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**The Sixties Scoop, Historical Trauma, and Changing the Current Landscape About
Indigenous People**

**By
Shandel Valiquette**

**A Major Research Paper
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
Through the Department of History
In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for
The Degree of Master of Arts at the
University of Windsor**

Windsor, Ontario, Canada

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**The Sixties Scoop, Historical Trauma, and Changing the Current Landscape About
Indigenous People**

**By
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September 18, 2019

Declaration of Originality

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Abstract

Through analyzing current literature on the Sixties Scoop and how it frames its origins and causes, many describe it as primarily assimilatory, even while acknowledging the historical legacies that contributed to problems in Indigenous communities and families. This paper will analyze the various perspectives on the Sixties Scoop, and argue that it was a complex process, a result of historical trauma related to colonial efforts and not a single, unified policy focused on assimilating Indigenous people into mainstream culture.

In pulling the thread of historical trauma rather than assimilation, this paper traces the streams of the past which help to focus on why Indigenous people are an incredibly vulnerable and dependent group, and it also allows for more education and understanding to offer more support. Through writing, this paper argues that to understand the Sixties Scoop, we cannot look solely at the government for the removal of thousands of Indigenous children from their homes. Instead, we need to look at its complex process that involves many factors, including residential school legacy, the longer history of colonialism, as well as a wider lack of education and ignorance that has shaped attitudes of society towards Indigenous peoples.

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this paper to the many professors throughout my post-secondary career that helped develop my skills, and give me the knowledge, creativity and belief that I could accomplish something this large. A few professors, such as Brittany Luby who originally inspired me to tackle a paper on the Sixties Scoop when she first taught it to me and the rest of our class. The first paper I ever wrote on the Sixties Scoop was written in her class in 2014 at Laurentian University, and the dominos began to fall. I would like to thank and dedicate this to Brittany Luby. I would also like to thank Dr. Bruce Douville at Algoma University for helping me with my undergraduate thesis, also on the Sixties Scoop, but from a very different angle. Lastly, I'd like to thank Dr. Miriam Wright at the University of Windsor for helping me – or putting up with me - through this process. Circumstances did not make it the easiest task, but we've pulled it off.

I would also love to dedicate this paper to the variety of people that have helped, supported, and questioned my methods over the last ten years of post-secondary. Autumn, Andy, Kayla and Brittany especially, because when I felt defeated during points of my post-secondary career and especially this paper, you pulled me out and lifted me up. I also want to thank you for proof-reading the atrocity that was the very first draft of this paper. You four, and others, have given me something throughout this process that I don't know if I could explain, or even begin to thank you for.

To my family, friends, peers, and even the student I GA'd for over the years, I want to thank you all. I've learned so much from all of you.

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Introduction

The history learned throughout general education does not go into much detail about the rise of colonialism and the impacts it has had on Indigenous peoples beginning in the 18th century. They do not describe that from the earliest days, all forms of government have set out and pursued assimilationist policies towards Indigenous people, leading to the creation and devastation of residential schools, and they most certainly do not go on to discuss how those colonial policies have had devastating ripple effects through to the 19th century, up to today. History books in school often don't educate us on why commissions such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission came to be, what it set out to do, and the results that surfaced. Nor do they tell us about the Sixties Scoop Class Action lawsuit that is happening in various provinces in present day, where survivors of the Sixties Scoop are trying to get compensation for the damages they claim the government inflicted upon them. There is so much that is not taught which only continues to add to the havoc of colonialism.

This paper sets out to challenge the current day preconceived notions an individual can hold towards Indigenous peoples by switching the thinking on the Sixties Scoop from negative preconceived notions and assimilation and focusing on historical trauma. The Sixties Scoop, between the early 1950s through to the mid 1980s, was a time when over 15,000 Indigenous children were removed from their families by provincial child welfare services across the country and sent to live in foster homes or adopted by predominantly white families. At its peak in the mid 1970s, 581 Indigenous children in Ontario were taken into the care of provincial child welfare authorities, and were placed into the system to be fostered or adopted.¹ Today, many of

