PIONEER
ACADEMIC PUBLISHING LIMITED

Journal of Advanced Research in Education
ISSN 2709-3980
www.pioneerpublisher.com/jare
Volume 3 Number 6 November 2024

Right in Front of Our Eyes: The Hidden Curriculum and the Role of School-Based Practices on Violence Against Indigenous Women

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doi:10.56397/JARE.2024.11.07

Abstract

As Indigenous issues begin to become an increasingly bigger part of the Canadian education system, the terms of their participation become a contentious issue amongst educators, especially in the wake of a human rights crisis (the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Movement). This paper explores the history of Indigenous education in Canada, the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls movement, and the hidden curriculum in British Columbia's Social Studies and Careers curriculum. Through a detailed analysis of the curriculum outlined by the British Columbian Ministry of Education, this paper aims to apply both traditional and modern educational theories to evaluate the effects of the education system upon both indigenous and non-indigenous students regarding the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls movement. Based on its conclusions, the paper offers policy recommendations and further predictions on how the education system is expected to change in the near future.

Keywords: indigenous education, curricula, Canada, hidden curriculum

1. Introduction

For the past few years, the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Movement (MMIWG) has been raising awareness of a human rights crisis that has been sweeping the nation (Brant). In a political climate post-December 8th inquiry and the calls to Truth and Reconciliation, the movement represents the failure of the Canadian government to protect Indigenous women and girls, leading to at least 1,200 cases (Brant) in the MMIWG movement. With rising rates of homicide and violence, the MMIWG movement eventually raises questions about institutionalized racism: how could Canadian Society allow and ignore this crisis for decades?

The answer might have something to do with Canada's education system. Often considered the foundation of society (Buchmann and Hannum, 80), educational institutions build and reinforce the belief systems reflected in greater society. As a colonial nation, Western education is the template for the Canadian schooling system, becoming the dominant mode over more traditional approaches to education that many Indigenous nations previously employed. In conjunction with the implementation of residential schools, the history between the

Canadian education system and Indigenous people has been shaky, with impacts still being seen today. As more studies (Morcom) begin to show improvement in the education of Indigenous students through greater Indigenous representation, new holes are emerging in how indigenous people are represented in school curriculums all over the country. As the history of racism is often baked into curriculums, it is not hard to imagine that current undertones can contribute to modern social issues, making Indigenous students specifically more susceptible to violence.

The goal of this study is to examine whether the socialization of Indigenous women and girls contributes to the growing degree of susceptibility to marginalization and violence that is decried by the MMWIG movement. Using different perspectives on education, this paper examines the effects of the curriculum in British Columbia to evaluate whether schooling creates an environment that makes Indigenous children more vulnerable to violence. Using a qualitative research method, the paper reviews curriculum guides in both Social Studies and careers to determine whether the education system conditions Indigenous women and girls to become more vulnerable in the future.

2. History of Education

The current education system in Canada is a by-product of European colonization. This section serves as a literature review of Canadian education, detailing events from pre-colonialism to the modern day. Indigenous peoples have practiced education in varied forms, with adults being responsible for both practical and social skills, from oral teaching to participation in group ceremonies (McCue). Furthermore, girls and boys would be taught separate skills, with women taught domestic skills and men taught skills surrounding the land such as hunting. Indigenous traditional education also focused heavily on spirituality, something crucial to many Indigenous nations' cultures and traditions (McCue). Youth from many nations would also be educated in specific ceremonies and artisanal skills, with societies often also passing down oral histories and stories (McCue). The pre-colonial education system helped to prepare children for adult life, giving them both the cultural and practical knowledge needed to thrive in modern societies (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada 5). The importance of pre-colonial Indigenous education cannot be undermined, as it built the foundation for the identity and culture of many of the First Nations, with the stripping of in future decades aiding in the cultural genocide of Indigenous Canadians (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada 3).

