CHAPTER 14

GENOCIDE IN THE INDIAN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

Canadian History through the Lens of the UN Genocide Convention

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> *I don't see why a German who eats a piece of bread should torment himself with the idea that the soil which produced this bread has been won by the sword. When we eat wheat from Canada, we don't think about the despoiled Indians.*
>
> —Adolf Hitler, discussing German expansionism in *Table Talk*

For too long we Canadians have portrayed ourselves as morally superior to our neighbors to the south. Our mythology includes Canada avoiding military misadventures like Vietnam, ending slavery early, more peacefully settling the west, and generally treating Aboriginal peoples better (Granatstein 1996: chapter 1). Yet our tendency to engage in "chosen amnesia" (Buckley-Zistel 2006: 132–34) has been thrown into question by two decades of revelations about the horrific treatment of Aboriginal children in Canada's network of Indian residential schools (IRS). More contentious than the facts of systemic abuse and intergenerational trauma have been claims of genocide and cultural genocide, with both terms enjoying widespread use in public discourse. In 2011, for example, the chief commissioner of Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), Justice Murray Sinclair, argued on the CBC documentary series *8th Fire* that genocide had been committed ("Q & A" 2012). Assembly of First Nations National chief Shawn Atleo made a similar argument around the same time ("Residential Schools Fit Definition of Genocide" 2011). They are hardly alone. Since the 1970s a number of academics have

asserted that the United Nations Genocide Convention (UNGC) does indeed apply to Aboriginal experiences (Davis and Zannis 1973: 175–76; Chrisjohn and Young 1994: 2–6, 33–35; Neu and Therrien 2003; Cardinal 1999; Grant 1996: 69, 270–71; Haig-Brown 1988: 11; Woolford 2009: 81–97; Powell 2011; Ladner 2009; Nicholas 2001: 10–13). My goals in this chapter are, first, to explore whether the IRS system was genocidal and, second, to suggest ways we might move forward with reconciliation if we accept that genocide was a goal of the system's architects.

I begin with a brief background of the IRS system before plunging into my main discussion as to whether the system can be deemed genocide. I focus primarily on Article 2e of the UNGC, "forcibly transferring children of the group to another group." Space prohibits me from engaging in any detail with the other four elements of Article 2. Death in the schools is not a major focus of this chapter, although it is clear that large numbers of children died as a result of their experiences in the IRS system (TRC 2012b: 31). I also do not engage with recent studies of nutrition experiments in several residential schools from 1942 to 1952 (Mosby 2013).[1] I conclude with a brief discussion of what are we to do now, in Canada, if we recognize that the IRS system was genocidal. What sort of restitution and reconciliation needs to occur between Aboriginal and settler peoples, and how much will this change Canada as it is now politically constituted?

Having worked with Anishinaabeg IRS survivors and elders, I use the term *Shognosh* to refer to Canada's European settler populations as well as multicultural people like me who are assimilated into European ways of thinking and acting. This is consistent with the use of *Pākehā* in New Zealand to designate those of European ancestry and others who are not Māori (King 1985; Mulgan 1989).[2] Since it is reasonable in political science to refer to *Aboriginal* or *Indigenous* people, we should, in the interests of fairness, be willing to categorize ourselves using Anishinaabeg, Cree, Haida, and other languages of this country. The use of *Shognosh* is a crucial signifier in the interests of academic rigor, since it can act to discursively de-neutralize terms like *settler*, *mainstream*, *authorities*, *government*, and *Canadian*.

Why Was the IRS System Created?

The IRS system should be contextualized as one aspect of a much larger colonial project that began with early Shognosh colonizers in the sixteenth century and continues to this day. The system marked a deliberate attempt to destroy many aspects of Aboriginal distinctiveness over several generations to facilitate Shognosh colonization. It began in an era when the economic

benefits of partnership with Aboriginal peoples through the fur trade were largely irrelevant; rather than being economic assets, Aboriginal peoples were perceived as an impediment to further colonization (Miller 1996: 62–63). If we use Wolfe's (2010: 103) analysis of settler colonialism, Shognosh expansion should be framed as a territorial project, whereby Aboriginal peoples were to be alienated from their lands and subdued, as what was formerly theirs became ours.