¹ Canada. Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. *Annual Report, Fiscal Year 1973-1974*. By Judd Buchanan. Ottawa, ON: Queens Printer. Library and Archives Canada: 21

those children taken, now adults, are wishing to reconnect with family, with their culture and communities, hoping to regain what seemed to be stolen from them. In an era of reconciliation and recognition of Indigenous peoples, the Sixties Scoop is front and centre; many survivors are in the media through news articles and radio broadcast, creating conversations. Literature, films and documentaries are coming out about struggles and survival throughout the Sixties Scoop, and the reconnection it will hopefully bring them.² It is a common narrative to describe the motives of the Sixties Scoop as assimilation, that the mass removal of Indigenous children from their birth families was a deliberate attempt to eradicate their culture and an extension of assimilationist policies within Canadian colonialism. While it may have been a motive for some, this paper will discuss how the Sixties Scoop may better be explained as a complex process, a result of historical trauma associated with decades of colonialism and federal policies that have negatively affected Indigenous people. Using the framework of historical trauma to understand the Sixties Scoop rather than assimilation allows us to offer a fuller perspective on the deep causes of these social and family problems. It may also help to give a different perspective on history for people who hold negative views of the issues Indigenous people face.

Scholars and others talking about the Sixties Scoop tend to portray it in two different ways. The first is that the Sixties Scoop was assimilatory, a continuation of the residential school era, an attempt to absorb Indigenous peoples into mainstream society so the government would no longer have to be their caretakers. In this perspective, child welfare agencies stepped in to abduct children as the residential schools were phased out. Child welfare authorities and poor

² A lot of articles in the news about a class action lawsuit happening across Canada trying to get compensation and damages, and ultimately reconciliation and closure from the Sixties Scoop. Articles have arisen in various media outlets such as CBC, Global News, Huffington Post, Macleans and more through the years. As well as authors such as Colleen Cardinal, Carol Daniels and other write books describing the traumatic experiences and effects on their cultures because of the Sixties Scoop, and documentaries such as Birth of a Family by Tasha Hubbard have been released which talk about loss of self, family, culture and the desire and importance of reconnection.

foster and adoptive homes simply replaced the Indian agents and the church. A number of Indigenous people who had been removed from their homes recounting their experiences have argued this, such as Carol Daniels' *Bearskin Diary*. In this story, the main character Sandy describes her experiences after being "scooped up". She recalls what the Sixties Scoop was and how it came to be that "the Scoop happened to single [Indigenous] mothers who were deemed unfit, for no reason other than being single mothers," which is solely how Sandy feels.³ Sandy feels that if it was not assimilation, then there would have been no reason for her to be taken from her birth mother. While this story is a work of fiction, it is supposedly based on true accounts of survivors. While Daniels, nor the characters she writes, ever explicitly state that the removal of Sandy or other children was assimilation, she hints at it. Conversations once Sandy finds her family revolve around the various reasons why Sandy was removed, that her mom was a single, unwed, Indigenous woman living in the city.⁴ Suzanne Fournier and Ernie Crey, authors of *Stolen from Our Embrace*, also argue that the Sixties Scoop was in fact an attempt at assimilation, that the federal government used the trauma to their advantage to further assimilate Indigenous children.⁵ While looking at a broad definition of the Sixties Scoop - that it was the mass apprehension of Indigenous children who were then placed into non-Indigenous foster and adoptive homes – it very much does seem like an assimilatory agenda. A closer look, however, reveals that the Sixties Scoop was a much more complex, multi-layered experience.

Indeed, the other perspective on the Sixties Scoop is that it was not assimilation, but instead was the very negative side effects of past colonial practices and massive trauma having been

³ Carol Daniels, *Bearskin Diary: A Novel*. Gibson: Nightwood Editions (2015) 29.