As indigenous nations slowly came into contact with the European Powers, namely Samuel de Champlain and Pierre de Monts of New France, the style of education began to shift (Government of Canada). Beginning in the early 1600s, Récollet missionaries began to establish European-style education institutions to engage with the indigenous nations near Quebec (White and Peters). During this period, France's policy was to convert the First Nations people into "Frenchmen" (White and Peters). Referred to as "[f]rancization", the Rêcollet missionaries believed that these institutions were crucial in preparing Indigenous people to be converted into Christians (White and Peters). In Notre Dame des Anges, six native boys would be brought to the boarding school to learn French culture and sermons (White and Peters). Although the school would eventually be closed due to the lack of First Nations participants, similar programs would continue, with First Nations boys sometimes being sent to France to fully convert (White and Peters). The Récollets' goals would be "to educate the children in the mission field as a means of reaching the older generation and rearing up a generation of converts who would eventually rise to positions of influence in the band or tribe" (Scott 112), trying to subtly influence the children of First Nations leaders into becoming more open to French ideals. However, this system would not last, with Indigenous not being willing to send their children to these schools without monetary compensation, making it a costly venture (Scott 112).

After the passing of New France to the British in 1773 under the Treaty of Paris, Anglican missionaries began to establish schools, similar to those of the French decades prior (Scott 113). In 1799, the Anglican Church Missionary Society issued a statement declaring that "it is the duty highly incumbent upon every Christian to propagate the knowledge of the gospel amongst the heathen", stating their intention to "civilize" people in the British Empire's holdings (Prochner et al.). In Canada, the Anglican society established schools in Ontario, Manitoba, and Alberta (Prochner et al.). However, it is important to note that early the schools established by the

Anglican Societies, due to the Protestant belief that God's writing was crucial to salvation, helped to promote bilingual literacy through their translations of important religious texts into First Nations languages (Scott 113). This however would change in the early 1800s, as the Anglican Church Missionary Society began to adopt the policy of assimilation held by the greater British Empire (Scott).

As mission schools began to explode in numbers, more and more scholars began to think that the only way to "civilize" Indigenous children would be to remove them from their families. Church Missionary Society Cleric John West, a prominent figure in Alberta, would write about his trip through the Red River colony, stating that "the North-American Indian of these regions would part with his children, to be educated in the white man's knowledge" (Scott 113). These ideas from Rousseau and other Enlightenment thinkers began to shift the narrative surrounding Indigenous people into those needing to be saved, education began to be used as a tool for this transfer (Prochner et al).

3. Residential Schools

The era post-1830 marked a change in how schools were approached in Canada. The century that followed had Indigenous students being forcibly assimilated into Canadian Society through education. In 1934, the longest-running residential school would be established in Brantford, called the Mohawk Institute. Known as the "Mushole" to the locals (Miller). In the 130 years it acted as a school, the Institute was known for both its exploitation and abuse of its Indigenous students, a trend that would continue as more schools began to open (Miller). Although many Indigenous nations had begun to request the establishment of schools near their lands to teach their children the ways of European society (as seen in the schools built near Sault Ste. Marie) (Miller), policymakers in Ottawa beginning in the last 1890s started to emphasize residential rather than day schools, stating that "By the children being separated from their parents and property and regularly instructed not only in the rudiments of English language but also in trades and agriculture… I [Indian Commissioner Edgar Dewdney] can but assure myself that a great end will be attained for the permanent and lasting benefit of the Indian" (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada 13). Following this statement, the Department of Indian Affairs began to open up industrial schools to serve as an alternative to the day-school school model, instead of boarding schools usually off reserve, expanding all over the country until 1920, when the peak number was 80 (Miller).

