the lives taken (Rwanda Genocide Memorial Centers, 2022). One space, for example, is dedicated to photographs and genocide from across the world to show that "this indeed is not a Rwandan problem but a world problem that should never happen again" (Rwanda Genocide Memorial Centers, 2022, para. 3).

Similar calls are now being made across Canada, where several Indigenous communities are asking for the renovation of residential school sites across Canada (Smart, 2021; see also Taylor, 2021; Eneas, 2021; Desmarais, 2021). These Indigenous communities are ultimately asking for the implementation of the TRC's *Call to Action* number 21, which calls upon the government to build "healing sectors" to "address the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual harms caused by residential schools" (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015, p. 3). But there is an even louder call to decolonize colonial monuments, followed by protest that has

expedited the process of tearing down a number of statues of colonial figures across Canada. In the same manner, protest has hastened decisions to change the names of various institutions that are also named after colonial figures. Nonetheless, since this issue is ongoing, there is no telling how far these processes of decolonization will go, nor how many *Calls* will be answered—but preeminently, how many graves of Indigenous children will be found across the country. The desired result of this research is twofold: first to add to the current literature on recent historical moments where Canada has had to reckon with their colonial past; and second, to also add to the current literature regarding the application of a slow-moving genocide to colonial societies. Therefore, the goal of this research is to capture this pivotal moment in Canadian history and document how news media has portrayed how this historical moment of children who never returned from residential schools.

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## Methods

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### Introduction and Objective:

While the previous chapter provided a brief history of the conceptualization of genocide, residential schools, various reparations and attempts at revealing the truth, as well as calls that have been made, but have yet to be answered, the current chapter details strategies adopted to conduct the following research, and describes the rationale behind each of these decisions. This includes the various steps to qualitative research and content analyses, in addition to both standard and specific measures utilized throughout this process.

The foundation of this research is rooted in what is known as an “exploratory” approach, meaning it seeks to investigate an “under researched aspect of social life” (Hesse-Biber, 2017, p. 13). Exploratory studies have three main purposes—to satisfy the researcher’s interest and need for greater understanding, to “clarify concepts, and form hypotheses” (Sue & Ritter, 2007, p. 2). This type of research further assists in “understanding what is happening, to seek new insights, to ask questions, and to assess phenomenon in a new light” (Swaraj, 2019, p. 664). In this current investigation, the goal is to look at news media representations of unmarked graves that have been located across Canada—and more specifically, what has come to light, and what demands

are being made as a result of the discoveries made since late May, 2021. Since these events continue to unfold, and the vast majority of residential school sites have yet to be investigated using ground-penetrating radar, this research is exploratory in how it seeks to investigate an “under researched aspect of social life” (Hesse-Biber, 2017, p. 13).

In this study, news articles can be observed as “cultural artifacts,” similar to the technique highlighted by Fortunati et al. (2014), wherein they claim print *and* online newspapers are “material artefacts that must be seen as mediators of reality as they are culturally shaped” (p. 843). These sources provide a diverse reflection of debates, reports, positions and commitments made on all levels—from the public sphere, to various Indigenous communities, government officials, and religious diocese. Equally important is how these issues are being framed and discussed by news media, because they all add to the larger conversation about colonial history and the treatment of Indigenous peoples. All of this is made publicly available, with databases providing a constant flow of articles to keep readers—or subscribers, for those who use databases requiring a fee—up to date with the latest news.

One of the most prominent forms of content analysis, according to Saraisky (2015), is media analysis because “media are generally acknowledged to play a key role in interpreting and disseminating ideas about the public” (p. 27). News media are recognized in the research literature as playing “an important, perhaps key, role...as both purveyors of information and as

ciphers for competing ideas” (Saraisky, 2015, p. 28). While research suggests differing degrees to which media influences the public, it *is* certain that media can affect “how issues come to be understood as public issues, reflecting broader cultural, historical and institutional affinities” (Saraisky, 2015, p. 28). This allows research to extend beyond baseline understandings of how issues are framed as “public issues,” and reveals deeper nuances for analysis.

### Qualitative Content Analysis:

In this area of scholarship, content analysis has been proven to be useful because of its ability to make deductions by deciphering, coding and deliberately assessing the article text (Pfarrer, 2020). The content analysis approach was first developed as a way to “analyze hymns, newspaper and magazine articles, advertisements and political speeches,” in the early 19th century (Elos, S. & Kyngäs, 2008, pp. 107; as seen in Harwood & Garry, 2003). According to Elos and Kyngäs (2008), this allowed researchers to make “replicable and valid inferences from data to their context, with the purpose of providing knowledge, new insights, a representation of facts and a practical guide to action” (p. 108). The goal, then, is to compile a “condensed and broad description” of the phenomenon, and as a result of the analysis, “concepts or categories describing the phenomenon” will inevitably emerge (Elos & Kyngäs, 2008, p. 108).

A qualitative approach was adopted for this study because a quantitative approach would not be able to achieve the goal of seeking deeper, symbolic meanings from the data. Steering away from a statistical content analysis approach, a qualitative content analysis allows for a more exploratory and detailed approach of this phenomenon and how media interprets these events. In the qualitative content analysis process, "data are categorized using categories that are generated, at least in part, inductively (i.e., derived from the data)," and in most cases, "applied to the data through close reading" (Forman & Damschroder, 2008, p. 40; as seen in Morgan, 1993). This process is further strengthened by keeping research solely dependent on the relative discourse which, in this case, is news media. Thus, accessibility remains a non-issue, since the articles required for analysis are public domain.

For some researchers, qualitative content analysis entails distinguishing categories or words—or "analyzing them statistically if there is sufficient sample size"—to distinguish patterns in the data, "then analyzing those patterns to understand what they mean" (Forman & Damschroder, 2008, p. 40). Typically, however, a qualitative content analysis is characterized more comprehensively by researchers to also include techniques "in which the data are analyzed solely qualitatively, without the use of counting or statistical techniques" (Forman & Damschroder, 2008, p. 40). This research has adopted the latter because the purpose is to go *beyond* the numbers to the more symbolic, deep meanings being portrayed in news discourse.

Another strength inherent to qualitative content analyses is that it goes beyond merely counting words, or “extracting objective content from texts to examine meanings, themes and patterns that may be manifest or latent in a particular text” (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009, p. 1). Instead, it helps researchers understand social reality “in a subjective but scientific manner” (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009, p. 1). Since this type of research is “fundamentally interpretive,” when presenting results, researchers should strive toward a “balance between description and interpretation” (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009, p. 5). Through description, the researcher can ensure background and context—and through interpretation, the researcher is able to represent their own personal *and* theoretical “understanding of the phenomenon under study” (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009, p. 5). This ultimately allows the researcher to understand, interpret, and later present social reality in a “subjective but systematic manner” (Prasad, 2019, p. 7).

While this research doesn't require the same type of ethical protocols that are involved when conducting quantitative research, or when relying on participants to acquire data, there are still ways in which a researcher *can* ensure that ethical practices are being utilized when conducting qualitative research. In an effort to determine how ethics and transparency could be represented in qualitative research, Golafshani (2003) found that researchers can rely on addressing both the reliability and validity of their own study. More specifically, researchers have



conceptualized reliability and validity as “trustworthiness, rigour and quality in the qualitative paradigm” (Golafshani, 2003, p. 604). Trustworthiness, rigour and quality can be addressed in qualitative research if the researcher takes the extra step to ensure their study’s “practices [are] visible, and therefore auditable” (Gunawan, 2015, p. 10). Golafshani (2003) breaks down the concept of validity even further by explaining that it is *not* a “single, fixed or universal concept,” but rather a “contingent construct, inescapably grounded in the processes and intentions of particular research methodologies and projects” (p. 602; as seen in Winter, 2000, p. 1).

With this in mind, I ensured transparency in this research by adopting several measures—beginning with creating an “audit trail,” which entails a “transparent description of the research steps taken from the start of a research project to the development and reporting of findings” (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006, para. 1). From the literature review to the methods portion of this research, each step has been outlined so as to keep this work transparent and repeatable. This is followed by the rationale behind each of those steps to support the reliability and validity of this research. Another way I represented the reliability and validity of this research was through data triangulation, a process defined by Roulston (2021) as, “examining multiple concrete situations of phenomenon in order to check emerging propositions” (para. 4). More specifically, I adopted an approach mentioned by Hesse-Biber (2017), whereby three different

data sources were selected “using the same or different methods” (p. 270), which will be further described in the latter portion of the following section.

### Sampling and Data:

The type of sampling utilized for the following research is purposive—which includes different testing procedures to retrieve data that possesses elements or characteristics of particular interest to this research (Symbaluk, 2014). Since I am well aware that the research topic has had extensive news coverage, there was no concern that there would be a lack of collectible data. My sole concern prior to collecting data was whether it would be feasible, given the timeframe, to reach theoretical saturation—defined as, “when the collection of new data does not shed any further light on the issue under investigation” (Low, 2019, p. 133). This was, however, not the case, since multiple articles had been published on various online news databases, which will be described in detail below.

Using the qualitative content analysis described above, I have turned to three prominent news broadcasting corporations: *The Globe and Mail*; *Canadian Broadcasting Corporation* (hereafter, *CBC News*); and *Aboriginal Peoples Television Network's National News* (hereafter, *APTN National News*). Both *CBC News* and the *Globe and Mail* sit at the top five most popular Canadian News sites—the former being labelled number one, and the latter, number two (All You

Can Read, 2022)—pointing to the popularity of these sources. *CBC News* prides itself as Canada's "most trusted 24-hour news channel," whose "award-winning journalists have brought audiences the biggest stories from across Canada and around the world for over 30 years" (CBC News Network, 2022). The *Globe and Mail*, on the other hand, has long since been deemed "Canada's #1 newspaper" (Watson, 2022; see also Agility PR, 2021; Chepkemai, 2019; 4 International Media & Newspapers, 2022). The *Globe and Mail* is the only online news source, of the chosen three, that requires a subscription to access their article database. The subscription is billed at a rate of \$6.99 per week, which was not an obstacle to the researcher in this case, since they have been subscribing to the *Globe and Mail* since 2019.

The third network, *APTN National News*, was purposely selected because it is an Indigenous network. As mentioned in the literature review, this research seeks to utilize a decolonial approach. Another way to ensure Indigenous representation, since these are Indigenous issues, is by looking to *APTN National News*, because this network "has served Indigenous peoples in Canada and Canadian audiences for over two decades" (*APTN*, 2022). *APTN National News*, a news media corporation that holds the title of being "the first national Indigenous broadcaster in the world" (*APTN*, 2022), shares their mission "to share Our Peoples' journey, celebrate our cultures, inspire our children and honour the wisdom of our Elders" (*APTN*, 2022). Since these are Indigenous issues, it is vital to include Indigenous

perspectives, critiques, stories and testimonies—all of which are offered by utilizing *APTN National News* as one of the three online news broadcasting corporations for this research.

Triangulation, a method used to “increase the credibility and validity of research findings” (Noble & Heale, 2019, p. 67), also resulted naturally by using *three* news media broadcasting corporations in the following study. This strategy works as an extra layer of protection to help “ensure that fundamental biases arising from the use of a single method or a single observer are overcome” (Noble & Heale, 2019, p. 67). Of the three types of triangulation—method triangulation, investigator triangulation and theory triangulation—this study has adopted method triangulation, wherein “multiple methods of data collection are used regarding the same phenomenon” (Carter et al., 2014, p. 545).

It is also important to note that each of the three online news corporations have varying ideological biases, reflected in their publication. While the *Globe and Mail* is known to have endorsed both Liberal and Conservative parties over the years, and is “economically right-wing,” it is regarded as a “socially libertarian paper” (Maliszewski, 2021, para. 8)—although, other sources have claimed the *Globe* is “slightly centre-right bias due to editorial positions” (Media Bias, 2022). *CBC News*, on the other hand, “has long had a liberal bend,” which Brian Lilley (2021) says, “wouldn’t be a problem if they would just admit it” (para. 14). Because of its explicit focus on Indigenous issues, *APTN National News* is also regarded for “left-leaning news

coverage” (Ground News, 2022; see also Media Bias, 2022). With this in mind, it was expected to find a range of perspectives in the data.

Using these three news reporting corporations, I directly relied upon the search engines located on each website ([theglobeandmail.com](https://www.theglobeandmail.com), [cbc.ca/news](https://www.cbc.ca/news), and [aptness.ca](https://www.aptness.ca)), which function as databases that hold every article they have published. The purpose behind relying on the individual websites as opposed to using a database such as the Douglas College Library or LexisNexis Academic is because, for articles published within the past couple of years, each website provides *every* possible relevant article published within that time frame. Whereas, the Douglas College Library database and LexisNexis Academic do not contain those same articles—especially with articles published in 2022.

Both inductive and deductive coding schemes were created while compiling articles from the three different websites, just as Savelsberg and Nyseth Brehm’s (2015) research was conducted. This allows the articles to be looked at as a “collection of statements based on different sources that the journalist combined” (Savelsberg & Nyseth Brehm, 2015, p. 574). An inductive approach refers to developing codes “directly from the data” (Skjott Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019, p. 12). This allows the codes to stay “close to the data,” further mirroring “what is actually in them,” rather than prior ideas or presuppositions held by the researcher, “who is vigorously to remain open-minded” (Skjott Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019, p. 12).