⁴ Daniels, *Bearskin Diary*. 124-127

⁵ Suzanne Fournier and Ernie Crey. *Stolen from Our Embrace: The Abduction of First Nations Children and the Restoration of Aboriginal Communities*. Vancouver: Douglas & MacIntyre Ltd (1997)

inflicted upon Indigenous peoples, families, and communities throughout previous generations. Intergenerational trauma, or as it will be referred to in this paper, historical trauma, is not a clinical term but instead describes the compounded effects of the colonial experience. It involves the transmission of social, individual, familial, and community problems from one generation to the next. The 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples defines intergenerational effects, which is very applicable, as “the consequences of past errors continue to be felt in successive generations of [Indigenous] families.”⁶ An article by Linda O’Neill *et al* states that “in the case of many [Indigenous] people, generations have been exposed to traumatic experiences, violence, sexual abuse, accidental death, suicide, discrimination, and oppression. The trauma here is intergenerational because economic, social and political dependence, the effects of colonization, are intergenerational. This specific intergenerational trauma affecting Indigenous people is often referred to as historical trauma.”⁷ From today, in the twenty-first century, historical trauma for an individual could easily go back to the late 19th century; upwards of four generations, compiling and being passed onto the next. Therefore, it takes generations to heal. Historical trauma is not a term that is normally used in historical literature, but is more grounded in psychology and sociology, specifically relating to family studies. Much of the literature on historical trauma has emerged from work with cultural and historical traumas; families affected by historical traumas can display residual effects of disrupted differentiation of self, traumatic stress, and emotional and psychosocial disorders.⁸ Isobel, Goodyear, *et al* state that:

Any relational trauma experienced by an individual may be replicated in their children via the attachment relationship due to the relational nature of early childhood neurobiological

⁶ Government of Canada. *Report on the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples: Gathering Strength*. Ottawa: Canada Communication Group Publishing (1996) 31.

⁷ Linda O’Neill et al, “Hidden Burdens: A Review of Intergenerational, Historical and Complex Trauma, Implications for Indigenous Families.” *Journal of Child and Adolescent Trauma* Vol 11: 2 (2108) 177.

⁸ Sophie Isobel, Melinda Goodyear et al, “Preventing Intergenerational Trauma Transmission: A Critical Interpretive Synthesis.” *Journal of Clinical Nursing* 28 (7-8) 1101

development. The uniqueness of intergenerational trauma therefore lies in its existence as a relational process. Rather than an event or events, intergenerational trauma is both an antecedent and outcome of traumatic attachment. It results in a disrupted construction of intersubjective self and identity, due to the blurring of self and other, where trauma experienced by the important other becomes incorporated into the self of the recipient. Once transmitted, the trauma has its own consequences and individual effects as per all psychological and interpersonally developed traumas, including vulnerability for further transmission of trauma to subsequent generations.⁹

And the authors of *Hidden Burdens* relate this historical intergenerational trauma more closely to what Indigenous peoples have experienced throughout history to lay more ground:

Historical trauma describes the legacy of traumatic events experienced by historically oppressed communities over succeeding generations, a legacy that includes social and psychological responses. Using historical trauma as a lens presents a broader picture of the compounding effect of traumatic experiences over time. The three main characteristics of historical trauma include: (a) the widespread nature of it in many Indigenous communities, (b) historic traumatic events resulting in distress and collective loss for contemporary community members, and (c) the purposeful, destructive intent of outsiders who perpetuated the traumatic events.¹⁰

Although the term historical trauma is not commonly used in history, the term is best used to help to think about the long-term effects from colonials, government policies and state paternalism and its impact on individuals, families and communities that become afflicted by it.

This paper will analyze current literature on the Sixties Scoop and how it frames its origins and causes. Some scholarly literature and much of the popular accounts – first person accounts, account in the media – describe the Sixties Scoop as primarily assimilatory, even while acknowledging the historical legacies that contributed to problems in Indigenous communities and families. This paper analyzes the various perspectives on the Sixties Scoop, and argues that it was a complex process, a result of historical trauma related to colonial efforts and not a single, unified policy focused on assimilating Indigenous people into mainstream culture.

⁹ Isobel, Goodyear, et al, “Preventing Intergenerational Trauma Transmission.” 1102-1103;

¹⁰ O’Neill, “Hidden Burdens” 177-178.