By the 1920s, the day schools were phased out, with residential schools becoming the flagship program for Indigenous education. Furthermore, all Indigenous children from the ages of 7 to 15 were made to attend these facilities, with officers penalizing families that refused to send their children away (Sharpe 213). Thus, if a parent refused to send their child to residential school, the RCMP had the jurisdiction to take them by force (Linklater 12). In addition, children were often also forbidden to practice traditional beliefs, wear traditional clothes or hairstyles, and were only allowed to speak in English (Truth of Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 76). As a means to separate children from their heritage, belongings that were linked to Indigenous culture or family would be destroyed, most famously with Phyllis Webstad.

Besides the alienation, however, the children were often victims of physical and sexual abuse, with an estimated 6000 (out of 150,000) dying (Miller). The curriculum was not much better either, reinforcing the belief that Indigenous children were less than compared to white children. Additionally, teachers found in these institutions were often not qualified to teach anything more than basic education, creating a self-fulfilling cycle, leading to Indigenous children often coming out with low self-esteem, therefore setting them out to be less successful (Scott 120). The lack of Indigenous role models, the abuse, and the distance away from home led to issues facing Indigenous communities in the modern day, such as chronic unemployment, substance abuse, poverty, violence and more (Sharpe 216-17). Although the last residential school closed down in 1996, the legacy that they left continues in the children of survivors, affecting how Indigenous communities today.

4. Competing Perspectives on Education

In the 1949 book *Social Theory and Social Structures*, Robert Merton introduces the idea of Manifest and Latent Functions, and the intended and unintended consequences of policies (Merton 60-9). As a more classical perspective on education, Merton's theory on manifest and latent functions helps map out the educational system's goals in Canada, breaking down the effects into intended and unintended. Because

policy projects what society considers to be the ideal, manifest and latent functions can be used to observe a society's ideals, and the political ideology supporting them (Ball). As education becomes more oriented toward the preparation of students for the workforce, some manifest functions of education include socializing children to work with others, taking on adult economic roles, and respecting social control (whether through laws or authority) (Robertson). Education may also play a role in determining social place, specifically as a means of upward mobility and financial stability (Buchmann and Hannum 80).

However, education also carries its own biases, often reinforcing social hierarchies already present as latent functions. This can include continued marginalization, the perpetuation of racist ideals, and harmful stereotypes, especially for visible minorities such as Indigenous students. In Canada, Indigenous scholars such as Eve Haque and Donna Partick have pointed to linguistic policies made by governmental bodies like the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism (1963-1969) to the Canadian constitution in reinforcing racial hierarchies seen in broader Canadian society, further marginalizing Indigenous peoples in institutions such as schools (Haque and Patrick).

While manifest and latent functions provide one way to look at education, critical theories help address the inequalities within the education system's structure. Started by Paulo Friere, critical pedagogy questions institutions through specific lenses, in this paper's case, indigenous education (Giroux 716). Looking at both the formal curriculum (what norms and values of dominant Canadian that the educational material and social organization of schooling reflect) and the hidden curriculum (what unspoken lessons are absorbed by students through authority and the reinforcement of existing culture), critical theories of education can help uncover any possible issues in public schools, identifying the processes in which inequity is reproduced.

The final competing perspective to education however is indigenous pedagogy, focusing on the decolonization of education as a whole. Although both classical and critical forms of educational theory are crucial in determining what parts of the curriculum alienate Indigenous students, Indigenous pedagogy helps to showcase what parts of schooling fail to serve the specific community (Furrey). While critical pedagogy focuses on remaking public education to benefit all students, Indigenous pedagogy aims to criticize the core of the educational system as a whole, focusing on the inherently colonial parts of and how other less traditional forms of education can help support Indigenous communities (Furrey).

Building on all of these perspectives, this paper explores the combined roles of the hidden and formal curricula, looking specifically at (a) the content of textbooks in history, literature, and civics and (b) a range of school-based that may reinforce disadvantage and violence against specifically Indigenous women in the Canadian school system. Included among the school-based practices are regulations by provinces such as language, resource allocation, disciplinary action, and other practices that way inform cultural erasure.