Deductive coding, on the other hand, refers to a top-down approach where the researcher develops codes prior to the data collection period (Azungah, 2018). The codes are then assigned to the qualitative data, and can come from previous research—or in this case, through the literature review (Azungah, 2018). This was conducted throughout the literature review process, wherein a codebook was created with several words or themes relating to the subject matter.

By entering the keywords “residential schools,” I was provided with a collective total of 164 *relevant* articles to obtain data that were released between May 27th, 2021 (the day of the Kamloops 215 discovery) and March 1st, 2022. Each website varied slightly, with between 91 and 147 pages when the keyword “residential schools” was entered. From these results, there were 10 to 15 articles per page. After going through *every* article that appeared on the website, and weeding out irrelevant articles, I was left with the total number of articles that covered anything to do with residential schools. It is also important to note that the reason why there were significantly more *Globe and Mail* and *CBC News* articles than there were *APTN National News* articles is because there was a significant number of the same articles that had been re-published on one (and sometimes two) of the other website(s). Additionally, there are significantly more articles published by both the *Globe and Mail* and *CBC News* on the topic, in contrast to *APTN*. The breakdown of articles goes as follows:

Globe and Mail = 76

APTN National News = 47

CBC News = 79

**Total = 202**

Once all of the articles had been compiled, each article was read through thoroughly, and data was collected. Data consisted of sentences or paragraphs that had either highlighted key pieces of the article, or shared various perspectives relative to the subject matter. This was highlighted by colour, tying the presupposed codes to the inductive codes, resulting in a chart similar to Figure #1. Dealing with each individual article in this manner ensured no important content was missed, since the article was read through twice—once to highlight the data, and a second time to copy the data, shown in the first column of Figure #2. This interaction permitted me to observe new codes that might not have been explicitly stated in the literature. From that point, I had managed to create a total of 11 overarching themes, with various sub-themes, as shown below:

**Figure #1:**

Code #	Codes and Sub-Codes
1	<b>Truth-Telling</b>
1.1	Truth about the deaths of children in residential schools
1.2	Truth telling about the current intergenerational effects of residential schools
1.3	Truth-telling vs. public ignorance/unknowing and denial
1.4	Truth as a part of healing
1.5	Awakening the truth nationally and internationally

Code #	Codes and Sub-Codes
1.6	Relatable truth-telling
1.7	Survivor/witness testimony
1.8	Truth-telling about pain and trauma—but also resilience and courage
1.9	Truth-telling about shame/sadness—this is not the first time
<b>2</b>	<b>Canadian “History”</b>
2.1	Dark “hidden” historic realities
2.2	Retelling history correctly in the education sector
2.3	Educating all Canadians — collective history
2.4	Re-thinking what it means to be “Canadian”
2.5	Historical representations (statues, etc.) and the debate to demolish [add to 9.3/9.4]
2.6	Confronting colonial history and decolonization—together (all those North of Turtle Island)
<b>3</b>	<b>Human rights abuses: Crimes against humanity, atrocities, genocide, etc.</b>
3.1	Human rights abuses/violations
3.2	Crimes against humanity
3.3.1	Genocide
3.3.2	Cultural genocide vs. Genocide
3.3.3	Re-thinking of genocide and its application in the Canadian context
3.3.4	Continued genocide
3.4	Atrocities
<b>4</b>	<b>Investigating</b>
4.1	The need/call for an independent investigator
4.2	Investigating more sites
4.3.1	Criminal investigation [currently, there is a lot about releasing records, but that will be its own category]
4.3.2	Cover-ups by church/state
4.3.3	Releasing records
4.4	Indigenous-owned investigative sovereignty
4.5	Investigative transparency



Code #	Codes and Sub-Codes
4.6	Evidence of unmarked graves (connects to recovery efforts and promises of action)
5	<b>Apologies/Onus/Accountability</b>
5.1	Apologies from the Catholic Church (Pope)
5.2	Apologies from the government
5.3	Government accountability
5.4	Public Accountability
5.5	Religious accountability
5.6	Resistance to onus/accountability
6	<b>Action</b>
6.1	Canadians demanding action/justice
6.1.1	Indigenous Canadians demanding action
6.1.2	Non-Indigenous Canadians demanding action
6.1.3	International community (UN) demanding action
6.1.4	Scholars demanding action
6.2.1	Funding/commitments
6.2.2	Fast-tracking funding/commitments
6.3	Implementing the TRC [turned into theme 10 "Mention of the TRC/MMIWG Inquiry]
6.4	Action as the only solution forward
6.5	Policy commitments
6.6	Communities taking matters into their own hands (demolishing statues, etc.) [add to 9.3/9.4]
6.7	Reconciliation
7	<b>Systemic Patterns</b>
7.1	Using policy to hide past wrongs
7.2	Temporary attention/acknowledgements—or disingenuous
7.3	Systemic discrimination
7.4	History repeating itself: From residential schools to the child welfare system to prison to death
8	<b>Canada/TRC Day</b>

Code #	Codes and Sub-Codes
8.1	Cancel Canada day
8.2	Using Canada Day to reflect on history in a different light
8.3	National Day for Truth and Reconciliation
<b>9</b>	<b>Memory sites, memorials and monuments</b>
9.1	Schools where unmarked graves have been found
9.2	Transforming IRS sites (and other sites) into information centres
9.3.1	Tearing/taking down monuments/religious buildings and IRS sites (relates to anger at churches after finding graves)
9.3.2	Arson as acts of defiance/destruction upon news of graves of children
9.4	Decolonizing colonial monuments/institutions
9.5	Monuments and memorialization—to honour the children
9.6	Other sites providing education for Canadians
<b>10</b>	<b>Mention of the TRC/MMIWG Inquiry</b>
10.1	Mention of the TRC/Calls to Action
10.2	Mention of the National Inquiry into MMIWG
<b>11</b>	<b>Indigenous peoples taking the lead in reconciliation, healing and next steps</b>
11.1	Indigenous peoples taking the lead in reconciliation
11.2	Indigenous peoples taking the lead in healing
11.3	Indigenous peoples taking the lead in next steps

Using Graneheim & Lundman (2004), the “meaning unit” is shown under the first column, which shows the selected data, or rather, “chunk[s] of text.” This is followed by the “descriptive code” in column two, used to highlight key points from the meaning unit in column one (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004, p. 106). The themes shown above were also added to the chart, as shown by Hesse-Biber (2017), wherein the themes shown in Figure #1 were listed under

the columns in Figure #2 titled “Category/Sub-Theme” and “Theme/Analytic Codes” (p. 320).

With these 11 broad themes that, together, work to answer the research questions, I then conducted a fourth reading—this time, solely focusing on the main points compiled from each article (listed as the meaning unit) and from there, extracted quotes (listed as descriptive codes) that were relevant and necessary to answer the research questions. The next step allowed me to obtain an even deeper meaning of the content through interpretation, wherein the data was broken down and listed under Figure #2 titled “Interpretation.” This left me with a completed chart for each article (example below).

**Figure #2: Example of a Coded Chart**

*National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation make deal to hand over residential school documents (Zimonjic & Stefanovich, 2022).*

Meaning Unit (Chunk of text)	Descriptive Code	Interpretation	Category (Sub-theme — analytic codes)	Theme (Analytic codes)
The federal government has struck a deal with the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation that will see it hand over thousands of residential school records, Crown-Indigenous Relations Minister Marc Miller said today. (para. 1)	The federal government has struck a deal with the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation that will see it hand over thousands of residential school records	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• After many, many years of fighting...</li> <li>• And of the government going back and forth saying “we gave all the records already...” or “we shredded them” and now, “oh we still have some...”</li> <li>• That file room needs some <i>serious</i> organizing!</li> </ul>	5.3 Government accountability  6.2.1 Funding/commitments	<b>Apologies/Onus/ Accountability +  Action</b>

Meaning Unit (Chunk of text)	Descriptive Code	Interpretation	Category (Sub-theme — analytic codes)	Theme (Analytic codes)
“Canada has a moral obligation to survivors to pursue the truth and to ensure access to documents, school narratives and records, so important to healing, to closure, to education and preservation,” Miller said today. (para. 3)	“Canada has a moral obligation to survivors to pursue the truth and to ensure access to documents, school narratives and records, so important to healing, to closure, to education and preservation.”	<b>AGREED!</b>  <b>QUOTE AS-IS:</b> “Canada has a moral obligation to survivors to pursue the truth and to ensure access to documents, school narratives and records, so important to healing, to closure, to education and preservation.”	5.3 Government accountability  6.2.1 Funding/commitments  <b>NOTE “CANADA HAS A MORAL OBLIGATION...”:</b> 5.4 Public Accountability  2.6 Confronting colonial history and decolonization— together (all those North of Turtle Island)	<b>Apologies/Onus/ Accountability +</b>  <b>Action +</b>  <b>Canadian “History”</b>
In December, Miller said the government would hand over thousands of documents that the federal government had been criticized for withholding. Today, Miller said the deal will see more than 875,000 documents handed over to the NCRT. (para. 5)	... the deal will see more than 875,000 documents handed over to the NCRT.	• <b>NOTE:</b> <b>875,000 is not a small number...especially since PMJT went from saying all documents have already been handed over. When in reality, close to one million have yet to be disclosed. Ridiculous.</b>	5.3 Government accountability  6.2.1 Funding/commitments	<b>Apologies/Onus/ Accountability +</b>  <b>Action</b>
The government said it did not release the documents earlier because of third-party obligations to Catholic entities, including the Sisters of St. Ann, Sisters of Charity of Providence of Western Canada, Sisters of the Presentation and La Corporation Episcopale Catholique Romaine De Prince Albert. (para. 6)	The government said it did not release the documents earlier because of third-party obligations to Catholic entities...	<b>Government’s excuse for delayed release:</b>  “... it did not release the documents earlier because of third-party obligations to Catholic entities...”  They probably would’ve been better just saying “our file room is way too disorganized”—just saying...	5.3 Government accountability  6.2.1 Funding/commitments	<b>Apologies/Onus/ Accountability +</b>  <b>Action</b>

Using these coding strategies described above (and shown in Figure #2) resulted in the emergent of rich data, consequently permitting me to engage in thematic analysis. Nowell et al. (2017) describe thematic analysis as a method for “identifying, analyzing, organizing, describing, and reporting themes found within a data set” (p. 2). Through its “theoretical freedom,” thematic analysis gives an exceptionally flexible methodology that can be adjusted for the necessities of many examinations, giving a rich and itemized, yet complex record of information (Nowell et al., 2017, p. 2). This strategy proves further value by summarizing key features when dealing with a

large data set, as it “forces the researcher to take a well-structured approach to handling data, helping to produce a clear and organized final report” (Nowell et al., 2017, p. 2).

Finally, I conduct a comparative analysis based on representations in online news media. Comparative analyses work to compare two or more data sets and distinguish their similarities and differences (Pattyn et al., 2017), which further enhances my understanding of how this historic moment of the discoveries of children who never came home from residential schools is being portrayed by Canadian news media. Many of the same calls and demands have been made when Canada has attempted to reckon with the residential school legacy. Simultaneously, however, due to its complex nature, political and social environments have changed so drastically over the years, making a comparative analysis based on representations in these different sources imperative to answer the research questions.

Now that the various methods and approaches adopted for this study have been established, the findings are described and analyzed in a similar manner to that of the literature review. Prior to engaging in this process, however, it is important to establish both reliability and validity within the relative context. Reliability refers to the “stability of responses to multiple coders of data sets” (Whittemore et al., 2001, p. 522), whereas validity refers to the “trustworthiness” of a study, which can be achieved through “credibility, authenticity, transferability, dependability, and confirmability in qualitative research” (Amankwaa, 2016, p.

121). One step taken toward the direction of ensuring validity, as mentioned above, was through the triangulation of three news media broadcasting corporations. On the same token, since there is solely one researcher engaging in the coding process, there is no concern that the data will be coded inconsistently, thus making reliability a non-issue in this study.

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## Findings

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### Introduction:

Ballantyne (2021) admonished that “truth must come before reconciliation,” and on May 27, 2021, on the grounds of the former Kamloops Indian Residential Schools, Canada was “delivered a difficult dose of truth” (para. 1), as the number 215 began to spread through news media like a wildfire. Simultaneously, the characterization of residential schools as “instruments of genocide” (Coates, 2021, para. 4) reignited, with calls for action being echoed across every level—from Indigenous and grassroots communities to governmental and religious sectors (Bresge & Wells, 2021; see also House, 2021; Kilawna, 2021; Bell, 2021; Forester, 2021; Kirkup, 2021; Hager & Kirkup, 2021; MacLean, 2021; Grant, 2021). There was a diverse range of perspectives offered by each news corporation—from *The Globe and Mail* to *APTN National News* and *CBC News*—all of which is explained below. Using the predetermined themes described previously, this section simply lays out what is being shared by the three news media companies, under the following headings: truth-telling about the deaths of children in residential schools; truth-telling about pain and trauma—but also resilience and courage; truth-telling about the current intergenerational effects of residential schools; truth as a part of healing; truth-telling

vs. public ignorance/unknowing and denial; awakening the truth nationally *and* internationally; crimes against humanity; genocide; criminal investigation; apologies; accountability; *and* memory sties, memorials and monuments. Utilizing these themes obtained throughout the data collection process, this section will be discussing findings based on the analysis of the data to simultaneously answer the research questions:

How is this historic moment of the discoveries of children who never came home from residential schools being portrayed by Canadian news media?