On of the reasons assimilation does not fit the Sixties Scoop experience is that although it happened across Canada, it was never a unified, concerted project like some federal policies relating to Indigenous peoples. Child welfare services are under provincial jurisdiction, and beginning in the 1950s, provincial authorities, through regional welfare agencies, become involved in cases on reserves. The number of children removed and placed in foster and adoptive homes varied greatly from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, municipality to municipality. Therefore, it was not a single, coordinated policy but a scattered effect found throughout Canada. What the case workers going into the reserves found in common, however, were communities and families suffering from the historical trauma, the longer-term impacts of colonial policies, unable to cope. They found children often in less than ideal situations. Therefore, this paper argues that negative effects of colonization causing compounded historical trauma and inability, as well as lack of support for Indigenous communities, rather than assimilation, was behind the Sixties Scoop. Going through the Indian residential school era to give context to the Sixties Scoop, this is truly where the historical trauma begins to make the deepest cuts and the most hidden scars.

This paper will begin by looking at the larger impact of Canadian government colonial policy on Indigenous people beginning with the *Indian Act, 1876*. The *Indian Act, 1876* was a legal document that effectively rendered Indigenous people dependent on the Canadian government. It spelled out what Indigenous peoples were legally entitled to, including land, money, property, and estates. It stated who could, and who could not leave the reserves; it defined and constructed how bands would elect chiefs and councillors; it legally defined who was and was not “Indian”.¹¹ The power that the federal government had over the daily lives of

¹¹ Government of Canada, “Indian Act, 1876”

Indigenous peoples, as seen in the *Indian Act*, is often seen as one of the many factors that has stripped away independence and self-respect from Indigenous communities over time.

The Indian residential school era is widely seen by scholars, by the 2015 Truth and Reconciliation Commission on residential schools, and many Indigenous peoples as a major source of the social, cultural, family, health and other problems that have afflicted Indigenous communities over successive generations. John Milloy and J.R Miller, as well as other scholars and writers on the Sixties Scoop, have argued the atrocities and detrimental effects of the Indian residential school era laid a foundation for the social and familial problems that led to the Sixties Scoop. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) states that “there is strong evidence that the residential school period was the beginning of an intergenerational cycle of neglect and abuse. This cycle is seen as one very important contributor to the significant over-representation of [Indigenous] children and families in child welfare systems in the country today.”¹² The TRC later states that “it is indisputable that many of the recognized social determinants of health – income, education, employment, social status, working and living conditions, health practices, coping skills, and childhood development – were themselves impacted by attendance at residential school,” as well as other efforts of colonization outside of the residential school such as strict rules for on-reserve Indigenous peoples, and constant racism and discrimination that off-reserve Indigenous peoples had to deal with during that time.¹³

In its 2015 report, the TRC of Canada detailed the impacts of the Indian residential school era. In the introduction of this lengthy report, the Commissioners argued:

¹² Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *The Legacy Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*. Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press (2015): 31

¹³ Truth and Reconciliation Commission, *The Legacy*, 158.

For over a century, the central goals of Canada's [Indigenous] policy were to eliminate [Indigenous] governments; ignore [Indigenous] rights; terminate the Treaties; and, through a process of assimilation, cause [Indigenous] peoples to cease to exist as a distinct legal, social, cultural, religious, and racial entities in Canada. The establishment and operation of residential schools were a central element of the policy, which can be best described as "cultural genocide".¹⁴

The TRC provided their own definition of cultural genocide, because it is not defined by modern dictionaries. They state that cultural genocide is "the destruction of those structures and practices that allow a group to continue as a group. States that engage in cultural genocide set out to destroy the political and social institutions of the targeted group."¹⁵

Understandably, the TRC paints a very negative picture of the residential school legacy and sees a direct connection between lingering colonial attitudes in government and society and the Sixties Scoop. The report notes that the "provincial social workers assigned to reserves assessed child safety and welfare by mainstream cultural standards," and that they "received little to no training in [Indigenous] culture; they were not trained to recognize problems rooted in generations of trauma related to the residential schools."¹⁶ The TRC positions themselves within the assimilationist argument on the Sixties Scoop, saying that child welfare authorities simply replaced the residential schools as the institution for child apprehension, and that there was no concern in preserving Indigenous culture or identity.¹⁷ They argue that the Sixties Scoop was the

¹⁴ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*. Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press (2015): 1; and arguably the Sixties Scoop which the Truth and Reconciliation Commission covers very briefly later on in the document, but the report is still very applicable to

¹⁵ Truth and Reconciliation Commission, *Honouring the Truth*, 1.