5. Data and Methodology

The history of Indigenous policy raises a few questions: how does the socialization by the Canadian hidden curriculum and policy perpetuate violence against Indigenous women specifically in the context of the MMIWG movement? Are Indigenous figures presented in the curriculum to lead to this conclusion? And how does the curriculum choose to include Indigenous figures in Canadian history?

This paper focuses on how the Social Studies and Career curriculums in British Columbia from grades 8-12 potentially affect how Indigenous girls and women are socialized, determining whether or not it makes them more susceptible to violence. Because Canada has its education system organized by province rather than federally, all the curricula observed in this study will focus on where the MMWIG movement is the most severe, British Columbia. This paper specifically will use qualitative data, to interpret the curriculum guidelines set by the Ministry of Education in British Columbia. This paper uses qualitative methodology to determine its results because the educational outline can help showcase what the British Colombian Ministry is attempting to instill in the future generation, something that only data cannot determine. Because the hidden curricula cannot be measured quantitatively, qualitative data is the best way to showcase the implicit messaging of the educational policy. Furthermore, because of the prevalence of young girls missing in the MMIWG movement, this paper follows students'

formative education to early to late teenagers. Besides the age range and location, Social Studies and careers were chosen because of their roles in presenting Indigenous people in Canadian society. For Social Studies, this paper looks at the inclusion of Indigenous history into the curriculum through cultural and community involvement in different major events as well as how Indigenous figures are treated. On the other hand, with the careers curriculum, this paper will analyze how the course affects Indigenous students (whether it aligns with more traditional post-secondary pathways for Indigenous peoples, whether it stunts or limits Indigenous students from pursuing further, whether it creates a stereotype on the careers or choices Indigenous students should embrace). Together, both subjects will hopefully help to showcase the pitfalls that the British Columbia educational system falls into, illustrating possible areas in which Indigenous students (especially women and girls) can be socialized into marginalized positions.

Examining the context of textbooks and the policy recommendations set out by the Ministry of Education in the province, a systemic cultural comparison will be done to analyze factors such as cultural and social organization. Although textbooks have been traditionally what studies have used to look at the curriculum, as more and more classrooms have opted to move away from their use, the curriculum outlined by the Ministry of Education provides valuable insight into what is happening. The curriculum will mainly be analyzed for what is included about ideology, language and the use of orality, and what insights can be found on how racial hierarchy is presented and how Indigenous voices are treated within the classroom.

Finally, the overall schooling structure and schedule will be taken into account when observing the effects of the hidden curriculum within education. Besides educational content, schooling practices such as policies on disciplinary instruction, school attendance (whether schooling coincides with major Indigenous holidays), and Indigenous student's relationship with overall administration (do Indigenous people have a say in how education is presented to their children?) also affect how Indigenous students are perceived as well as socialized. As a precursor of how society will treat them, how does the structure of institutions like schools treat Indigenous students?

Although this paper observes how Indigenous students are treated within the educational system, it is only looking at a specific case study from a limited segment of the population. The results from this study do not present the experiences of all Indigenous people in education or in context with the MMIWG movement but instead, a small group that represents the ideals and thoughts of their respective Indigenous nations. This paper looks at only indigenous students in British Columbia and further studies are warranted to compare the treatment of indigenous students in differing provinces.

6. Findings

6.1 Social Studies

Beginning in social studies, students from grades 1-7 are taught foundational information about the community such as local culture and traditions, with an emphasis on required units surrounding Indigenous peoples. During early primary school years, students learn about social structures that are local to areas, try to incorporate Indigenous oral history into the curriculum, learn about the relationship between humans and the environment, and begin to make ethical judgements on decisions. This can include questions on whether indigenous languages and traditions should be maintained, land rights, and whether or not technology developed today is better than the ones that indigenous peoples have previously had. As students move into the later years, the focus shifts to broader Canadian history, covering Indigenous involvement in the War of 1812 and the "discovery" of the Americas through both indigenous and settler perspectives. However, as the students go into grades 5-7, the course work begins to broaden into larger world history, only covering other Canadian minorities in limited detail. Although call #62 from the calls to Truth and Reconciliation for residential schools to be a mandatory part of the education curriculum, besides what was covered in the report, there is very limited mandatory coverage of modern Indigenous events. Culturally relevant education is critical for developing students' self-esteem and self-worth (Morcom), especially with primary school students, with Indigenous students performing better when courses reflect their own experiences (Morcom).