The IRS system was developed in the context of Aboriginal uprisings in the late nineteenth century. It also acknowledged the English-French conflicts that had divided the fledgling country for a considerable time, conflicts that were expressed in political, cultural, linguistic, and religious terms (Haig-Brown 1988: 31–32). The system was also an answer to the decimation of Aboriginal populations during the nineteenth century due to starvation (a result of the decimation of food like the bison), disease (smallpox, malaria, whooping cough, tuberculosis), and other conditions (Carter 1999: 37–39, 100). Indeed of the 2 million Aboriginal people estimated to have been in what is now Canada at the end of the fifteenth century, the population had been reduced by some 95 percent by the end of the nineteenth century, leaving about 100,000 to 125,000 people remaining (Saul 2008: 22–23; for British Columbia statistics, see Manuel and Posluns 1974: 27).

Although the first experiments in residential schools go back to the seventeenth century in Canada, no systematized effort was undertaken until the nineteenth century. Various Shognosh initiatives to deal with the "Indian problem" included the 1842 Bagot Commission, which proposed a system of rural boarding schools. Legislation like the Gradual Civilization Act (1857) and the Act for the Gradual Enfranchisement of the Indian (1869) laid the foundations for the IRS system that was to follow (Aboriginal Healing Foundation 2002: 2). In 1879 a residential school was established at a former military barracks in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, which served as a model for the network of boarding schools established in the United States (Milloy 1999: 13). Strongly influenced by the United States, our IRS system was established in the mid-1880s and was conceived in partially benign terms: to help Aboriginal people better adapt to life in a Shognosh-dominated country. Many treaties contained provisions for government-funded on-reserve schools, and Aboriginal leaders like Chief Shingwauk intended for "teaching wigwams" to educate his people and prepare them for a better life. The early balance between Shognosh and Aboriginal worldviews gave way to a far more coercive system that entailed forced assimilation and cultural destruction.

The federal government worked closely with mainline Canadian churches, which initiated the creation of many schools and were responsible for running

most of them until the 1950s. The Catholic Church entities ran approximately 60 percent, the Anglicans about 30 percent, with the Presbyterian, Methodist, and United Churches running most of the remainder. Until the 1950s attendance for children age five to sixteen was compulsory (Milloy 1999; Miller 2004: 84). An early distinction was drawn between boarding and industrial schools. Boarding schools were located on or near reserves and were designed to attract local Aboriginal children. Industrial schools, by contrast, were located farther from Aboriginal reserves and closer to settler towns and cities (Furniss 1995: 27). After 1923 the distinctions between these types of schools mattered little, and in government parlance all were known as residential schools (Miller 1996: 141–42). At least 150,000 children passed through 125 schools, the last of which closed only in 1996 (Barkan 2003: 130–31). Of these there are approximately seventy-five thousand Survivors alive today, and many face myriad social, economic, and other problems as a result of their experiences.

What Is Genocide in Canada?

The UN Genocide Convention is hardly a perfect document. While it marked a milestone in international law, the final document was nevertheless a compromise among states, many of whom had committed atrocities against their own populations, some of these ongoing at the time the UNGC was being negotiated. Certainly Canada's role in the UNGC process was not benign; indeed our contribution, as outlined in the *Travaux Preparatoires*, was to actively exclude cultural genocide, while at the same time (and not without irony) stressing the English and French heritage of the country (Abtahi and Webb 2008: 2:1509). When Canada did ratify the UNGC in 1952, we did so highly selectively. Portions of the Convention were excluded from the Criminal Code, such that genocide still means only Article 2 (a) and (b) (Criminal Code Canada 1985). The official reasons given to Parliament by the *Report of the Special Committee on Hate Crimes in Canada* was that portions of the UNGC "intended to cover certain historical incidents in Europe that have little essential relevance to Canada" could safely be omitted. They even asserted that "mass transfers of children to another group are unknown . . . in Canada" (Churchill 2004: 9, 86).