- i. How has this moment of reckoning amplified the truth about darker moments of Canadian history?
- ii. What calls for justice are being sought by Indigenous, Inuit and Métis communities who continue to feel the trauma and long-term effects of residential schools?
- iii. How are calls being framed around the roles and responsibilities of governments—federal and provincial—the church, and the rest of the Canadian public?
- iv. With thousands of graves of Indigenous children being unearthed across Canada, how has this reshaped the debates surrounding a genocide against Indigenous peoples?



Truth-telling about the deaths of children in residential schools:

On May 27, 2021, the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc First Nation shared with the world their finding of 215 unmarked graves located on the grounds of the former Kamloops Indian Residential School (Pruden et al., 2021; see also Alhmidi, 2021; Slobodian, 2021; Hager, 2021; Piapot, 2021; House, 2021; Martens, 2021). However, this was merely a confirmation of what Indigenous communities had “already understood from oral history” (Tasker, 2021, para. 3; see also Pruden, 2021; Kirkup, 2021; Pruden et al., 2021; Ridgen, 2021; Ballantyne, 2021; Ridgen, 2021), which quickly became the first focus of articles released within the first few days of the initial late-May findings. There were a great deal of testimonies and remarks made by several Indigenous leaders and residential school survivors from across Canada regarding their knowledge of mass graves being hidden—waiting to be found. According to Kukpi7 (Chief) Rosanne Casimir of the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc Kamloops Indian Band, the fact that there was a shocking number of Indigenous children who never came home from these church- and state-run institutions was “something...we’ve always had to prove” (Pruden, 2021, para. 3). These findings merely “deepen the pain that families, survivors and all Indigenous Peoples and communities are already feeling, and that they reaffirm a truth that they have long known” (Pruden et al., 2021, para. 23).

Ballantyne (2021) referred to the burials as “ancestral graves [that] are not ‘discoveries’, but rather affirmations for what survivors had already known for decades” (para. 3). The federal

government had been warned about unmarked graves “for generations” (Ballantyne, 2021, para. 4; see also Ridgen, 2021, para. 3), but, as stated by Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Grand Chief Garrison Settee, “nobody wanted to listen...[because] nobody really grasped the magnitude of the horror” (Bergen, 2021, para. 8). This tragic, yet “unsurprising” news had been anticipated since the findings of the TRC in 2015 (Eneas & Kliem, 2021, para. 8; see also Mohatarem, 2021, para. 8). Those like the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations Chief Bobby Cameron say that despite such knowledge, “you still get this pit in your stomach and just this heart-sinking feeling” (Eneas & Kliem, 2021, para. 29).

While the first two findings—the first being 215 unmarked graves found on the grounds of former Kamloops Indian Residential School, and the second 751 unmarked graves discovered at the site of the former Marieval Indian Residential School—had extensive coverage, the finding of 182 graves on June 30, 2021 by the Lower Kootenay First Nation (Alhmidi, 2021; see also Martens, 2021), and each of the subsequent findings had only one article published by each news corporation—at most—and often didn’t have any coverage at all. For example, despite having discovered “5,000 children found in unmarked graves” across Canada from late May to late September 2021 (Steele, 2021, para. 16), only 1,624 unmarked graves were accounted for throughout this research period (from May 27, 2021 to March 1, 2022) by all three news corporations (Globe and Mail, CBC News *and* APTN National News) combined. Nonetheless, there remained extensive coverage on subsequent issues from such findings, as well as calls for

action being remarked by those from grassroots and Indigenous communities, those who are experts on this topic, and those who hold political positions.

For example, the finding of graves across the country also came with an outpouring of truth, forcing Canadians to face the “reality of the residential school legacy that Canadians have overlooked for too long” (Pruden et al., 2021, para. 41). House (2021) admonished that for decades, “word and whispers about students who went missing from the school pointed towards [the] burial ground[s]” of residential schools (para. 2). This has led us to this point wherein, according to Stephanie Scott, the executive director of the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, “this horrific truth can no longer be ignored” (Pruden et al., 2021, para. 42). Yet, despite such widely shared evidence, government officials, including Carolyn Bennett, then Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, referred to these truths as “a Canadian ‘mistake’” (Ballantyne, 2021, para. 5). Stewart (2022), however, rejects such a minimization given that the “knowledge of survivors and extensive archival records contain clear information about children dying...while in residency” (para. 5) at the church- and government-run institutions. Stewart (2022) further states that with such testimonial *and* archival evidence, “we do not need ground penetrating radar results to know that children did not come home from this school” (para. 5). Quwezance, residential school survivor and former chief of the Keeseekoose First Nation in eastern Saskatchewan, states that “it was not that they could not hear, but they did not believe our survivors” (Sanders, 2022, para. 6).

Data further revealed that, even without testimonial knowledge of graves on the perimeters of residential schools by survivors, the *TRC* dedicated an entire report entitled *Canada's Residential Schools: Missing Children and Unmarked Burials* in 2015, making knowledge of such graves publicly available *since* the *TRC*'s release (Hataley & Leuprecht, 2021; see also Matthew, 2021; Warick, 2021; Forester, 2021; Grant, 2021; Kirkup, 2021; Paez, 2021). Thus, there was a repeated rhetoric surrounding the "truth" that any one who cared to know about the deaths of children in residential schools could have done so since the *TRC*'s release in 2015—ultimately resulting in a "smack-in-the-face," or a "we told you so" tone directed at society—with statements by political leaders, a number of prominent Indigenous leaders, and residential school survivors sharing that same message (Pruden et al., 2021; see also Koschik, 2021; Pruden, 2021; Bresge & Wells, 2021; Smart, 2021; Kirkup, 2021; Pimentel, 2021; Connors, 2021).

Regardless of past ignorance about graves and warnings from residential school survivors, Sydney Halcrow of the Kapawe'no First Nation points out the "little warriors have waited for us to find them. Now we will ensure they rest in peace" (Germano, 2022, para. 2). One thing that has been made quite clear by the data is that these findings are "just one indication of the continued unfolding that's in our midst" (Pruden, 2021, para. 27; see also Faust & Heffernan, 2021, para. 1), and that "embracing the truth...*has* to happen" (Kirkup, 2021, para. 6) as searches across the country intensify.

Also revealed by the data was that, “embracing the truth” (Kirkup, 2021, para. 6), has been a “stark reminder that the actual number of child deaths at these institutions is a dark unknown” (Barrera, 2021, para. 1). The *TRC* was mentioned several times with specific regard to the estimates of graves: “6,000 Indigenous children remain unaccounted for under the residential school system” (Hataley & Leuprecht, 2021, para. 1; see also Talaga, 2021, para. 8; Stranger, 2021, para. 4); and the *TRC*’s “list of 3,200 children known to have died in Canadian residential schools” (Warick, 2021, para. 7). Press (2021), instead, quoted “ongoing research [which] says at least 4,100 children died in a climate of neglect” (para. 12). But as more discoveries were made across Canada, it quickly became apparent that all of these estimates “may prove conservative” (Hataley & Leuprecht, 2021, para. 1; see also Bergen, 2021; Sanders, 2022). Soon after, articles began stating the number of deaths at residential schools could in fact be much higher, ranging “between 15,000 and 25,000” (Barrera, 2021, para. 16; see also Quenneville, 2021, para. 8). With such numbers circulating throughout news discourse, it became evident that, outside high rates of deaths due to tuberculosis being noted (Faust & Heffernan, 2021, para. 1; see also Martens, 2021, para. 11; Steele, 2021, para. 2; Tang, 2021, para. 2), Chief Lee Kitchemonia of the Keeseekoose First Nation purports that “these are not just instances where a principal or a teacher disciplined. These could potentially be murdered children, hidden” (Sanders, 2022, para. 11).

Tanya Talaga (2021), a writer and member of the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc First Nations, noted that regardless of estimates, “every discovery made will come with its own awful story, driving home what truly occurred in [these] ‘schools’” (para. 7). Sydney Halcrow of the Kapawe’no First Nation took it one step further, revealing the sad reality that “finding one grave is too much, the chief said, and finding many is incomprehensible...[because] each of these children was a beloved part of a family and no one has been held accountable for their deaths” (Germano, 2022, paras. 3-11).

Since May, 2022, one year after the initial findings, with only one quarter of Canada’s residential schools having grave searches underway—and of those searches, less than a quarter of those sites have been searched—there has been a total of 2,207 graves uncovered (*Two Row Times*, 2022, para. 14). With this number accounting for almost 69 per cent of children who died in residential schools, in accordance with the *TRC*’s mention of 3,200 known and registered deaths (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015, p. 2), it has become exceedingly clear that “the math, the evidence, and the documented history are not adding up” (*Two Row Times*, 2022, para. 14). As searches across Canada continue, using these updated numbers and comparing them to the data above, it has become quite obvious that the number of graves found at the end of this decade-long search could very likely be closer to “15,000 and 25,000” (Barrera, 2021, para. 16; see also Quenneville, 2021, para. 8).

Subsequently, this data has revealed the answer to research sub-question one: How has this moment of reckoning amplified the truth about darker moments of Canadian history? As mentioned throughout the data, although it took the discoveries of over two thousand graves, Canadians *have* begun to reckon with the history of residential schools (Marten, 2021, para. 1; see also Alhmidi, 2021, para. 3; Slobodian, 2021, para. 1; Warick, 2021, para. 9; Stewart, 2022; Piapot, 2022). Some Canadians have taken this opportunity to educate themselves about this history, while others have had no choice but to hear or read about it on news media. Regardless of their previous beliefs or knowledge, the discoveries have had extensive news coverage since late-May, 2021. This coverage has also helped Canadians reckon with the intergenerational trauma caused by residential schools and other colonial policies enforced upon Indigenous communities for hundreds of years.

Truth-telling about pain and trauma—but also resilience and courage:

The discoveries have caused a significant “outpour[ing] of grief” (Pruden et al., 2021, para. 5), as well as “legitimate pain and understandable anger” (Dijkema, 2021, para. 1), specifically amongst survivors and subsequent generations. Stories and whispers of children never returning from residential schools, once mass graves began to pop up across Canada, were finally validated. Still, the confirmation of graves has stirred up an array of emotions—from pain and trauma, to shame and anger, and even courage and resilience (Pruden, 2021; see also Gregg,

2021; Connors, 2021; Stewart, 2021; Warick, 2021; More than 160 unmarked graves found on Penelakut Tribe territory in B.C., First Nation says, 2021; Martens, 2021; Bell, 2021; Germano, 2021).

Recurring emotions of pain and trauma were quite prominent throughout the data—particularly amongst articles that had been published during the first few months after the primary late-May findings. Residential school survivor and Kwanlin Dün First Nation (KDFN) councillor Jessie Dawson shared with *APTN National News* how “the hurt many of us have been living for a lifetime was brought back to surface this year” (Connors, 2021, para. 2). For those like Chisasibi Chief Daisy House, “knowledge that the remains of children will be found on grounds in our community...is almost too much to bear” (Bell, 2021, para. 8). This is understandably so, given any person would feel overwhelmed with emotion after finding out a late family, friend, or community member, who was thought to have disappeared years ago, could have died at these “government and church-run” institutions (Shield, 2021, para. 4).

Treaty 8 Grand Chief Arthur Noskey shared his trauma with *CBC News*, saying that “each time potential graves are located... ‘it’s as if this wound cannot heal. It’s reopened over and over. When you think it will get better, it splits open again’” (Germano, 2022, paras. 25-26). This is precisely why there was also quite a prominent call to treat future findings and investigations with “special care” to avoid “re-traumatizing former students and their families” (Bell, 2021, para. 4; see also Martens, 2021; Cardoso, 2021). Cowessess First Nation



Chief Cadmus Delorme has made it clear that Indigenous peoples “are not asking for pity, but we are asking for understanding...we need time to heal and this country must stand by us” (Martens, 2021, para. 26). Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Marc Miller, provided a similar response, stating:

We know that Indigenous communities, families and friends are hurting...for months and years, we have heard atrocious anecdotes that only remind us that calling those ‘schools’ can only be a euphemism. Now is the time to start fulfilling our duty to help First Nations, Inuit and Métis recover the truth. (Cardoso, 2021, para. 3)

Chisasibi Chief Daisy House, on the other hand, said that “this painful history must be exposed and remembered, but people also need to hear about *resilience* and *love*” (Warick, 2021, para. 10). Residential school survivor Rose Miller agreed, stating “for us, the most important is knowing who we are where we came from and why we are so resilient” (House, 2021, para. 21). To show their courage and resiliency, the Penelakut Tribe, in the same letter announcing their finding on July 13, 2021 of more than 160 unmarked graves, Chief Joan Brown wrote, “we are at another point in time where we must face the trauma” caused by the residential school system, and that “each time we do, it is possible to heal another more...courage is not the absence of fear, courage is acting in spite of fear” (More than 160 unmarked graves found on Penelakut Tribe territory in B.C., First Nation says, 2021, paras. 14-15).