As students move onto secondary education, the educational curriculum once again broadens towards global events, looking at world history

and how humans developed societies as well as modernized. Specifically looking at the colonization of the New World and how trade networks developed, the last part of mandatory social studies mainly focuses on European developments and ideals, looking at how they affect the world. Although the curriculum does cover other societies (namely parts of Asia and the Arab World), most of the curriculum outlined by the BC Ministry of Education fails to connect Canadian experiences with larger world history, with limited involvement in indigenous peoples (not just in Canada but Worldwide). It is not until grade 9 that Indigenous people are reintroduced into the curriculum as mandatory or major parts of Social Studies. Focusing on colonialism and imperialism, the grade 9 curriculum aims to question the role of the Canadian government and how it perpetuated inequity, covering both competing perspectives on Canada's colonial identity and its lasting effects on Indigenous communities. Although revolutions are covered, specifically Canadian rebellions (such as the Red River Resistance and the Northwest Resistance) are not required content, leaving areas for teachers to choose whether or not to focus on Canadian history. While mandatory education in British Columbia carries some Indigenous perspectives, they still serve as non-mandatory additions to the school system, meaning that for Indigenous students to have more access to Indigenous perspectives in education, many would have to seek it on their own. While many teachers actively strive to include relevant Indigenous texts in courses such as Social Studies, settler teachers have found that teaching these topics tends to be intimidating and beyond what many were taught to teach, resulting in less culturally relevant material being included in the education of Indigenous children (St. Verna 39). For teachers who were not taught Indigenous perspectives and lack sufficient training to question the curriculum that many grew up on, the subjects they teach (such as Social Studies) can lack critical information for the communities they serve, as educators, especially those who are more hostile or fail to see the relevance in the more Indigenous heavy curriculums, lean on the status quo (Brant-Birioukov 110).

It is only when a student opts to pursue Social Studies as an elective that more opportunities to discuss the role of indigeneity arise. The grade 10 Social Studies curriculum focused more on Indigenous governance and what it means to be Canadian, looking at how Indigenous people interacted with the government through the past centuries until colonialism. This is explored through political acts such as the Indian Act, treaties, and discussions surrounding land rights as well as local issues. While the government of British Columbia encourages discussions surrounding Indigenous people, teachers are still given the choice of the level of Indigenous perspectives that are involved in the classroom. While the grade 10 Social Studies Curriculum encourages more critical thinking beyond what previous years have contributed, it still falls into the same issues that plagued the curriculum before, limited areas in which indigeneity is discussed in combination with limited knowledge within the field.

The final two years of Social Studies work with the varying topics discussed in previous years to branch into multiple disciplines and courses, from indigenous perspectives to philosophy to world history. As a major departure from previous years, the curriculum for social studies in grade 11 is split into Francophone culture and a general course meant to prepare students for at least three branches of the humanities (it is up to the teacher's discretion to choose what to focus on). While some schools may choose to incorporate discussions of Indigenous perspectives into their curriculum, the general grade 11 social studies course lacks a firm curriculum plan, instead choosing to mix the disciplines for students to prepare for their final year courses. While this plan makes logistical sense, most likely being tailored for the electives offered at the specific school, it leaves a message to students on the lowered importance of Indigenous perspectives, something that can be chosen or forgotten depending on convenience. This implicit messaging is further strengthened by the availability of the Francophone elective as a course that exists separately, fundamentally placing the francophones (another major minority in Canada) as something more important than the First Nations and other minorities, reinforcing the racial and cultural hierarchy that has existed since colonialism. By making Indigenous perspectives in education, especially for students who will soon be joining the adult workforce, the curriculum reinforces the idea that Indigenous voices are not a mandatory part of society and deserve differing treatment compared to other major groups such as the Francophones, letting students be able to

ignore parts of Canadian society that are still affected by colonialism. For Indigenous students in British Columbia, the flippancy that the curriculum treats Indigenous rights is a reflection of how society will choose to approach Indigenous perspectives, opting to include them when asked but choosing to ignore them when it is convenient, instead building up the legacies of the colonial entities that it is trying to divorce from.