Despite problems of how genocide is defined under the Criminal Code, the argument can be made that forced transfer is clearly a form of biological genocide. This was Raphael Lemkin's conclusion in 1951, when he posited that "genocide can be committed either by destroying the group now or by preventing it from bearing children or keeping its offspring." He further

responded to the question "Can genocide be committed by kidnapping children?" by stating emphatically, "The answer is yes!" (Lemkin 1951). Kidnapping, he argued, was certainly a form of biological genocide: "From the point of view of genocide or the destruction of a human group, there is little difference between direct killings and such techniques which, like a time-bomb, destroy by delayed action" (Lemkin n.d.). Kurt Mundorff (2009: 117) has articulated the same view, seeing forcible transfer as both physical and biological: "It does so biologically, by preventing children from reproducing within the group, and physically, by discouraging children from returning to their group." He continues, "Childrearing is the quintessential process that racial, ethnic, religious, or national groups perform as these groups perpetuate themselves primarily through childrearing. Any instrument protecting these human groups should recognize the central role of children" (125).

TARGETED PROPORTION OF THE GROUP

How large a part of the group must be targeted to invoke the UNGC? Jim Miller (1996: 141–42) is correct that no more than one-third of Aboriginal children were targeted with compulsory attendance in residential schools. Indeed it is clear from Miller's work that off-reserve schools were always in the minority, with the majority of Indian children enrolled in day schools located on the reserves. Further, there were few residential schools in eastern Canada and only one in Atlantic Canada, the majority being in British Columbia, James Bay, and the prairies (Miller 2004: 245; 1996: 141–42). In part these regional differences can be explained by the territorial expansionist motives of the government. Settling and pacifying the West were nineteenth- and twentieth-century objectives. Any putative threat posed by First Nations in Atlantic Canada had been subdued much earlier. This reality does not, however, invalidate arguments in favor of calling the behavior genocide.

In determining what percentage is sufficient, most international case law is vague on this matter, relying primarily on judicial intuition. The UN special rapporteur Benjamin Whitaker put it that "in part" should imply "a reasonably significant number, relative to the total of the group as a whole, or else a significant section of a group such as its leadership" (quoted in Mundorff 2009: 88). This was revisited by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in *Prosecutor v. Radislav Krstić*, wherein the Trial Chambers recognized that "'in part' . . . must be a substantial part of that group" (United Nations 2004: 2). In my view the UNGC would still apply to one-third. First, even if one unceremoniously lumps all Aboriginal people together, one-third of a group by any standard would still count as significant enough to invoke the UNGC. Certainly in Srebrenica eight thousand

of forty thousand Muslims killed amounted to roughly the same percentage (see MacDonald 2009).

Yet, second, if one accepts the point that we are dealing with multiple victim groups, then there may be dozens of groups that have been victims of genocide. It would be grossly inaccurate to look at Aboriginal peoples as only three groups (First Nations, Métis, and Inuit). Even now we have some fifty-three distinct Aboriginal languages divided into eleven families (Spielmann 2009: 30). We would not talk about one undifferentiated genocidal era stretching from the late nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century, but genocidal episodes, time periods when genocidal action was more concentrated, when, for example, more children were taken than in other periods.