Truth-telling about the current intergenerational effects of residential schools:

Another recurring theme was regarding the long-lasting effects and intergenerational trauma caused by the IRS system. Terry Teegee, Regional Chief of the British Columbia Assembly of First Nations, was one of several Indigenous leaders who shared that “residential schools were in the past but it still resonates today in regards to the social issues we are dealing with” (Bresge & Wells, 2021, para. 4). As mentioned in the literature review, these “schools” only closed in 1997—twenty-four years ago—which points to just *how* recent this is for those who attended.

Much of the data pointed to survivors’ experiences and shared how severely mistreated, abused, and violated they were as children to provide a link between residential schools and intergenerational trauma. For instance, Barry Kennedy, a residential school survivor who attended the former Marieval Indian Residential School shared with CBC News that they were “introduced to rape...violent beatings...[and] things that weren’t normal with [their] families” (Eneas & Kliem, 2021, para. 16). Gregg (2021) highlights that even beyond poor housing, poor health care, and undrinkable water, “it is *this* lived experience that is at the root of heartbreaking levels of alcoholism and incarceration, as well as poor graduation rates and shortened life expectancy, in Indigenous communities” (Gregg, 2021, para. 8).

In a joint statement by British Columbia Premier John Horgan and Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation Minister Murray Rankin, the link between past and current violence was

made, stating “Indigenous Peoples have experienced and continue to experience systemic racism, discrimination and intergenerational trauma” (John Horgan marks Indigenous Peoples Day by urging recognition of systemic racism, 2021, para. 3). While this statement may appear as symbolic or minor, 10 years ago, no provincial government leader had admitted to there being systemic discrimination against *any* group. But with thousands of unmarked graves discovered across Canada (Steele, 2021), it seems even provincial government leaders can no longer deny the truth. B.C. Premier Horgan, on a later date, reiterated a similar statement, saying that each grave located, “...is a stark example of the violence...inflicted upon Indigenous peoples and how the consequences of these atrocities continue to this day” (Pruden, 2021, para. 24).

Data that covered topics about the intergenerational effects of residential schools tended to make the claim that these institutions, despite being closed since 1997, have simply shifted to the child welfare system, which is discussed in greater detail later on. But within this sub-section, it is solely important to note *how* the news media has portrayed truth-telling about the intergenerational effects of the residential school system. Because without the relatively recent findings of mass graves of Indigenous children across Canada, news media would *not* have had the opportunity to explain Indigenous perspectives in this manner—which is why much of the data shared how important it is that “every Canadian needs to know about this time and the intergenerational trauma it continues to cause” (Pruden, 2021, para. 21).

Truth as a part of healing:

Another overarching theme revealed by the data regarded the importance of telling the truth (and finding the truth) so that Indigenous peoples—residential school survivors and their communities—can begin to heal (Reynolds, 2021; see also Alhmidi, 2021; Kirkup, 2021; Pruden, 2021; Pruden et al., 2021; Ward, 2021). Leah Gazan, MP for Winnipeg Centre and a member of the Wood Mountain Lakota Nation in Saskatchewan, asserted the importance of truth, saying that there can be “no reconciliation without truth” (Reynolds, 2021, para. 3), which is why Indigenous leaders and communities are seeking the *whole* truth, and will not stop until they “locate every lost child” (Pruden et al., 2021, para. 35).

Despite the truth being accompanied by an understandably “painful process,” Cowessess First Nation Chief Cadmus Delorme says, “having the truth heard and accepted will ultimately bring healing” (Pruden et al., 2021, para. 45). Assembly of First Nations National Chief Perry Bellegarde agreed, saying regardless of how difficult the truth is, and how close to home it is for many Indigenous peoples, “embracing the truth has to happen” (Kirkup, 2021, para. 6). Since the discoveries have revealed why so many Indigenous children never made it home, the truth has also allowed survivors and their families to begin to heal from this dark past. For example, Stephanie Scott, who works for the NCTR and is Anishinaabe from Roseau River First Nation, shares her experience:

I haven't seen this kind of reaction in the last six years, at all. We had to do a lot of outreach, a lot of begging for help, a lot of interactions with governments, provinces, organizations, in order to support us and then all of the sudden, it's flipped, it's changed. (Ward, 2021, para. 8)

While this support is a step ahead, it is a small step in the long, ongoing journey of discovering the full truth. UN human rights office spokeswoman Marta Hurtado reminds the *Globe and Mail* that there are various steps and actions that must take place before true healing can begin, saying that "healing will only be possible once families and Indigenous communities are given access to documents about missing or dead family members and the remains are properly identified" (Alhmidi, 2021, para. 8). Former Crown-Indigenous Relations Minister Ms. Carolyn Bennett agrees, stating, "now *all* Canadian know...we need them as part of the reconciliation, part of the healing, [and] part of the understanding" (Pruden, 2021, para. 32), reminding us that healing requires several key actions *and* support from all Canadians.

#### Truth-telling vs. public ignorance and denial:

Just as the discoveries have brought about truth and healing, they have also revealed that there is a significant portion of society that remains ignorant or deny the truth about what had happened at residential schools. On the same token, demands for action and further investigation have been waved off—and the treatment of Indigenous children at residential and day schools

has been minimized—by too many Canadians. Kukpi7 (Chief) Judy Wilson of the Neskonlith Indian Band, and secretary-treasurer of the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs, shared how both during the implementation of the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement in 2007, the release of the 6-volume TRC report in 2015, and today, with mass graves being located across the country, Indigenous testimonies and calls for action are being “waved off and discounted” (Pruden, 2021, para. 17).

The data presented a reminder that, for many Canadians, “harmful government policies were never taught in school” (Pruden, 2021, para. 32). The late-May (2021) and subsequent findings, however, have pushed the truth to the forefront of news media—and those whose excuse was not being educated on residential school history in their earlier years are also positioned in this reckoning. Some are inspired by the horrifying news of mass graves and grasp the opportunity to educate themselves, while others continue to choose ignorance, as though residential schools were “not that harmful” toward Indigenous communities (Pruden et al., 2021; see also Eneas & Kliem, 2021; Pruden, 2021; Pruden & Kirkup, 2021; Kirkup, 2021; Kilawna, 2021). Eneas and Kliem (2021), writing for *CBC News*, amplified Saskatchewan’s Little Pine First Nation Chief Wayne Semaganis’ voice, which perfectly captures this perspective:

Even today there is still dismissiveness from the general public — that it's a history, it's in the past...No it's not in the past. It's today. It's ongoing...[and] it's frustrating that even now it's Indigenous people who have to prove that they were

hurt...There is still too many of the great majority of Canada that don't understand our grief...They deny us our right to grieve. That is what really hurts. (paras. 18-22)

Cowessess First Nation Chief Cadmus Delorme took this one step further with the *Globe and Mail*, imploring Canadians to “move past ignorance and ‘accidental racism,’ and to stand with Indigenous communities” (Pruden et al., 2021, para. 15). Despite such dismissiveness, ignorance and “accidental racism” (Pruden et al., 2021, para. 15), Indigenous communities and advocates have chosen to continue fighting and inspiring action (Shoush, 2021). Nevertheless, Shoush (2021) explains, “the catastrophe of the residential schools was largely tolerated or ignored by Canadians for so long exactly because the project of devaluing Indigenous life was so successful” (para. 11). Fortunately, Pruden (2021) highlights that, since the truth “of the atrocities that happened at these residential schools” has come to light, there can be no *valid* case of denial in this instance (para. 17)—neither on a national nor international level.

#### Awakening the truth nationally and internationally:

The discoveries of graves throughout Canada have sparked both national and international attention. Prior to May 27, 2021, Canada was thought to be a benevolent country with, according to former Prime Minister Stephen Harper, “no history of colonialism” (Henderson & Wakeham, 2009, para. 1). But with the headline of “hundreds”—and

now, “thousands”—of graves of children found in any given country, widespread attention becomes inevitable (Marten, 2021, para. 1; see also Alhmidi, 2021, para. 3; Slobodian, 2021, para. 1; Warick, 2021, para. 9; Stewart, 2022; Piapot, 2022).

Pruden et al. (2021), writing for the *Globe and Mail*, states that the “revelation of these unmarked gravesites is part of a stark and painful history that is increasingly being recognized and acknowledged around the country” (para. 5). Terry Teegee, Regional Chief of the British Columbia Assembly of First Nations, agreed, saying, “I think what this country is finally realizing and contemplating and thinking about is the lived reality of Indigenous Peoples” (Bresge & Wells, 2021, para. 3). Since this answers the TRC’s (2015) *Calls to Action* number 76—as well as the MMIWG Inquiry’s (2019) *Calls for Justice* number 15.2—regarding national recognition, it is certainly a step in the right direction. Still, much of the data called out how disparaging it is that this level of attention required the bodies of hidden Indigenous children to be found for people to finally believe “that children did not come home from this school...[and] died while in residency” (Stewart, 2022, para. 5). Nonetheless, as the truth continues to unfold, people across the world are waking up to the “atrocities,” and “darker parts” of Canadian history (Pruden et al., 2021, para. 24; see also Stranger, 2021, para. 8; Pruden, 2021, para. 17; Ridgen, 2021, para. 4; Gignac, 2021, para. 2).

Algonquin Elder Claudette Commanda, in welcoming APTN and others to her people’s unceded territory, rightfully pointed out that these discoveries have “woken up not just the



country to the horrors of the residential school system — but the world as well” (Forester, 2021, para. 4). Garry Gottfriedson, whose poems and books explore Indigenous identity, told the *Globe and Mail* that he is overwhelmed with support from “people from all over the world and from Canada expressing their sympathies, expressing their support,” but added that he hoped this support and sympathy “doesn’t die out” (Meissner, 2021, para. 5). Treaty 8 Grand Chief Arthur Noskey agreed, stating the importance of the international community both knowing and acknowledging “that these institutions were *not* schools” (Germano, 2022, para. 27).

William Schabas, a professor at Middlesex University in Britain, told the *Globe and Mail* that “Canada likes to champion itself as a human rights supporter,” but that the discoveries have damaged its reputation, and made “many people look at its activism with an amount of cynicism” (Alhmidi, 2021, para. 2). Alhmidi (2021) continued Schabas’ statement, wherein he claimed that the world stage will look at Canada and say, “this is a country that’s great at condemning human rights violations in the strongest of terms in other countries, and has more trouble with its own situation” (para. 3).

That is precisely what occurred on June 22, 2021, when China called out Canada while it was launching an “international effort at the United Nations to demand that China allow free access to Xinjiang to investigate reported human rights violations” (MacDonald, 2021, para. 1). In response to Canada’s efforts, China “and its allies” called on the United Nations to “investigate crimes against Indigenous people in Canada” (MacDonald, 2021, para. 1; see also

Alhmidi, 2021, paras. 31-32). Jiang Duan, a senior Chinese official, also called out Canada, saying, “we are deeply concerned about the serious human rights violations against the Indigenous people in Canada...[because] historically, Canada robbed the Indigenous people of the land, killed them and eradicated their culture” (MacDonald, 2021, para. 2). This was, however, just one of several international officials that have called out Canada since the late-May discovery in Kamloops, B.C.. Although, given China’s record, it has more to do with public shaming on the global stage to draw attention to their *own* human rights record.

Assembly of First Nations National Chief Perry Bellegarde pointed out that “the detection of remains...has woken up both the country and the world to genocide in Canada...” (Kirkup, 2021, para. 1). In prior situations where Canada has been forced to reckon with its treatment of Indigenous peoples, as highlighted in the literature review, conversations surrounding genocide also occurred. But the major difference between then and now is that there was little to no genocide debate, or questioning whether Canada has committed a genocide or cultural genocide. Instead, it was expressed quite plainly—by Indigenous leaders (Reynolds, 2021; see also Pruden et al., 2021; Coates, 2021; Forester, 2021; Martens, 2021; Forester et al., 2021), religious leaders (Bergen, 2021, para. 1), and government leaders (Forester et al., 2021; see also Guyot, 2021; Forester, 2022) alike—that Canada’s use of residential schools constitutes “genocide” (Shield, 2021 para. 3; see also Bergen, 2021, para. 19; Kirkup, 2021, para. 15;

Alhmidi, 2021, para. 32; Pruden et al., 2021, para. 35; Stranger, 2021, para. 8). This will be discussed further in the following sections.

### Crimes Against Humanity:

Indigenous New Democrat MP Sol Mamakwa was among the first to claim that the death of Indigenous children “is a crime against humanity” (Pruden & Kirkup, 2021, para. 17). B.C. Premier John Horgan took this accusation further, calling the findings “a tragedy of unimaginable proportions” (Pruden, 2021, para. 24). A group of Canadian lawyers agree, and have been fighting for several years to bring justice through formally requesting the International Criminal Court “investigate the Vatican and the Canadian government for crimes against humanity” (Erna, 2021, para. 7). They have yet to be successful in their probe toward the International Criminal Court, but Shoush (2021) writes that justice must continue to be sought, because while “the death of a child is every parent’s worst nightmare...the killing of a child at school is a horror of unimaginable proportions” (para. 1).