The hidden curriculum is seen most prominently in the final electives that grade 12 students can choose to take, with many given the choice to touch upon Indigenous perspectives, from politics to genocide studies to urban studies. While many of the examples provided by the British Colombia Ministry of Education touch upon Indigenous perspectives, it is rare to find substantive examples or criticisms of how the Canadian government treats indigenous peoples specifically in relation to the elective. Besides the courses B.C. First Peoples and Contemporary Indigenous Studies (which usually have some level of input from local people), many of the courses that are offered do not give room for students to question the role that Canadian institutions still play in perpetuating inequity, presenting Indigenous voices without incorporating the criticisms that come with them. While the curriculum allows for Indigenous voices to be added, it fails to foster the critical thinking needed for students to be able to incorporate and listen to First Nations perspectives within the workforce, failing to allow constructive representation of Indigenous students and experiences.

In the curriculum of British Columbia, to be indigenous is to play a passive role within Canadian society. The biggest failing in the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives in the curriculum is the limited roles that Indigenous people are allowed to play within history, often being portrayed as victims at the hands of colonialism, whether this be through treaties, residential schools, or current treaty disputes. In the cases in which Indigenous perspectives are encouraged to be added, such as conversations around Indigenous life and governance, the curriculum still positions it to how Canadian society has changed, indirectly fostering the narrative that Indigenous voice and culture is a thing of the past. By keeping Indigenous representation within a passive role, victims of a perpetual crime, the curriculum indirectly inspires apathy within larger Canadian society towards Indigenous issues and it creates a new stereotype for Indigenous people to be placed in, as Indigenous experience is reduced to its relation to the Canadian government.

For Indigenous students, this might also mean that the current representation of Indigenous people does not effectively reflect their own experiences and communities, making them less likely to be interested or connect with the content that is being taught, therefore failing to set them up for success. The people who experience the most consequence of British Columbia's failure to represent Indigenous people accurately are Indigenous students, as they become more likely to face stereotypes and the expectation of victimhood or passivity, hindering their success in adapting to the challenges of later life, as the solutions given to solve Canada's problems with colonialism fail to address the core issue.

6.2 Careers

Careers is a Canadian course meant to prepare students to join the workforce. Like many other provinces, British Columbia's career curriculum mainly focuses on both career development and post-secondary planning, whether that means applying for institutions of higher education or gaining skills to join the workforce. The careers curriculum includes interviewing skills, self-reflection, chances to work with mentors, and the exploration of careers and goals. Although the curriculum focuses on finding careers, the British Columbian Ministry of Education also acknowledges the different viewpoints and experiences that affect the decisions that lead to post-secondary choices. While it acknowledges it, however, the scope on how much Indigenous perspectives is included for Indigenous students is left up to the teacher's discretion, with no further instructions on how Indigenous students and other minorities should be taught in the curriculum, it is difficult to access whether the goals have been met.

Harold Cardinal in his book *The Unjust Society* wrote that Indigenous people required attention to be transitioned into the workforce or as a part of Canadian society. Arguing that the stereotypes put on Indigenous people (poverty, under or unemployment, and being supported by the welfare system) are a result of failure to support Indigenous people properly after colonization, created by the racist policies that were implemented. While the careers program might

hold merit in some aspects, helping prepare students for post-graduation, it is only effective if a teacher can fully address the needs of the students in the communities that they teach. Without the proper instructions or incorporation of the variety of perspectives that exist within British Colombia, teachers could potentially continue to reinforce their own biases against Indigenous students, discouraging them from exploring other pathways to success.