TO TRANSFER

The elements subsumed in the verb *transfer* are as follows:

1. Shognosh governments create departments such as Indian Affairs and enact discriminatory legislation (such as the Indian Act) that allows for large-scale policies of transfer. At the federal level, government officials, bureaucrats, and others in positions of influence express a desire for transfer to take place.
2. Shognosh organizations such as the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and individual Indian agents and other interested Shognosh persons (priests, ministers, and their proxies) carry out what is ostensibly the kidnapping of children from their families.
3. Shognosh church administrators receive children and then, in the guise of altruism, seek to destroy those elements of the children's identity that tie them to their group of origin, elements that enable the group to perpetuate its existence into future generations. The suppressed aspects of the children's identity are then forcibly replaced with loosely cognate Shognosh religious, cultural, and linguistic elements.
4. Arrangements are made through Shognosh government, churches, and other supporting organizations to ensure that the transfer "sticks"; that is, impediments to Aboriginal cultural "backsliding" are introduced to make return to the group problematic.

These four elements constitute transfer and are consistent with the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples' "three-part vision of education in the service of assimilation" (Hurley and Wherrett 1999: 312). The fourth step is the proverbial icing, because by the time stage 3 was successful, the child's worldview was irrevocably damaged. We can acknowledge Kress's argument, discussed in Munsdorff (2009: 91), that transfer should be understood to long

have occurred when the children are in the control of another group. They do not necessarily have to be integrated into the mainstream of the perpetrator group, just taken from their group of origin. As such, even if children are held in residential schools or orphanages, transfer for the purposes of the UNGC can be judged to have taken place.

ELEMENTS OF TRANSFER: LEGISLATIVE INTENT

What did the founders of the IRS system intend? Nicholas Flood Davin and other Shognosh political leaders later in the century were keenly interested in using the schools as a vehicle for the destruction of Aboriginal identity. Davin, an early influence on the IRS system, took forty-five days to research and write a report, which he submitted in 1879. Davin recommended (in contradistinction to the American system) forging a partnership between government and churches, partly for cost savings but, more important, to effect a more thorough level of assimilation. He concluded that since the IRS "would undermine existing spiritual and cultural beliefs," it would be important not to destroy a child's faith "without supplying a better" one: Christianity (quoted in TRC 2012b: 10). Davin was clear that residential schools were preferable to day schools on reserve since "the influence of the wigwam was stronger than the influence of the school" (Haig-Brown 1988: 29).

Davin's report found support in Ottawa. Superintendent General of Indian Affairs Hector Langevin made it clear to Parliament in 1883 that residential schooling would enable Aboriginal children to "acquire the habits and tastes . . . of civilized people" (quoted in Grant 1996: 64). The intention of ending the separate existence of Aboriginal peoples as Aboriginal peoples was expressed in 1887 by John A MacDonald when he argued, "The great aim of our legislation has been to do away with the tribal system and assimilate the Indian people in all respects with the inhabitants of the Dominion, as speedily as they are fit for the change" (quoted in Miller 2004: 191). To this senior Indian Affairs official Hayter Reed expressed his department's perspective in the 1890s; the IRS system should make "every effort . . . against anything calculated to keep fresh in the memories of the children habits and associations which it is one of the main objects of industrial education to obliterate" (quoted in Hurley and Wherrett 1999: 312).

Then we move to Duncan Campbell Scott, the now infamous deputy minister of Indian Affairs, who opined similar sentiments about ending the separate existence of Aboriginal peoples. In 1915 Scott described his vision for the department: "The happiest future for the Indian Race is absorption into the general population, and this is the object of the policy of our government. The great forces of intermarriage and education will finally

overcome the lingering traces of native custom and tradition" (quoted in Neu and Therrien 2003: 102). Scott later gave his famous speech in 1920: "I want to get rid of the Indian problem. . . . Our object is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic and there is no Indian question, and no Indian Department" (quoted in Miller 2004: 35).

One could amass a large collection of these statements and musings that would provide, in anecdotal form, snapshots of the zeitgeist of the IRS founders and their intentions. Such snapshots are useful in demonstrating several recurring elements:

1. A discourse motivated by a desire to destroy Aboriginal peoples *as* Aboriginal peoples, or in other words, to destroy the group *as such* in whole or in part.
2. A belief that destruction was *creative* in that it would save individual Aboriginal people with the genetic capacity to excel once they had been freed from the shackles of their inferior cultural background.
3. A belief that no matter how difficult the process of removal and assimilation might be in the short term, in the long term the visionary goals of Shognosh IRS boosters would be vindicated.