Others, like Assembly of Nations National Chief Perry Bellegarde, referred to residential schools as “a human-rights violation of the highest degree that children...were buried and forgotten” (Kirkup, 2021, para. 3). Ryerson University Law professor and Indigenous advocate Pamela Palmater also joined the conversation, calling out Canada for holding itself as a human rights defender, which she states is “just not holding weight anymore” (Alhmidi, 2021, para. 11).

However, professor Schabas of Middlesex University points out that “Canada doesn’t usually lecture other G7 countries about their human rights records, but it does that with countries in the global south,” which is common practice for G7 countries (Alhmidi, 2021, para. 28).

Also remarked by professor Schabas, is that the discovery is most likely “going to discredit Canada’s initiatives when we’re dealing with people in the global south” (Alhmidi, 2021, para. 29), because how can Canada point fingers when they have yet to settle their own issues? Furthermore, the recent recoveries, according to Bruno Gelinas-Faucher, a law professor at the University of Montreal and a PhD candidate in international law at the University of Cambridge, have simply brought to light that “Canada’s treatment of Indigenous people has been one of the biggest stains on its human rights record” (Alhmidi, 2021, para. 30). Grand Chief Jerry Daniels of the Southern Chiefs’ Organization, in a statement to *APTN National News*, admonished:

Canada can no longer hide the hidden truth. We want the world to know that an atrocity was committed in this country and this country was founded on assimilation policies that killed our people and killed our children in residential schools. Canada cannot go into an international committee and try to chastise people for injustices when the injustices committed on our land has not been addressed. (Stranger, 2021, para. 8)

Genocide:

The boldest claim represented by the data were claims that there has been a genocide committed against Indigenous children. The data also revealed that conversations have transitioned from the *TRC*'s (2015) finding of "cultural genocide" (p. 1), mentioned in the literature review, to outright "genocide" (Reynolds, 2021, para. 8; see also Ballantyne, 2021, para. 19; Forester, 2021, para. 7; Bergen, 2021, paras. 5). Frank Chalk, a history professor and co-founder the Montreal Institute for Genocide and Human Rights Studies at Concordia University, was the only scholar who preferred to use the *TRC*'s claim of "cultural genocide," stating:

I sympathize deeply with the impulse to force the government of Canada to admit that genocide was committed against Indigenous peoples, including in the residential schools. But I think it's a distraction from what really needs to be achieved today on behalf of compensation for the descendants of those children who were forced into the residential schools. (Stefanovich, 2021, para. 13)

Nonetheless, this opinion was not popular amongst the data, and the vast majority of news media compiled for this research utilized various perspectives, testimonies, and other forms of evidence to support the claim that residential schools were either "instruments of genocide" (Coates, 2021, para. 4), and "institutions of genocide" (Forester et al., 2021, para. 5; see also Bergen, 2021, para. 20; Kilawna, 2021, para. 20; Steele, 2021, para. 2; Piapot, 2022,

para. 5). Several advocates were not shy to provide powerful, evocative commentary without regard or concern over whether the terminology they utilize causes discomfort among government officials and non-Indigenous people (Coates, 2021, para. 10). Coates (2021) replied that “words of anger from Indigenous peoples are both commonplace and appropriate, with some describing residential schools as instruments of genocide” (Coates, 2021, para. 4). Chief Bobby Cameron of the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations in Saskatchewan was one of countless Indigenous leaders to state how “we are seeing the results of the genocide that Canada committed here...genocide on *our* treaty land” (Martens, 2021, para. 31). Chief Cameron later went on to say that the use of residential schools “*was* genocide, and it should be acknowledged as such by the perpetrators, the church, the government, and the RCMP” (Shield, 2021 para. 3). Leah Gazan, MP for the New Democrat Party of Canada, further called out the RCMP, stating how they were *also* part of the “apprehending of children to take them off to residential detainment centres” (Guyot, 2021, para. 12).

RoseAnne Archibald, who was recently elected in 2021 as Canada’s National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, was another frequently mentioned advocate that agrees residential schools were instruments of “genocide” (Forester et al., 2021, para. 5; see also Talaga, 2021; Hager, 2021). In Forester et al. (2021), Archibald shared with APTN that her first priority as Canada’s National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations is “truth and justice for the victims of residential schools, which she prefers to call ‘former institutions of assimilation of

genocide” (Forester et al., 2021, para. 5). In a joint statement with the Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak, which represents 26 northern First Nations, Southern Chiefs’ Organization Grand Chief Jerry Daniels said that the discoveries have “further reveal this country’s history of committing genocide against First Nations and Indigenous Peoples” (Pruden et al., 2021, para. 36). The statement later goes on to demand Canadians “fully acknowledge this country’s history of sexual, physical, emotional and lethal abuses that our people were subjected to, just for being First Nation” (Pruden et al., 2021, para. 38).

The claim of genocide was also strengthened by focusing on genocidal intent—perhaps the most difficult element to prove. Faust and Heffernan (2021) make the case for genocidal intent, saying, “these deaths should not be dismissed as an unavoidable consequence of a long-standing epidemic, but as the result of deliberate neglect and mistreatment on the part of the architects of the residential-school system” (para. 2). Treaty 8 Grand Chief Arthur Noskey takes intent to the next level, and rightfully points out how residential schools have been painted to be understood as institutions of assimilation, but were truly “institutions established to kill the Indian in the child...we see it was never about erasing who we are but eradicating us all together. It was genocide” (Piapot, 2022, para. 5). NDP leader Jagmeet Singh also made the case for genocidal intent, refusing to equate the institutions to anything less than genocide: “What happened to Indigenous people in this country is genocide...there’s no question about it...there were clearly systems in place designed to kill them,” he remarked (Forester, 2021, para. 9).

While individuals like former Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations Carolyn Bennett have referred to the discoveries as a “Canadian mistake,” experts like Veldon Coburn say, “there is no mistake about it, it was intentional” (Ballantyne, 2021, paras. 5-6). Coburn, who works at the Institute of Indigenous Research and Studies at the University of Ottawa, tells *APTN National News* that:

It’s easier to move to innocence when you say it was a mistake... I take more offence to the idea that the suggestion that it was a mistake, like, somebody slipped on something, and said, *oops*, sorry, we just killed millions of Indigenous people and we destroyed the lives of Indigenous children and societies that are going to follow afterward...falsely framing residential schools as an isolated mistake from a well-intentioned government whitewashes the direct role they had in creating a colonial system designed to assimilate Indigenous Peoples into Canadian society. (Ballantyne, 2021, para. 6)

While Coburn’s words may come as a shock to some, they do in fact match reports and testimonies established by Indigenous communities over generations. Another expert, Brenda Macdougall, chair of Métis Studies at the University of Ottawa, further supports the allegation of genocidal intent by saying to *APTN* that “Canada’s role in residential schools was planned and deliberate, there’s an architecture to it there...If you take children away, you leave communities without hope and without future” (Ballantyne, 2021, para. 8).



Alan Lagimodiere, Manitoba's recently appointed minister for Indigenous reconciliation and northern relations, "who previously suggested residential schools were founded with good intentions," and later apologized, said he spent some time educating himself, and soon came to the conclusion that there was nothing positive about residential schools, and that they were in fact an act of "genocide" (Bergen, 2021, para. 1). He makes the case for genocidal intent by sharing: "Sir John A. [Macdonald] and his plan was to eliminate Indigenous people from Canada. And that, to me, is genocide" (Bergen, 2021, para. 6).

To prove intent, others turned to the estimated numbers of the lives lost whilst residential schools were enforced (Klein, 2021; see also Hataley & Leuprecht, 2021; Talaga, 2021; Stranger, 2021; Quenneville, 2021; Steele, 2021; Barrera, 2021). Tanya Talaga (2021) shared how "this country's genocidal policies led to the deaths of at least 6,000 children at Indian residential schools" (para. 8). She continued, "only now, as thousands of our children wait to be recovered and brought home, is Canada truly beginning to acknowledge the scope of what has happened here" (Talaga, 2021, para. 8). Others, like Justice Murray Sinclair, former TRC chair, relied on a more recent estimate quoted from relatively recent scholarship to prove intent: "As many as 25,000 children may have died at the schools" (Quenneville, 2021, para. 8; see also Barrera, 2021, para. 16). Klein (2021) reminds us that "there's danger in these numbers...ten thousand...six million...behind every digit, there are family members without pictures in their family albums...sometimes without even names for the relatives they've never met" (para. 9). Klein

(2021) purposely utilizes the number “six million” to represent, and relate to the Holocaust, wherein both were intentional attacks on a specific group of people (para. 9).

Klein was among many authors who related the treatment of Indigenous children in residential schools to the 1939-1941 Holocaust (French, 2021; see also Eneas & Kliem, 2021; Kirkup, 2021; Kilawna, 2021; Martens, 2021; House, 2021). Outside numbers, authors related the issue in question to the Holocaust when referring to residential schools as “concentration camps” (Klein, 2021, para. 8; see also Martens, 2021, para. 34; House, 2021, para. 8).

Alternatively, Justice Murray Sinclair shares his wish that all documents relating to the lives and deaths of residential school children are kept and maintained forever, “just like we maintain the documents of what happened to the victims of the Holocaust” (para. 13). Kirkup (2021) also compared residential schools to the Holocaust by relating the dehumanization of Jewish people in the lead up to the Holocaust to the dehumanization of Indigenous peoples as “dirty savages” to allow the process of assimilation to begin (para. 17). Since the “devaluing [of] Indigenous life was so successful” (Shoush, 2021, para. 11), Canadians have since “been groomed to think of these deaths as natural” (Hataley & Leuprecht, 2021, para. 1).

To further support the claim of genocide, others steered away from genocidal intent, and instead, turned to different forms of evidence (Talaga, 2021; see also Reynolds, 2021; Taylor, 2021; Doucette, 2021; Steele, 2021; Goodyear, 2022). Tanya Talaga (2021) was among the first to admit that “the evidence presented to date is startling and unequivocal” (para. 2). Talaga

(2021) also quoted Dr. Sarah Beaulieu, the University of Fraser Valley archeologist who came forward to present her ground penetrating radar analysis that woke up the world, and noted how graves were “0.7 or 0.8 metres [deep]...supporting the claims of survivors that children had to dig the holes...[they were] little graves dug by little people” (Talaga, 2021, paras. 3-10).

Other forms of evidence pointed to warnings by Dr. Peter Bryce, the chief health inspector for the Department of Indian Affairs in the early 20th century, who attempted to “alert the nation to the atrocious conditions in residential schools — where abuse, malnutrition and especially tuberculosis were taking a deadly toll on the children forced to attend the institutions” (Steele, 2021, para. 2; see also Faust & Heffernan, 2021). Steele (2021) continues Bryce’s story, telling readers that his attempts were “largely ignored, and he was branded a troublemaker and pushed into retirement from the public service,” and later, published a pamphlet about the residential schools titled *The Story of a National Crime*, then died one year later (para. 3). Today, Dr. Bryce’s work remains useful in proving the poor state of these institutions, largely used as evidence in genocide scholarship.

Evidence of genocide was also supported through the use of testimonial evidence from survivors who experienced the horrors themselves, and their families who felt the blow and heard the stories of what happened to their loved ones. Robert Doucette (2021), whose parents *and* grandparents were forced to attend residential schools, shared how his family members had either been victims of, or witnessed, instances of children being “physically and sexually

assaulted, mentally abused and murdered, either through neglect or outright murder” (para. 5).

Cowessess Elder Florence Sparvier, a survivor of residential school, described how “parents would be jailed if they didn’t give up their children to the school, where students endured mistreatment, had their cultural practices and beliefs denigrated, and had lessons ‘pounded into us’” (Pruden et al., 2021, para. 27). Rose Miller, another survivor, shared with *APTN National News* her experience at the schools, recalling “kids crying in dorms all the time,” and a laundry room where an incinerator was off limits to students, “and smelled horrible” (House, 2021, paras. 12-16). Archaeologist Whitney Spearing shared with *CBC News* her research findings and expertise:

There definitely have been accounts of children going missing, sometimes in the night; definitely children having to dig graves for potentially other children who are buried onsite; and that definitely there have been cases where there's been child pregnancies at the mission and an attempt to cover up those pregnancies.

The infants were sometimes removed from the care of the mothers through transferring them to unwed mothers' homes. And, in some cases, they were put into the incinerator. (Goodyear, 2022, para. 8)

With countless accounts of similar stories, and what Indigenous author Robert Doucette (2021) says is “just the tip of the iceberg,” people are beginning to wake up to “an understanding that it *was* genocide” (para. 4). Nonetheless, as discussed by the literature review, even when

elements of genocide may exist, and when the majority of the public agrees with this claim, the chances of Canada being found guilty of genocide through their use and abuse of the residential school system remain slim. Additionally, even if further discoveries reveal estimates closer to “15,000 and 20,000” (Barrera, 2021, para. 16; see also Quenneville, 2021, para. 8), while this news may impassion Canadians to acknowledge the injustices and intergenerational trauma faced by Indigenous peoples, whether or not Canada is found guilty of genocide will most likely remain unproven—based on legal principles established by the *United Nations Genocide Convention* and Canadian laws on genocide. One thing that *is* certain is that the late-May, 2021 and subsequent findings have re-shaped debates surrounding a genocide against Indigenous peoples.