¹⁶ Truth and Reconciliation Commission, *The Legacy*, 21

¹⁷ Truth and Reconciliation Commission, *Honouring the Truth*, 68.

result of Canada not listening to or helping Indigenous parents when they needed support, but instead removed children for assimilation.¹⁸

This paper will then explore the literature that looks specifically at the Sixties Scoop. Veronica Strong-Boag, Allyson Stevenson, and Patrick Johnston are the scholars who challenged the idea that child welfare services were deliberately removing children to destroy their families and culture. They argue that rather than a deliberate, coordinated strategy, impoverished conditions and neglect by the federal government, along with systemic racism were destroying their families and culture. In the midst of that devastation, many child welfare workers believed that children, for the sake of their lives and well-being, needed to be removed. As Karen Dubinsky points out in *Babies Without Border*, we need to “move from the symbolic language of ‘scoop’ and instead consider how racism and poverty created a set of adoption experiences for [Indigenous] children.”¹⁹ As well as the Sixties Scoop itself, this paper will explore the way that people who experienced the Sixties Scoop directly, either as adoptive parents of Indigenous adoptees, talk about cultural impact.

In pulling the thread of historical trauma rather than assimilation, it allows for a better understanding of how Indigenous peoples live today. Through historical trauma we are able to trace the streams of the past which help us better focus on why Indigenous people are an incredibly vulnerable and dependent group, and it also allows for more education and understanding to offer more support. The lens of historical trauma also allows for the realization the majority of people are incredibly uneducated or ignorant towards Indigenous people and historical trauma. Through writing, this paper argues that to understand the Sixties Scoop, we

¹⁸ Truth and Reconciliation Commission, *The Legacy*, 15.

¹⁹ Dubinsky, *Babies Without Borders*, 99.

cannot look solely at the government for the removal of thousands of Indigenous children from their homes. Instead, we need to look at its complex process that involve many factors, including residential school legacy, the longer history of colonialism, as well as a wider lack of education and ignorance that has shaped attitudes of society towards Indigenous peoples.

At the end, I try to point out the patterns of destruction and hurt that the individual in society is able to create, and if realized soon enough, they are able to shift that into patterns of healing and reconciliation. If one horrible idea (by today's standards) can be shared by the collective and create hurt, anguish and pain that ripples out for many years, does that also mean that a beautiful and helpful idea can be shared by the collective to move the people in a forward direction?

Colonialism, Canada, and Indigenous People

The Sixties Scoop did not start abruptly, but rather is the result of long-term colonialist strategies. It could be argued that the creation of the treaties was the beginning of complex relationships between Indigenous peoples and the Europeans. Indigenous treaties in Canada are constitutionally recognized agreements between the Crown and Indigenous peoples and are the basis of alliance between Indigenous peoples and Canada. Originating from the Royal Proclamation of 1763, first the British Crown and then after 1867, the Canadian government signed a series of treaties where Indigenous people gave up the majority of their land in exchange for reserve land which they were able to live on, as well as annual payments. The treaties the Canadian government signed after 1867 also included promises of education, health care and more for Indigenous peoples. For Indigenous peoples, the sacred and binding character of treaties is not found primarily in the documents' legalistic language. Instead, the true force of treaties is rooted in what was verbally exchanged, often in Indigenous languages, at the time of negotiations. These treaties also provided the groundwork for the federal government's continued involvement in the lives of Indigenous peoples, including the eventual creation of the residential schools.

Besides the treaties in 1876, the newly formed Canadian government introduced a piece of legislation that would have deep and long-lasting impacts on Indigenous peoples across Canada. *The Indian Act of 1876* was a consolidation of previous regulations pertaining to Indigenous peoples and it gave greater authority to the federal Department of Indian Affairs.²⁰

²⁰ Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada. "First Nations in Canada: Part 4 - Legislated Assimilation – Development of the Indian Act (1820–1927) - The Indian Act." Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada. May 02, 2017. Accessed July 05, 2019. <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1307460755710/1536862806124#chp4>.