The Process of Removals

In terms of legislation, two dates stand out. In 1894 an amendment to the Indian Act, in force by 1895, made residential schooling compulsory, although this was not rigorously or universally applied (Milloy 1999: 70–71; Miller 1996: 129; Furniss 1995: 108). The more significant date is 1920, when attendance was made compulsory for all Aboriginal children age seven to fifteen ("Residential Schools—A Chronology" 2008). Truant officers, including RCMP officers, priests, ministers, and Indian agents, could prescribe fines or imprisonment to those who did not comply. Stricter legislation greatly increased the numbers of children attending residential schools (Milloy 1999: 71; Miller 1996: 169–70; Assembly of First Nations [AFN] 1994: 16–17). The Indian Act, sections 114–22, dealt with schools for Aboriginal children; section 119 covered "truant officers," who were empowered to "take into custody a child whom [they believe] on reasonable grounds to be absent from school contrary to this Act and may convey the child to school, using as much force as the circumstances require" (Aboriginal Affairs Canada 2010). It is worth mentioning that force for the purposes of the UNGC can include the threat of force, or, as the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda put it in long

Akayesu, "threats or trauma which would lead to the forcible transfer of children from one group to another" (quoted in Mundorff 2009: 96).

A larger climate of legal suppression and what we could call cultural genocide made it exceeding difficult for Aboriginal parents to resist the coercive nature of the system. Forms of cultural genocide were intertwined with overt policies of forced removal. One recalls here the outlawing of the potlatches in 1884, give-away ceremonies among Prairie First Nations, the Thirst Dance of the Saulteaux and Cree, and the Blackfoot Sun Dance. Such laws were rescinded only in 1951 (Furniss 1995: 24; Carter 1999: 164). Miller (2004: 184–85) notes that despite sporadic enforcement, a number of high-profile arrests "created a climate of fear and resentment." In 1885 the pass system was introduced; individuals wishing to leave the reserve were required to receive written consent from the Indian agent or their employer stating the duration of their absence and its purpose. Selling cattle, farm produce, or any goods required written permission (Carter 1999: 162–63). Carter observes, "Oral and written testimony from reserve residents indicated that it was both enforced and resented as a result" (163–64). In 1927 an amendment to the Indian Act made it illegal for Aboriginal people to hire lawyers in pursuit of land claims or other matters (Miller 2004: 17), and until 1960 Aboriginal peoples did not have the right to vote. These and other impediments thwarted Aboriginal desires to seek justice within Shognosh legal and legislative systems.

The Schools

In understanding the high level of coercion in the IRS system, the AFN (1994: 3–4) described the schools as "total institutions," wherein "all activities of the children—eating, sleeping, playing, working, speaking—were subject to set time tables and to regulations determined by staff comprised of supervisors and teachers who, for the most part, belonged to a variety of Christian denominations." Comparing the IRS to penitentiaries, the AFN highlighted the divergence between the almost complete control wielded by adult staff and the almost total powerlessness of their young charges. Chrisjohn and Young's (1997: 91) exploration of total institutions describes a process of "'unmak[ing]' the people over whom they gain control." The use of corporal punishment was widespread, as was verbal, emotional, physical, and sexual abuse (Milloy 1999: chapters 5, 6, 7; Miller 1996: chapter 11). These too should be seen as means of facilitating the forced transfer of children, while promoting the totalizing influence of the institution. Survivor testimony recounts that sexual abuse rates at some schools reached 75 percent, and physical abuse rates were even higher. It is difficult to generalize from these findings, but clearly abuse was an endemic and recurring feature (Rice 2011).