More specifically, the debate has shifted from the *TRC's* (2015) mention of “cultural genocide” (p. 1) to “genocide”—represented throughout the data described above (Reynolds, 2021, para. 8; see also Ballantyne, 2021, para. 19; Forester, 2021, para. 7; Bergen, 2021, paras. 5). Additionally, it has become less of a debate amongst the public of whether a genocide has been committed—with a significant portion of the data simply agreeing with the genocide assertion, as opposed to debating the legitimacy of the claim. Nonetheless, whether Canada or the international community chooses to officially recognize the use of residential schools as genocide depends on whether a criminal investigation is commenced to determine the *legal* legitimacy of the claim.

### Criminal Investigation:

Calls for a criminal investigation have been made on account of the latest discoveries of graves located across Canada since late-May 2021 (Matthew, 2021; see also Doucette, 2021; Kirkup, 2021; Tang, 2021; Butt, 2021; Talaga, 2021; Martens, 2021; Barrera, 2021). Justice Murray Sinclair told. The *Globe and Mail* that the purpose of an investigation “should be to determine whether crimes occurred, not only in terms of the cause of death but whether crimes occurred, in terms of cover-ups, too” (Kirkup, 2021, para. 3). Assembly of First Nations National Chief Perry Bellegarde extended this call with the *Globe and Mail*, saying, “it is incumbent upon governments to ensure there are proper human and financial resources for residential school investigations and to ensure calls to action from the TRC are fully implemented” (Kirkup, 2021, para. 14).

Mumilaq Qaqqaq, Nunavut’s previous Member of Parliament, specifically called for “perpetrators of abuse at institutions such as residential schools and tuberculosis sanatoria need to be brought to justice” (Tang, 2021, para. 2). Qaqqaq later pointed to the example of Johannes Rivoire, “an Oblate priest accused of sexual abuse against Inuit children in several Nunavut communities” (Tang, 2021, para. 3). Several individuals have been lobbying for Rivoire to face justice for well over ten years, with no success. Martens (2021) explains why:

Rivoire, who is now believed to be in his 90s and living in France...The RCMP in Nunavut laid three sex-related charges against Rivoire... But he had already returned to France. [Despite] Rivoire being wanted on international arrest warrants...Canada stayed the charges against him in 2017, citing lack of cooperation from France (paras. 2-12).

Despite extradition processes making things incredibly difficult, Martens (2021) doesn't hold back, saying that there's no reason why cases like Rivoire's cannot be pursued, since they tried "Nazis for what happened to the Jews after the Second World War" (para. 14). Fortunately, with renewed calls for action, the Government of Canada has stated that it "may" be looking at Rivoire's case, and others similar, again (Martens, 2021, para. 10).

There have been cases of the RCMP declaring sites for investigative purposes on a municipal level, such as on the former Kamloops Indian Residential School (Press, 2021, para. 1), and the former Mohawk Institute Residential School (Forester, 2021, para. 1). The Native Women's Association of Canada, on the other hand, has chosen to focus on requesting the Attorney-General "to ask that all former residential-school sites immediately be declared crime scenes, and that investigations be conducted to determine how each child buried at the sites died and who is responsible for their deaths" (Pruden et al., 2021, para. 39). But such a move has been highly criticized by Indigenous leaders like Justice Murray Sinclair, former TRC chair, who shared with *CBC News* that the RCMP should be nowhere near the sites, "accusing the RCMP of

‘intimidating’ people involved with the search” (Press, 2021, para. 5). Sinclair is among many individuals advocating for an independent investigation (Press, 2021; see also Alhmidi, 2021; Kirkup, 2021; Tang, 2021; Butt, 2021; Talaga, 2021; Cardoso, 2021).

This hesitation to trust the RCMP with a criminal investigation over what happened to Indigenous children who never returned home is not exactly baseless. Historically, as mentioned in the literature, the RCMP were involved in the forced removal of Indigenous children from their homes, alongside other ways in which the police have enforced discriminatory policies, ultimately dispossessing Indigenous lands and resources. Since these historical injustices paint the RCMP as an oppressive colonial force throughout its successive treatment of Indigenous peoples, there is little doubt why there is a lack of trust in the RCMP—proving that the decision to involve an independent investigator would only be fair. With calls for an independent interlocutor growing louder as more graves were discovered from province to territory, the federal government of Canada finally agreed, marking the criteria of such a role as follows:

Beyond acting as a go-between... the special interlocutor would be required to “make recommendations relating to federal laws, regulations, policies and practices surrounding unmarked burials at former residential schools. Those recommendations would lead to the creation of a “new federal legal framework that respects the dignity of burial sites of Indigenous peoples, in line with wishes and traditions of communities and families. (Cardoso, 2021, paras. 7-8)



Regardless of details about potential next steps, or how to proceed with an investigation, one thing is certain: Indigenous leadership *must* guide any further steps taken (Kirkup, 2021; see also Talaga, 2021; Alhmidi, 2021; Gregg, 2021; Hataley & Leuprecht, 2021; Gagnon, 2021; Bergen, 2021). Given the tenuous relationship between the federal government and Indigenous peoples, on top of “the government’s half-hearted past efforts on missing Indigenous persons,” extra steps must be taken to ensure a decolonial process is adopted (Hataley & Leuprecht, 2021, para. 5). Hataley and Leuprecht (2021) use the example of the federal government avoiding “colonizing the genetic identifiers of Indigenous individuals,” simply because Indigenous peoples “should be afforded the opportunity to take control of this information” (paras. 5-7). This type of control would enable Indigenous communities to “assert their sovereignty and retain control over their own bodies and communities” (Hataley & Leuprecht, 2021, para. 10). Gregg (2021), writing for the *Globe and Mail*, remarked:

When Indigenous people finally feel that they are partners, with a seat at the table that makes decisions about land that was once theirs, then – and only then – can reconciliation for past wrongs start to occur. (Gregg, 2021, para. 12)

Yet, in order for *any* valid investigation to occur, calls to release all relevant records must be answered. Shoush (2021) accurately exclaimed to the *Globe and Mail* that “it is *not* acceptable that documents [are being] withheld under the guise of ‘historical inaccuracies’” (para. 14). Justice Murray Sinclair was once again quoted, given his experience as

a former chair for the TRC, wherein he stated that during the TRC's investigation, their requests for records by the government often resulted in assertions that "the records no longer existed," but that they were not granted the authority to subpoena the government's archives, adding any future investigative body would require this ability (Kirkup, 2021, para. 16). Despite Prime Minister Justin Trudeau wrongfully stating all documents had already been handed over on October 19, 2021 (APTN National News, 2021, para. 11), in early 2022, the federal government committed to release "more than 875,000 documents" to the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (Zimonjic & Stefanovich, 2022, para. 5).

Since the Catholic Church had run residential schools until the government takeover in the early 1970s, calls have also echoed for the church to release all relevant records they may still be holding on to. The Sisters of St. Ann and Royal BC Museum were among the first to release records under their control as a result of mass graves being discovered across Canada (Order of Catholic nuns to enhance access to residential school records, 2021). Soon after, Ontario followed suit (Grant & White, 2021). Still, an agreement has yet been made by the Vatican to release records they may have in their archives. Grand Chief Garrison Settee of Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak shared with *CBC News* that "if churches won't willingly give up the records they have on residential schools...the government should step in..." (Bergen, 2021, para. 10). However optimistic this suggestion may be, while the federal government can

ask churches across Canada to release records, they have zero jurisdiction when it comes to the Vatican—an incredibly powerful institution far outside the scope of an investigator's ability.

There are also demands to investigate both government and church officials for alleged cover-ups (Kirkup, 2021; see also Pruden et al., 2021; Butt, 2021; Martens, 2021; Sanders, 2022; Bergen, 2021). For instance, during the handover of the residential schools from the Catholic Church to the government, there are several accounts of the deliberate hiding, moving and destroying of graves that held Indigenous children on the grounds of residential schools (Butt, 2021, para. 2; see also Pruden et al., 2021, para. 7; Martens, 2021, para. 16; Sanders, 2022, para. 6). Neil Sasakamoose, executive director of the Battlefords Agency Tribal Chiefs, shared with *APTN National News* that “testimony from elders and residents in the area is that children’s graves were moved-possibly twice” (Sanders, 2022, para. 6). Chief Cadmus Delorme of the Cowessess First Nation further shared their knowledge of deliberate removal of graves, saying that “in 1960, there may have been marks on these graves... The Catholic Church representatives removed these headstones, and today they are unmarked graves” (Pruden et al., 2021, para. 7). Chief Delorme continues:

It’s not clear why any grave markers that once existed were removed. But the chief noted that removing headstones is a crime in Canada, and added that we are treating this like a crime scene at the moment. (Pruden et al., 2021, para. 8)

Apologies:

Despite Stephen Harper's 2008 formal apology, which was discounted after his statement regarding Canada having "no history of colonialism" (Henderson & Wakeham, 2009, p. 1), there have been apologies on behalf of government officials over the years. But what had *not* occurred until after the data collection portion of this research, was an official apology from the Catholic Church—and specifically an apology from the Pope, otherwise known as a "Papal apology."

Garry Gottfriedson, a member of the Secwepemc First Nation whose poems and books explore Indigenous identity, told the *Globe and Mail* that one of the positive results of the discoveries is that it may finally "force governments and the Catholic Church to address the past and face the future" (Meissner, 2021, para. 2). A call for a Papal apology was made since the TRC's release in 2015, specifically in Calls to Action number 58, wherein the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015):

[Calls] upon the Pope to issue an apology to Survivors, their families, and communities for the Roman Catholic Church's role in the spiritual, cultural, emotional, physical, and sexual abuse of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children in Catholic-run residential schools. We call for that apology to be similar to the 2010 apology issued to Irish victims of abuse and to occur within one year of the issuing of this Report and to be delivered by the Pope in Canada.

Cardinal Czerny from the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCCB) mentions that, while there has been an apology directed at all Indigenous peoples “in the Americas” when the Pope visited Bolivia in 2015 (Reguly, 2021, para. 11), there was still a demand shared by many articles for *TRC's Call to Action* number 58 to be answered (Wolf, 2021; see also Hager & Kirkup, 2021; Grant, 2021; Wolf, 2021; Needham, 2021; Dickson, 2021; Shoush, 2021; Warick, 2021; Moore, 2022). Chief Kukpi7 Rosanne Casimir of the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc First Nation told the *Globe and Mail* that her “community recently met with the local Catholic bishop, but still wants a public apology from the Vatican” (Hager & Kirkup, 2021, para. 2). Chief Casimir continued, stating her community is demanding an apology, “not just for us, but for the world” (Hager & Kirkup, 2021, para. 3).

Grant (2021), a writer for the *Globe and Mail*, explains to readers why a Papal apology is still being requested, noting that the Catholic Church “ran about 60 per cent of the schools” (para. 14). He also highlights that there have been several apologies, both from the “local level...[and from] the heads of some religious orders,” but shares Chief Casimir’s stance that the Pope has failed to provide a “formal, public apology” (Grant, 2021, para. 14). There has since been a meeting between the Pope and “a delegation of Indigenous leaders...set to meet with the Pope” (Grant, 2021, para. 16). Donald J. Bolen, the eighth Archbishop of the Regina Archdiocese, told *APTN National News* that an apology would have happened sooner “had the world not come to a grinding halt because of the COVID-19 pandemic” (Wolf, 2021, para. 1)

While this may hold some truth, the fact is that COVID-19 began in 2019. Meanwhile, an apology from the Pope has been formally requested by the TRC since 2015, and from Indigenous peoples since the schools closed in 1997.

Apart from an official apology, Pope Francis did release a statement sharing “his pain over the discovery...and urged Canadian political and religious leaders to shed light on the tragedy, but stopped short of an apology” (Reguly, 2021, para. 1). White (2021) shared that “Vatican officials have long hinted that the Pope was willing to apologize on Canadian soil for the Catholic church’s role...but protocol demanded that the CCCB formally invite him” (para. 8). Another important factor highlighted by Warick (2021), a writer for *CBC News*, is that the cost of a Papal visit to Canada could be anywhere between “\$50 million to \$100 million” (para. 1). However, Warick (2021) also mentioned the Catholic Church still owes residential school survivors a bill that is “estimated at slightly more than \$60 million” (para. 2), stating the demand shared by many Indigenous peoples is for the bill to be paid “before one dollar is committed to bringing Pope Francis to Canada for an expected apology” (Warick, 2021, para. 2).

Despite one “Vatican expert” stating such a request being fulfilled by the Vatican is “highly unlikely,” it is not from a lack of financial resources, since the Vatican is known to have “very deep pockets” (Warick, 2021, para. 7). On the same accord, the Catholic Church in Canada “had \$4.1-billion in combined net assets... and that Catholic charities had brought in \$886-million in donations that year” (Cardoso, 2021, para. 2). The Catholic Church has yet to fulfill

their 2006 “promise to raise \$25 million in compensation for pain, suffering and abuse” for residential school survivors, despite being able to “successfully raise tens of millions of dollars for brand-new churches” (Renewed push for Catholic Church to compensate residential school survivors, 2021, para. 1).