The Department could now intervene in a wide variety of internal band issues and make sweeping policy decisions, such as determining who was an “Indian”. Under the Act, the Department would also manage Indian lands, resources and moneys, control access to intoxicants, and promote “civilization.”²¹

The Indian Act was based on the premise that it was the Crown’s responsibility to care for and protect the interests of Indigenous peoples, essentially being a very paternalistic mandate. It would carry out this responsibility by acting as a “guardian” until such time as [Indigenous peoples] could fully integrate into Canadian society.²² *The Indian Act* is one of the most frequently amended pieces of legislation in Canadian history. Between 1876 and 1927, it was amended nearly once a year and each amendment was largely concerned with ‘assimilation’ and ‘civilization’, and each time became increasingly restrictive, imposing more and more controls.²³ *The Act*, for example, did not allow Indigenous peoples to vote or hold property unless they became enfranchised or gave up their status, effectively rendering them a ‘regular’ Canadian citizen. The restrictiveness of *The Act* was often only escapable through enfranchisement, which furthered the assimilation agenda. Once enfranchised, they lost all treaty rights like annuity payments as well as *Indian Act* protections like exemptions from taxation and seizure of property.²⁴

Assimilation became the goal of the Canadian government to effectively have every Indigenous person become simply Canadian. One avenue of this assimilatory goal was the

²¹ Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada. "First Nations in Canada"

²² Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada. "First Nations in Canada"; confirms racist notions and paternalistic ideals from the government

²³ Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada. "First Nations in Canada"

²⁴ Robin Jarvis Brownlie. “‘A Better Citizen than Lots of White Men’: First Nations Enfranchisement -- an Ontario Case Study, 1918--1940.” *Canadian Historical Review* 87 no 1 (2006): 33

education of Indigenous children, far from their reserves and families. An amendment to *The Act* in 1884 provided for the creation of the Indian Residential Schools, which were predominantly funded and operated by the government of Canada and various denominations of churches.²⁵ In 1920, another amendment to the *Indian Act* made it mandatory for every Indigenous child between the ages of seven and sixteen years of age to attend an Indian residential school. In 1933, legal guardianship of the Indigenous children attending Indian residential school was assumed by the principals of those Indian residential schools, upon forcible surrender of legal custody by the parents.²⁶ If parents did not give up their children to attend residential school, “the Indian agent could threaten to withhold money from increasingly destitute [Indigenous] parents if they did not send their children away to school; he could even throw them in jail.”²⁷ In their book, *Stolen from Our Embrace*, Fournier and Crey highlight the gruesome elements of the church-run schools, the child welfare system and abuse and balance them against heroic stories of children who persevered and survived. They write:

in persuading [Indigenous] parents to send their children to these schools, authorities were assisted by a growing famine in Indian villages in western Canada. In this environment of hunger, amid recurring outbreaks of smallpox and influenza, the government withheld food rations from parents who resisted the removal of their children. Indian agents marched in lock step with the religious orders, preparing lists of children to be taken from the reserves and then organizing the fall round-up. Official policy called for children to be isolated not only from their family and homelands but also, once at school, from their friends and siblings. Isolation made the children more vulnerable to the massive brain washing...²⁸

²⁵ J.R Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision: A History of Native Residential Schools*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press (1996); John Milloy, *A National Crime: The Canadian Government and the Residential School System, 1879 to 1986*. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press (1999). Both books speak to how the residential schools were created and run, and who they were predominately run by.

²⁶ Union of Ontario Indian & Karen Restoule, *An Overview of the Indian Residential School System*. Creative Impressions (2003), 3-4.

²⁷ Suzanne Fournier and Ernie Crey. *Stolen from Our Embrace: The Abduction of First Nations Children and the Restoration of Aboriginal Communities*. Vancouver: Douglas & MacIntyre Ltd (1997) 54.

²⁸ Fournier and Crey, *Stolen from Our Embrace*, 56.

The government, like the churches, believed that Indigenous culture was barbaric and savage and, therefore, the education of the children needed to be assumed by ‘civilized’ people.