Implicit in the Indian Act is the condoning of forced conversion as a concomitant to the transfer process. Section 118 reads as follows: "No child whose parent is a Protestant shall be assigned to a school conducted under Roman Catholic auspices and no child whose parent is a Roman Catholic shall be assigned to a school conducted under Protestant auspices, except by written direction of the parent" (Aboriginal Affairs Canada 2010). Such legislation was meant to safeguard the rights of Catholics and Protestants to avoid their own transfer but also gave the schools carte blanche to forcibly convert non-Christian peoples.

Forced linguistic change was one of the hardest elements of transfer for many Survivors, because it not only detached them from their own pre-IRS identity but also deracinated them from their siblings, parents, and other family members if they returned home. While some schools were more lenient than others, a central goal of Shognosh administrators was to deprive children of their ability to communicate in their own language, while adopting either English or French (TRC 2012a: 24–25). Brutal penalties were often meted out for infractions (AFN 1994: 16–17). Certainly language was crucial to the ontology of the child, and destroying it was a key means by which the child's cultural inheritance could be broken. The obverse was also true: changing the child's language could help the transfer of the child from one group to another. Cuthand (2007: 62) ably conveys the implications of language loss, which is "a major blow to a culture" because "in many cases the culture ceases to exist. The oral history in the mother tongue disappears, the grandparents can no longer speak to their grandchildren, and the descriptive nuances and sense of humour change."

The fear of "backsliding" was a pressing one, since the permanence of any transfer depended on continuing the process of assimilation after the children had left the IRS. It was clear to some officials that every effort had to be made to prevent familial or tribal influences during the process of "reorientation." For this reason former superintendent general Dewdney supported keeping Aboriginal visitors off the grounds of residential schools, even if this involved using the police. He favored restricting student vacations, especially if this involved a return to the reserve: "Taking children in for short terms and letting them go again is regarded perhaps as worse than useless" (quoted in Milloy 1999: 30).

The same held true once students had left the system; concerted efforts were made to prevent what Indian Affairs called "retrogression"—a return to the reserve and the resumption of old ways. Overly optimistic about the prospects for racial and social harmony, Indian Affairs argued in its 1887 *Annual Report* that efforts should be directed "to prevent those whose education at an industrial institution . . . has been completed from returning to

the reserves." Instead Aboriginal students were to integrate into the Shognosh world, "to reside in towns, or, in the case of farmers, in settlements of white people, and thus become amalgamated with the general community" (Hurley and Wherrett 1999: 317–18).

Ultimately transfer never meant full transfer, akin to Himmler's *Lebensborn* program. Due to Shognosh racism, the IRS could never have created an egalitarian society or a truly level playing field. Rather it was designed to ensure that Aboriginal peoples would be subservient and no longer, as Scott once put it, "an undesirable and often dangerous element in society" (quoted in Neu and Therrien 2003: 103). Training Aboriginal people to compete with Shognosh was never the intention of the system. Rather they were to enter mainstream society primarily as workers and servants, at the lower rungs of the economic ladder (Friesen and Friesen 2002: 110; Deiter 1999: 15–16). While the IRS system failed to completely assimilate Aboriginal peoples, it certainly created a halfway house—a cultural, spiritual, and linguistic limbo land for large numbers of Survivors. A considerable body of evidence has been gathered on this topic, particularly on the problems of intergeneration trauma and the many social problems that have resulted from IRS experiences (Woolford 2009: 85).

When did the genocide end? In 1947, in part due to the atrocities witnessed in World War II and to the decreasing popularity of segregation south of the border, the Canadian government visibly switched its approach from forced assimilation to integration. Aboriginal education would now fall to the provinces and would become secular. The rationale remained deliberately coercive: children would be integrated by attending Shognosh day schools, absorbing dominant social values in the process (Friesen and Friesen 2002: 108). Indian Affairs closed down residential schools in areas where integration into the provincial system was possible (Hamilton 1986: 19). In areas where day schools were not available, the IRS system continued. In the late 1960s there were still some sixty residential schools with approximately ten thousand students in attendance. These were under secular administration by this stage, and by 1954 all IRS teachers were federal government employees (AFN 1994: 18–19).