Instead, Cardoso (2021) shared with the *Globe and Mail* how, out of the \$25 million the Catholic Church agreed to provide to survivors, solely “\$3.7 million” has been committed to date (Cardoso, 2021, para. 3). In response to these unfulfilled commitments, “survivors from Saskatchewan call it a betrayal, and proof that the Catholic Church does not take its responsibilities to Indigenous people seriously” (Renewed push for Catholic Church to compensate residential school survivors, 2021, para. 1).

There have, however, been positive steps taken by Canadian churches to date. Alvarez (2021) shares how the Roman Catholic Diocese of Calgary announced plans to “provide financial support for residential school survivors...[which] expresses the commitment of the Diocese to the ongoing work of justice and healing in our country with the Indigenous Peoples and their communities” (Alvarez, 2021, paras. 1-2). For those like Linda ManyGuns, the associate vice-president of Indigenization and Decolonization at Mount Royal University, they say this is simply “not enough,” stating they should go further in “helping this process instead of just [giving] a bit of money and an apology...pay for our culture to get back, pay for our languages to get returned” (Alvarez, 2021, paras. 7-8). The same message was shared, directed at

the Pope throughout several articles that admonished how “apologies aren’t an endpoint—they are a starting point” (Ghania & Warick, 2021, para. 13).

### Accountability:

#### *Government Accountability*

The government has also provided several apologies since the formal apology by Harper in 2008. But just as the Catholic Church is being asked to do more than apologize, the same holds true for the Government of Canada—by ten-fold, since it was the government that implemented and enforced residential schools for well over 100 years. B.C. Premier John Horgan shared his position that “it’s time Canada admitted accountability for past wrongs” (John Horgan marks Indigenous Peoples Day by urging recognition of systemic racism, 2021, para. 4), because despite apologies, what is being sought is complete accountability—for promises to be fulfilled and action to commence (Kirkup, 2021; see also Pruden, 2021; Pruden et al., 2021; Trudeau to visit Tk’emlups te Secwepemc Nation in Kamloops, B.C., 2021; Kilawna, 2021; Dickson, 2021; Forester, 2022).

Since the late-May discovery, political pressure on both federal and provincial governments has significantly increased (Kirkup, 2021). Ashley Michel, of the Tk’emlúps te Secwépemc First Nation, had the opportunity to speak with Prime Minister Trudeau when he



came to visit her nation several months after being asked (Kilawna, 2021). Kilawna (2021), writing for *APTN National News*, quoted her:

Where our people are safe and MMIWG2S is no more, where our children have clean drinking water, where they don't have to defend their sacred traditional land, where our children are not removed from their families and communities and placed in care, where Indigenous mothers can have their babies peacefully without worrying if their newborn child will be taken away, where our children can successfully walk in two worlds and practice our cultural tradition, language and have healing after everything our babies deserve to be found identified and brought home. Our children deserve a good future and our families deserve peace...So how do we get there? We need more than just words and broken promises, Mr. Trudeau. We need action...Use your power and privilege for good. Make this visit count. (paras. 18-20)

Bailey (2021), was among the first to cover the Federal Government of Canada's commitment that "Trudeau offered a federal response of \$2.2-billion in spending starting this year as part of the \$18-billion in funding announced in the budget to improve the lives of Indigenous people" originally announced in 2019 (para. 5). Thus, while previous commitments were expedited, there were essentially no *new* financial promises made. However, the federal government did agree to make \$27-million available "to help communities locate and identify

those lost” (Bailey, 2021, para. 8; see also Kirkup, 2021; Forester, 2021; Gignac, 2021; Press, 2021; Peterson, 2021; Bennett, 2021; Alam, 2021).

Only months later, in August 2021, the federal government realized that the \$27-million would be nowhere near enough for further searches. They decided to include “\$83-million for the search of unmarked graves and memorializing victims,” as well as “\$107.3-million for mental-health and community supports, and \$100.1-million to help “manage” residential school buildings” (Cardoso, 2021, para. 2). However necessary these commitments were, it is important to acknowledge that these financial resources were simply taken from the budget promised in 2019 (Bailey, 2021). The federal government also committed to creating an “independent interlocutor” to help with further searches (Cardoso, 2021, paras. 1-4), and a national advisory committee “made up of experts in archeology, forensics, pathology and mental health — to advise Indigenous communities and the government about finding and identifying unmarked graves” (Press, 2021, para. 5).

Eventually, provinces and territories across Canada began following suit and by providing financial assistance to help further searches for unmarked graves (Peterson, 2021; see also Bennett, 2021; Alam, 2021; Residential school survivor says funding to investigate sites a good start, but more will be needed, 2021). Saskatchewan was amongst the first to contribute “\$2-million” to the cause (Peterson, 2021, para. 1), and Alberta followed, contributing “8-million” (Bennett, 2021, para. 1) for further searches. Soon after, Manitoba joined the action,

committing "\$2.5-million"(Bennett, 2021, para. 14), and Ontario pledged "\$10-million" for the cause (Residential school survivor says funding to investigate sites a good start, but more will be needed, 2021, para. 2). About one month later, British Columbia followed suite, saying each community searching for graves in their given area "may receive up to \$475,000 each" as part of their total commitment of \$12-million total (Alam, 2021, paras. 1-3).

As was the case with commitments made by religious entities, Indigenous communities and other advocates responded to federal and provincial government commitments with cynicism (Talaga, 2021; see also Chowdhury, 2021; Kirkup, 2021; Bennett, 2021; Peterson, 2021; Alam, 2021). Other than pointing out that the financial commitments being made were "not enough" or "inadequate" (Kirkup, 2021, para. 5), Chowdhury (2021) shares how professional estimates say it could cost closer to \$10-million *per site*:

[There has been] more than 100 requests for financial assistance from Indigenous communities intent on launching searches for unmarked graves...[meaning] the final tab could realistically be 20 times higher, according to Indigenous leaders and academics experienced in such searches...If that \$10-million estimate is applied to each of the nearly 140... sites identified by the TRC, the total national bill quickly reaches north of \$1-billion. (paras. 1-3)

Another issue that has repeatedly been an obstacle when relying on government capital arises when it comes to accessing such capital. Most often, communities have to apply for a

portion of money, which takes months or years to access. And when they require more financial resources, they must repeat that entire process over again. This means that, realistically, it could take several years or decades before all residential school sites are searched. Talaga (2021) shares this sentiment, demanding the government had better “not set up a ‘program’ with say, \$10-million or \$27-million in it, and then ask Indigenous communities to apply for the funds after filling out detailed forms” (para. 17).

Despite these necessary commitments, there was an overarching tone regarding the need for *action*. Not empty promises and commitments, but the complete fulfilment of the *TRC's Calls to Action*, beginning with having the federal government “provide sustainable funding for existing and new Indigenous healing centres to address the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual harms caused by residential schools” (Dickson, 2021, para. 10; see also Kirkup, 2021; Meissner, 2021). Ian Mosby, a professor of history, calls the federal government’s progress—or a lack thereof—“disappointing,” in an interview with *APTN National News*, explaining how what has happened thus far “doesn’t actually change the everyday lives of Indigenous peoples” (Martens, 2021, para. 9). Mosby continued, saying the *Actions* that need to occur are “the legacy calls, which are about addressing structural issues, like in child welfare or in education or in health care...and that’s where we see the least progress” (Martens, 2021, para. 10). Cheryl Matthew of the Simpcw First Nation agreed, noting how “inquiries and commissions gather dust on shelves...without any meaningful action” (Matthew, 2021, para. 15). Matthew

continued: "...in order for Indigenous peoples in Canada to get truth, justice, and reconciliation, another inquiry or commission will *not* do" (Matthew, 2021, para. 15).

This portion of the data also assists in answering research question three—how are calls being framed around the roles and responsibilities of governments? In short, the data has revealed the obvious: that calls have remained the same since 2015. Governments are *still* being asked to fulfill the (2015) *TRC's Calls to Action*, with emphasis placed on investigating further residential schools sites for hidden graves, to release all relevant documents that have yet to be released, and to provide resources in a timely manner.

### *Public Accountability*

The type of change required to fulfill the *TRC's Calls to Action*—and even the *MMIWG Inquiry's Calls for Justice*—also requires effort from *all* Canadians. Chief Byron Louis of the Okanagan Indian Band urges Canadians to "take accountability...[since] Canadians are the beneficiaries of what was done" (Kilawna, 2021, para. 26). Chief RoseAnne Archibald continued this sentiment, but demands faster action, and that "we've got to get together and have a meaningful partnership with all parties" (Forester et al., 2021, paras. 2-3). Other than meaningful involvement, however, the loudest call made for all Canadians was to recognize their collective history, both directly and indirectly (Pruden, 2021; see also Pruden & Kirkup, 2021; Kirkup,

2021; Coates, 2021; Morritt-Jacobs, 2021; Needham, 2021; Dickson, 2021; Lindsay & Watson, 2022).

Educating all Canadians was framed in two ways—both as a call to include residential schools, colonization in its “true form,” and overall Indigenous culture in the education sector; *and* for Canadians to become aware of and recognize “the legacy of our own history, and the consequences of decisions that were made...” (Pruden & Kirkup, 2021, para. 49). Former Crown-Indigenous Relations Minister Ms. Carolyn Bennett agrees, stating that since “now, all Canadians know, we need them as part of the reconciliation, part of the healing, part of the understanding” (Pruden, 2021, para. 32).

Chief Robert Joseph, a Gwawaenuk hereditary chief, ambassador for the non-profit Reconciliation Canada, and former executive director of the Indian Residential School Survivors Society, shared that “the most important apologies on the path to reconciliation will take place between Canadians” (Kirkup, 2021, para. 1). This will not just take Canadians obtaining an understanding about the time of residential schools “and the generational trauma it caused” (Pruden, 2021, para. 21), but for “this country to own up to its part...for its role in the horror it created in residential schools” (Pruden & Kirkup, 2021, para. 18).

To answer the research sub-question number three regarding how calls are being framed around the roles and responsibilities of the Canadian public, the data has been quite clear.

Canadians are ultimately being called to educate themselves and actively acknowledge the harms

caused by colonial policies like the residential school system. These calls have been unfulfilled since the *TRC's* (2015) *Calls to Action* were released—but remain consistent, and clear, awaiting Canadians to answer these *Calls* once and for all.

### Memory sites, memorials and monuments:

Another significant debate covered by news media regarded residential school sites, other colonial monuments, religious institutions and memorials. Starting with how to deal with residential school sites, there was quite the debate on whether to keep them standing, or tear them down. For instance, activists, survivors and community leaders had been fighting to tear down B.C.'s Lower Post Residential School, until finally, on May 30, 2021, “hundreds of people gathered to witness the ceremonial demolition of the last standing building of the Lower Post residential school, in Lower Post, B.C.,” with a new community centre being built thereafter (Inside the ceremonial demolition of B.C.'s Lower Post residential school, 2021, paras. 1-2). Many other Indigenous communities share this sentiment, saying they “would like to see [their residential school] structures replaced with ‘places of healing’” (Smart, 2021, para. 6). The Woodland Cultural Centre also spearheaded a campaign to “preserve and restore” its nearby residential school “as an interpretive site ... [making it the first site] that has been restored” (Taylor, 2021, para. 2). Taylor (2021) goes into greater detail about the restoration:

Working with survivors, historians and museum consultants, the Woodland Centre has a draft plan for programming that will take visitors on guided tours through the building from the perspective of a child, separated from parents, language and culture to arrive in this foreboding place. Different rooms...will be restored to different periods in the long history of what was the first residential school in Canada. (para. 6)

While several other communities are looking to adopt the same route (Eneas, 2021; see also Taylor, 2021; Smart, 2021), others like Gerry Cheezie, chief of Smith's Landing First Nation, would prefer to see their community's residential school torn down, saying that "the territory should have never repurposed the old residential school sites because of the lasting trauma that he and his members experienced," but that he wants to see "a solid plan in place to make sure a replacement is built right away" (Desmarais, 2021, para. 8). Other museums have added a similar approach to their existing historic representations (Raman-Wilms, 2021; see also Lederman, 2021). For example, the RCMP Heritage Centre in Saskatchewan embarked on a mission, or what they called an "in-depth consultation process," to "revamp its exhibits in order to tell both positive and negative stories of RCMP history" (Raman-Wilms, 2021, para. 2). Canadian Heritage Minister Steven Guilbeault shared that the new centre "would have to tell the full story, and not from some glorified version," saying that "the issues of systemic racism, of



Indigenous racism, of the residential school program...are all elements that would need to be addressed” in the new exhibit (Raman-Wilms, 2021, para. 4).

As a result of the late-May and subsequent findings, there was also considerable coverage on vandalism that occurred either on colonial monuments and representations, memorial sites or religious buildings (Andrew-Gee, 2021; see also Coates, 2021; Kilawna, 2021; Ballantyne et al., 2021; Edwardson, 2021; Memorial to residential school victims burned in 4-hour vandalism spree in Brantford, Ont., 2021; Old wounds reopened after residential school monument vandalized in North Vancouver, 2022; Hager, 2021; Press, 2021). Beginning with arson as acts of defiance or destruction, upon news of graves of residential school children, and specifically on National Indigenous People’s Day in 2021, two Catholic Churches built on Indigenous territory in B.C.’s southern Okanagan region “were destroyed by fire...[within] roughly to hours” (Hager, 2021, paras. 1-2). Despite the RCMP not explicitly stating the two fires were arsons, they *did* mention that “liquid accelerants were found outside the burned-down buildings” (Hager, 2021, para. 3). Less than ten days later, two other Catholic Churches—one in Nova Scotia, and the other in Alberta—were also damaged by fires, with police saying that they “believe both the St. Kateri Tekakwitha Church in the Sipekne’katik First Nation and the St. Jean Baptiste Parish in Morinville were targeted early Wednesday” (Press, 2021, para. 2).