7. Missing and Murder Indigenous Women and Girls

Until it becomes commonplace for Indigenous stories to be taught in schools beyond the narrow narrative of victimhood, Indigenous identity in Canadian society will be linked with passivity. As students are being taught the new curriculum, a new image of Indigenous people has been emerging, one that has been informed only by stories of colonialism and guilt. For Indigenous students and non-indigenous students, the lack of strong contemporary narratives about Indigenous people ends up harming them, as the limited nuance breeds apathy about current issues, as Indigenous voices are relegated to conversations from a bygone era.

This is especially harmful to young Indigenous women, as it both creates an education system that fails to identify with them and a greater public perception that violence and victimhood are intrinsically linked with being Indigenous. For Indigenous women and girls who are already more at risk of facing violence, having a curriculum that uses Indigenous voices as accessories, added and taken away to suit the convenience of the school board, sends the message that they do not matter. By not centring or expanding on Indigenous voices, the British Columbian presents a version of Indigenous people that fails to connect with the core of the issue with the MMIWG movement, that Indigenous women are not believed and are treated worse by law enforcement in the areas that are the most vulnerable. For Indigenous girls and women, people who are parts of communities that already have bad experiences with law enforcement and governmental institutions, the way that Indigenous voices are presented throughout the curriculum only reconfirms their worst fears, that their identities and lives will be boiled down to a passive sidenote, that Canadian society does not expect anything more from their lives than being victims to a crime (whether that be colonialism, residential schools, or even the way the MMIWG movement is presented in education).

For non-indigenous students, the curriculum fails to adapt to newer topics, creating a level of dissociation from political issues that are extremely important. Because of how oversaturated the curriculum is with Indigenous issues from 1800-1900, many students end up not caring as much about the topic, leading to adults who choose to be apathetic about the same issues. For non-indigenous students—future teachers, lawyers, policy-makers, law enforcement, and more—the apathy and the messages that schools teach will become the view that is held by greater society for decades, leading to the dangerous idea that while Canadians will be aware of Indigenous issues, they will choose to turn a blind eye. If indigeneity is associated with victimhood, the more likely non-indigenous Canadians are to keep the status quo, not believing that there is something that can change this. The MMIWG cases are an excellent example of how Canadian education fails, as the same attitudes are being held while dangerous stereotypes evolve, creating a feedback loop that feeds into the human rights crisis.

8. Conclusion

The Canadian education system has started to push in the right direction in updating the education curriculum to include Indigenous perspectives. Yet there are still places that need updating for a fuller account of the Indigenous experience in Canada. Schools could try to incorporate more relevant and new texts about Indigenous people, as seen by the new English course focusing on modern Indigenous text into the education system. By having a wider variety of texts included in the curriculum, students can relate and empathize more with the content taught, teaching students that indigeneity is beyond a monolithic stereotype.

Furthermore, teachers need to be better equipped with the material; training must be required to improve teachers' ability to tackle Indigenous issues. For many educators currently, with the curriculum constantly changing and adding new content, the teaching of Indigenous issues becomes overwhelming, especially as many are not fully equipped with how to approach new content. School boards and the respective Ministries of education must make efforts to properly give resources (whether that be training sessions, detailed outlines, or recommended

readings) to teachers who are willing to reach out and better educate themselves about Indigenous issues, therefore being better equipped to pass on the knowledge towards their students. Until the Canadian education system can break out of the mould that it is treating its Indigenous people under, resources and support will be needed to prepare educators to be able to teach an equitable and understanding curriculum.

Author Statement

We would like to acknowledge that Toronto exists on the traditional lands and territories of the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. Toronto is covered by Treaty 13 and the Dish with One Spoon and continues to foster the livelihoods for both indigenous and non-indigenous people alike.

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