Despite the denouement of the IRS system, the violation of Article 2(e) continued in other forms. Beginning in the 1930s and 1940s, thousands of Aboriginal children were taken from their parents and sent for adoption or to foster homes, the majority sent to Shognosh homes. Many were shipped to the United States. At its height, one in four status Indian children were removed from their parents. Emily Alston-O'Connor's (2010: 4) reading of this period suggests that genocide occurred here as well. The process, known as the "60s scoop," demonstrates a consistent desire to effect forced removals,

although by different means. As one system of transfer wound down, another coercive system increased in significance. This makes intuitive sense when one engages with the early history of the IRS in the United States and the two tracks that were advocated at the time: residential schools and "planting out." Pioneered in Pennsylvania, the idea was to remove children and send them to white foster homes in an effort to remove their "Indianism" (Milloy 1999: 28).

Genocide and the Clash of Collective Memories

While Shognosh Canadians are beginning to learn about the IRS system and other aspects of Aboriginal inequality, there are fundamental differences between how our two peoples approach our national experiment. Sharene Razack (2002: 2) has termed our history a "fantasy" insofar as we tend to disavow notions of conquest, invasion, and genocide, promoting instead myths of peaceful settlement and colonization. Ervin Staub (2008: 5), a major theorist of ethnic conflict, observed recently, "Anyone who has worked with Survivors of genocide, or engaged with groups that have survived genocide . . . will know that Survivors desperately want to have the truth of what was done to them be established and their suffering acknowledged. Acknowledgement, especially when it is empathic, is healing." If there is dissonance in understanding between the victimized group and the perpetrator group, this makes it "difficult for Survivors to heal, look into the future, and move on psychologically" (6).

Certainly we are at an early stage of the reconciliation process; healing is taking priority over other considerations. But collective memory is crucial; how Shognosh and Aboriginal peoples choose to remember and reflect on the collective memories of colonization and the IRS system will determine the way forward. Obfuscation will be a constant temptation—blaming selected priests or administrators, who may become scapegoats in much the same way *Historikerstreit* historians blamed Nazi leaders to exculpate Germany (Hillgruber 1986). A full engagement with IRS history must mean not isolating this era as an aberration in Canadian history but understanding its formative nature in the creation of our Shognosh society and contextualizing this within the current relationships Shognosh and Aboriginal peoples maintain, including power and status differentials.

Institutional and Cultural Change

Most Canadians supported Prime Minister Stephen Harper's apology for the IRS system in 2008, but without real change the apology amounts to

little. Chrisjohn and Wasacase (2009: 219) are rightly frustrated by the fact that while the government admits wrong, the institutions that committed the crimes, from the mainline churches to the RCMP to the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, retain their power.[3]

Central to any genuine reconciliation must be the adoption of a new form of binationalism, one that is properly between Aboriginal peoples and Shognosh peoples, not between two very similar white European Christian colonizing peoples, as it has been for centuries. The ideal of a nation-to-nation partnership, embedded in treaties, affirmed through Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, and reiterated in the Idle No More movement, is a crucial step forward. As Maaka and Fleras (2005: 275–76) point out, a binational relationship will inevitably imply a reworking of dominant institutions and narratives, since binationalism seeks to "restructure the constitutional core to foster power sharing," "provides a constitutional framework for engaging indigeneity as a majority-to-majority partnership," and "is concerned with the sharing of sovereignty between two dominant cultures in complementary co-existence." Binationalism might contribute to a process of "reframing," that is, changing the symbols, terms, and narratives used to interpret the past and to chart a course for the future (James and Bonner 2011).

One crucial way in which reconciliation might proceed is in the official recognition and promotion of Aboriginal languages. A genuine focus on reconciliation would direct resources to reinvigorating Aboriginal languages, not just for Aboriginal peoples but for all Canadians. Such languages could be made official languages in provinces, and Shognosh children would learn Aboriginal languages that were indigenous to their region. Unfortunately, little has been done to preserve First Nations languages, many of which are on the brink of collapse (Galley 2009: 243).