On the other hand, other acts of defiance were targeted against memorials erected to respect the lives of those lost due to the residential school era (Edwardson, 2021; see also

Memorial to residential school victims burned in 4-hour vandalism spree in Brantford, Ont., 2021; Old wounds reopened after residential school monument vandalized in North Vancouver, 2022). For instance, also on National Indigenous People's Day, a teepee that had been erected at Charles Spencer High School for 2021 "Indigenous graduates containing a residential school memorial...[had] been vandalized" (Edwardson, 2021, para. 1). Fran Rogers, the artist of the memorial, who is Woodland Cree and a member of the Sturgeon Lake Cree Nation, told *CBC News* that "it was almost like they were making a statement...[and that] it seemed very deliberate," since it occurred on National Indigenous People's Day (Edwardson, 2021, paras. 10-11). Sadly, this was not the only occurrence. Another memorial for Indigenous children in Brantford, Ontario (Memorial to residential school victims burned in 4-hour vandalism spree in Brantford, Ont., 2021, para. 1), and in North Vancouver, where a monument "dedicated to survivors and victims of the St. Paul's Residential School had been vandalized, reopening old wounds for members of the Squamish Nation" (Old wounds reopened after residential school monument vandalized in North Vancouver, 2022, para. 1).

But perhaps the most typical reaction to the discoveries across Canada was the tearing down of colonial monuments and the changing of names dedicated to historic leaders who had a hand in enabling residential schools (Ballantyne et al., 2021; Kilawna, 2021; Coates, 2021; Andrew-Gee, 2021). While some protests simply hastened the decision to take down religious monuments, like that of the Macdonald statue in Charlottetown (Andrew-Gee, 2021),

representations of Egerton Ryerson, who had a hand in the design of residential schools, were quickly torn down (Coates, 2021). Ryerson University was also pushed to change its name to Toronto Metropolitan University after a statue of Ryerson was torn down on their campus (Ballantyne et al., 2021). Following suit, a Calgary school named after Hector Louis Langevin, “an architect of residential schools,” was also changed to Riverside School, except this step was “effective immediately” on June 1, 2021, just days after the initial late-May findings (Pimentel, 2021, para. 1). Ballantyne et al. (2021) points out that a lot of these acts have “always been tricky for Indigenous peoples, who have been negatively affected by the colonial tropes of either being the ‘Stoic Indian’ or the ‘Angry Indian’” (para. 9). Ballantyne et al. (2021) adds that:

Anger is a human emotion. We’ve been taught by churches, by parents, by society, to repress anger and only show a happy face, but that makes people really sick. And as you know, in our communities, we have a great deal of mental health issues from the traumas, not just the intergenerational trauma, but the ongoing traumas committed by every institution in society, governments and organizations.

So, I think anger is something we should see. (para. 14)

Since the fight toward justice and reconciliation are ongoing, the data shows that Indigenous peoples have persevered through these stereotypes and injustices—proving their constant resiliency. Although unfulfilled, the *TRC’s* (2015) *Calls to Action* have been prioritized throughout the data—making the answer to research question two (what calls for justice are

being sought by Indigenous peoples who continue to feel the trauma and long-term effects of residential schools) quite clear. Outside the demands regarding the roles and responsibilities of governments mentioned above, and the repeated call to fulfill the *TRC*'s demand, Canada is being asked to engage in the decolonization of colonial structures and entities—starting with colonial monuments, many of which have already been dealt with as a result of hastened decisions and protest.

### Findings: Concluding Thoughts

This research has painted a brief, but vital overview of news media coverage of residential schools after the late-May findings in an attempt to answer the research questions. However, there are important factors to consider while attempting to capture this prominent moment in history. Jessie Dawson, a residential school survivor and Kwanlin Dün First Nation councillor, says that the discoveries, while painful for Indigenous communities like hers, have “finally” provided the opportunity for their truth to be “told across the country” (Connors, 2021, para. 17). Still, Connors (2021) says that it is “up to...survivors to take control of our past and decide what we want for...[the] future” (para. 17). However, Stephanie Scott, of the NCTR, who is Anishinaabe from Roseau River First Nation points out that until *all* graves are located, therefor revealing the “full truth,” she thinks that “we’re going to be stuck for a little bit” (Ward, 2021, para. 10). Lorraine Whitman, President of the Native Women Association of Canada,

agrees, saying that “the data is there, the research has been done, the calls for action have already been there...so, let’s start taking them, implementing them and cost analyzing them and having the timelines there” (Needham, 2022, para. 4). And yet, as Steele (2021) points out, “we’ve now had 5,000 children found in unmarked graves since June [2021], but it's barely a ripple in the Canadian media now,” quoting Cindy Blackstock, a professor at Montreal's McGill University and executive director of the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society, and member of the Gitksan First Nation, who points out the brutal truth that “*now* is the time to not look away, and make sure the government of Canada remedies the injustices that are still going on” (para. 16).

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## Conclusion

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When leadership from the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc First Nation announced that ground-penetrating radar had revealed the graves of 215 Indigenous children, the horrors that occurred at residential schools had finally started to come to light as if the millions of dollars, blood, sweat and tears that resulted in the (2015) *Truth and Reconciliation Commission* had only now become relevant to Canadian society. Still, this historic moment has the potential to inflict long-awaited change outlined by the *Calls to Action*. Since this research began, there have been several measures implemented by governments and churches alike, resources have been committed to fund further searches, and there have been substantial steps taken to decolonize Canadian history. Additionally, the discoveries have been portrayed as a pathway for many Canadians to educate themselves on the historical and intergenerational effects of the Indian Residential School System. However, it is well over one year after the initial late-May findings, and only one quarter of 139 residential school sites have been searched, with less than a quarter of those grounds having been investigated. Needless to say, it will most likely take another decade before all residential school sites will be searched, and before a realistic estimate of how many Indigenous children died while in attendance can be determined. Regardless, this qualitative content analysis

on the coverage of unmarked graves *has* revealed the ways in which this historic moment of the discoveries of children who never made it home from residential schools is being portrayed by online news media—which is what this research sought out to accomplish.

While Canada has claimed their commitment to recovering further graves and providing resources to help survivors and their communities heal from intergenerational traumas, it is important to acknowledge that Canada *has* been involved in similar investigations across the world since the establishment of the United Nations in the 1940s. Canadian police and experts have helped in fact-finding missions, investigating human rights abuses, and by recovering countless bodies from mass grave sites in various countries across the world, such as “from the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, Sudan and various civil wars” (Poland, 2020, para. 24). Most notably, following the dissolution of the former Yugoslavia in 1992, “some 40,000 Canadian Forces personnel served in the region” (Government of Canada, 2022, para. 9), with many used in “evidence-gathering operations” (Poland, 2020, para. 16). In 2009, Canada even found Désiré Munyaneza guilty of seven counts of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes” in the Rwandan genocide” (Poland, 2020, para. 19). In order to secure this conviction, experts from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police “spent months on the ground in Rwanda interviewing witnesses and collecting evidence” (Poland, 2020, para. 21). Experts from Canada who have been involved in these international investigations have even admitted the importance of “considering cultural

aspects when working abroad...[which] can be resource intensive,” but send the message that “Canada isn’t complacent with war criminals” (Poland, 2020, paras. 11-22).

If Canada has admittedly been involved in fact-finding missions and the recovering of bodies abroad, then Canada is therefore well aware of the resources and expertise required to do the same work on a domestic level. There is little doubt that the journey toward recovering further bodies of Indigenous children who died while in attendance will be painstaking, expensive, and traumatizing for survivors and their communities. But if Canada provided the same attention and resources that they have previously committed when assisting in human rights investigations abroad, there is no excuse for Canada to not do the same here at home. This ongoing endeavour to recover the bodies of Indigenous children, therefore, could still lead to Canadian expertise being turned toward these domestic issues. But the extent to which this expertise is turned inward remains unknown and open for future research. What *is* known, and has been made quite clear by the data, is that regardless of what efforts are made going forward, they must be Indigenous-led and by invitation to consult.

There are also several challenges that were encountered throughout this research. Since the method adopted for this study was a content analysis, the first obstacle had to do with measures inherent to this type of research. For instance, this research was time consuming, and took just under one year from start to finish. This is due not only to the amount of data necessary



to conduct this type of research, but also because of the steps that are involved—from the data collection process, to organizational steps, and later analyzing the data. Content analyses also require the researcher to constantly be going in and out of the data to ensure that both nothing was missed, and that proper analyses are being made in relation to the research established in the literature review. This iterative process requires organization and patience, since typically, content analyses require the researcher to go through thousands of pieces of data in order to be able to accurately represent the issue in question. In this study, for example, thousands of articles had to be read to acquire a total of 202 articles that were relative to this research. Of those 202 articles, while some were relatively brief, the majority were detailed. Each important excerpt from each of the articles then had to be analyzed separately, and later re-organized under the different themes that emerged from the data.

As a result of the sheer volume of data, another challenge inherent to this type of research has to do with representation. Although I was dedicated to ensuring equal representation throughout the data collection process, absences and gaps of whose voices and perspectives are captured are inevitable. Furthermore, this research may have been able to better represent these issues had their been interviews conducted with Indigenous peoples, government officials, experts and Canadians. Still, Indigenous peoples are not a monolith, and there will always be gaps when trying to equally represent the opinions of the individuals or communities in question.

This issue was address through triangulation, wherein three news broadcasting corporations were used to “increase the credibility and validity of research findings” (Noble & Heale, 2019, p. 67).

The emotionality of reading testimonies and statements by residential school survivors and other Indigenous peoples through media representation was also, at times, challenging. From the pain and trauma faced by survivors and their communities, as their children continue to be unearthed across the country, to the resilience and optimism as they continue to fight for “reconcili-action.” Their statements were passionate, heart-felt, and emotional—but above all, they were a plea for help. A plea that has been ignored since long before Canada became a country. While understanding the scope of abuse and neglect that occurred at these schools is vital for this research, engaging with this content for a period of twelve months can become an emotional task.

The data selection period of this research was from May 27, 2021 to March 1, 2022, which also prevented updates regarding a Papal apology. On April 1, 2022, a large group of Indigenous delegates from across Canada finally went to visit Pope Francis, where he had provided a public apology (White, 2022)—which had been planned during the data selection period, but was postponed due to COVID-19 restrictions. Francis also visited Canada on a six day visit in late July to meet with Indigenous leaders and residential school survivors in Edmonton, Quebec City and Iqaluit (Yun, 2022, para. 2). Despite finally answering the *TRC*'s

(2015) *Call to Action* number 58 (p.7), there has been a mixed set of responses to his visit. Chief Randy Ermineskin from Ermineskin First Nation, who was among several Indigenous leaders that attended the Pope's apology, felt optimistic about the official apology, but was upset that Francis "didn't bring a chequebook to make things right" (Paradis, 2022, para. 32). Still, considering the Papal apology has been formally requested since 2015, there is an overall sense of relief that the Pope has recognized the harms inflicted upon Indigenous communities by the Catholic Church (Paradis, 2022).

Since the end of the data collection portion of this research, an Official Interlocutor has also been appointed by the Federal Government of Canada. Kimberly Murray, a Mohawk woman originally from Kanehsatake in Quebec, has been given this role to lead recovery efforts "for the next two years" (Tasker, 2022, para. 1). Having served as the executive director of the (2015) *Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, "where she worked to ensure the stories of survivors of the residential school system were heard and remembered" (Tasker, 2022, para. 4), there is no doubt that her position as an Indigenous woman and experience in the field will assist her in this arduous role. Appointing an Official Interlocutor to oversee further efforts to recover Indigenous children from residential school sites was a demand found throughout the data. This role has been sought because it is an official who is independent of the government, including the police—both who have been involved in the implementation and enforcement of residential and day

schools across Canada. This historical background naturally taints the waters between Indigenous peoples and government bodies. Thus, it seems only fair to appoint an independent body, or (at least) an individual, who can oversee this “two-year” endeavour and ensure Indigenous peoples’ best interests are their top priority.

While these updates would have added depth to the data, it is also important to recognize that these changes are occurring constantly. Canada’s journey toward reconciliation and confronting the injustices faced by Indigenous peoples may be too long for any one research study to capture. Nonetheless, one element of this research that is certain is that this historical, ongoing moment has inspired action across Canada—even though the extent to which recovery efforts will keep this momentum is unknown. Slow progress may seem incremental, but it has the potential to substantiate long-lasting change. Stephanie Scott, executive director of the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, relays this same sentiment:

It’s absolutely crucial that we all work together...

Because this work is going to take decades to do.

And it’s not an easy journey, but it’s a path of reconciliation...

And until we know the truth, I think we’re going to be stuck for a little

bit (Ward, 2021, para. 10).

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