A central means of protecting and asserting Aboriginal rights is naturally through self-government, not Indian Act colonialism but a return to more traditional forms of governance and away from chief and council and the Department of Aboriginal Affairs. Self-government could include forms of dual citizenship and passports, as well as other measures for Aboriginal entities seeking to assert their right to be recognized as self-governing nations. I share Taiaiake Alfred's (2009: 43) conclusion that the best way to decolonize is for Aboriginal people to reestablish their ties to the land, which will allow them to connect "to land-based cultural practices and the reestablishment of authentic indigenous community life."

However, any model of Aboriginal sovereignty will first have to contend with the fact that the structures of tribal government are determined by the Indian Act, which also determines who does and does not have status

(Furniss 1995: 22–23). We can see changes taking place in this so-called era of reconciliation. Idle No More signals a new, more assertive and self-aware form of Aboriginal consciousness. Further, the *Daniels* case in January 2013 has dramatically increased the number of people now considered to be "Indians," extending recognition to some 600,000 urban-based First Nations and Métis people ("Court Rules Métis, Off-reserve Aboriginals Qualify as 'Indians'" 2012). Things are moving forward, hopefully in a good way.

Alongside self-determination, increased representation and changes to existing institutions constitute a *complementary* process of empowering Aboriginal peoples using multiple channels. While autonomous self-government would help some Aboriginal peoples empower themselves, Michael Murphy (2008: 197–200) argues persuasively that "indigenous representatives may also need an effective voice in local, regional, and national institutions that have the capacity to influence their individual and collective futures." Institutional changes could include, first, adopting a form of proportional representation, a system that has functioned well in New Zealand, where Māori have achieved parliamentary representation higher than their percentage of the overall population, with Māori in the cabinet and in other positions of national leadership. Second, recent studies demonstrate that Māori and Pākehā are equally committed to common New Zealand symbols and national culture, a unique situation relative to other Western settler societies (Sibley and Liu 2007).

Yet we need to go further than simply ensure that Aboriginal peoples are represented in our primarily Shognosh colonial institutions. Local, provincial, and federal institutions have to be reinvented to promote forms of nation-to-nation power sharing and mutual respect. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples outlined a blueprint for a "House of First Peoples" that would comprise Aboriginal representatives, but this is only one idea among many (Schmidt 2003: 5–6). I don't feel it incumbent on me to describe what sort of "traditional" governance institutions should be established, since this is a discussion that is ongoing between Aboriginal communities and Shognosh governments.

Conclusions

Article 2(e) constitutes a useful ground floor from where we can begin to think creatively about how to reframe our understandings of Canadian history, moving from dominant Shognosh views to a more binational framework that grounds Canadian history, politics, languages, and cultures in a power-sharing arrangement with Aboriginal peoples. Recognition of genocide is

crucial to ensuring that the losses suffered by Aboriginal peoples are not taken for granted. Reconciliation is unlikely to be something any of us will see in our lifetimes, but this should not deter us from initiating the process by, at the least, identifying the problems and actively deliberating over potential solutions. Morally we need to work together to ensure that a genuine binationalism between Aboriginal and Shognosh peoples recognizes the inherent rights of Aboriginal people. This is only just. Many Aboriginal people know well that right conduct consists of ensuring that elders are able to eat first before the younger members of the community proceed, or else those with the most to offer are left only with the scraps. We would do well to keep this custom in mind.

Notes

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1. Mosby (2013: 172) does not use the term *genocide* but describes the experiments as "one among many examples of a larger institutionalized and, ultimately, dehumanizing colonialist racial ideology that has governed Canada's policies towards and treatment of Aboriginal peoples throughout the twentieth century."
2. Another option would be the Cree word *Moonia*, which means the same thing.
3. The arguments in this section are more fully developed in MacDonald 2013.

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