Historians often state that education of Indigenous children was the best direct way to assimilate Indigenous people, being that assimilation was the main goals of the policy.²⁹ J.R Miller, in his book *Shingwauk’s Vision: A History of Native Residential Schools*, emphasizes that residential schools had two primary purposes: separation of children from families and the belief that Indigenous culture was not worth preserving.³⁰ Miller writes:

of the three parties involved in residential school, the government had the clearest goals, objectives that Ottawa pursued with an implacable determination and consistency from the 1880s until the 1960s. The use of coercion and the Indian Act, the exploitation of student labor, the failure to provide adequate supervision of the missionary bodies, the desire in the 1940s to move to integrated education, and, finally, the urgency to phase out these schools in the 1960s are all to be explained primarily by Ottawa's desire to reduce and eliminate Financial Obligations to Native people.³¹

The Canadian government was responsible for the Indian residential school legacy, but the churches, who ran the schools also shared in the assimilationist agenda. Miller states that,

For the people who operated missions and schools, it was simply taken as ‘scientific fact’ that the [Indigenous] people to whom they ministered were inferior to them culturally, morally, and economically. in this highly charged atmosphere of scientifically racist Christian attitudes, it was increasingly likely that missionaries would assume that the most effective and lasting way of converting the [Indigenous] population to Christianity was simultaneously to reconstruct them as pseudo-Caucasians. By the time modern residential school system was established, the prevailing missionary belief was that, to Christianize [Indigenous peoples], it was essential also to remake them culturally. Hence, the missionaries’ educational objective was a combination of religious conversion, cultural assimilation, and economic adjustment to Euro-Canadian ways.³²

²⁹ Erica Neegan, Excuse Me: Who are the First Peoples of Canada? A Historical Analysis of Aboriginal Education in Canada Then and Now. *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 9, no 1 (2005): 4

³⁰ Miller, *Shingwauk’s Vision*, 208.

³¹ Miller, *Shingwauk’s Vision* 414.

³² Miller, *Shingwauk’s Vision*. 414-415

Historical works on the residential schools, as well as works written by former students highlight a history of abuse and loneliness.³³ For the most part, children do not recall positive experiences while attending Indian residential school. They were forced to abandon their language, cultural beliefs, and way of life, and mandated to adopt the European languages of English or French, foreign religious denominations, and new habits.³⁴ Some of the forced changes and traumatic experiences lived that have been documented include being forbidden to speak their language, forced haircut or shave, use of toxic chemicals to clean bodies, lack of nutrition and insufficient food quantities, sexual assaults, forced abortion, lack of medical attention and exposure to illness and unsanitary conditions, and more.³⁵ The harsh, strict rules were developed and strictly enforced to ensure children accepted and adapted to their ‘new way of life’ as these practices were seen as acceptable child rearing practices in these circumstances. Some of the documented ways that the school staff enforced the rules were by inserting needles into the tongue for speaking their native language, leather strap, beatings, burnings, starvation, shaming, public strip searches, genital searches, sexual abuse, and being locked up.³⁶

John Milloy, in *A National Crime*, argues that the schools were established to directly attack the Indigenous cultures and destroy them for the colonial agenda. Long-term impacts of those who attended residential schools are also discussed by many historians. Milloy continues to argue that “in their lives after residential school, many adult survivors, the families and

³³ Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision*; Milloy, *A National Crime*; Union of Ontario Indians, *Overview of the Indian Residential School System*; Isabelle Knockwood, *Out of the Depths: The Experiences of Mi'kmaw Children at the Indian Residential School at Shubenacadie, Nova Scotia*. Black Point: Roseway Publishing (1992). All these authors discuss abuses suffered and the isolations they felt.

³⁴ The Truth and Reconciliation discusses this, same as the Union of Ontario Indians, and nearly any firsthand account of someone who survived residential school, such as Shirley Knockwood's *Out of the Depths*, 2015.

³⁵ Union of Ontario Indians, *Overview of Indian Residential School System*. 5. These conditions are also noted in all the other books that were consulted on residential schools including Milloy's *A National Crime*, Miller's *Shingwauk's Vision*, and Fournier and Crey's *Stolen From Our Embrace* among many others.

³⁶ Union of Ontario Indians, *Overview of Indian Residential School System*. 6.

communities to which they returned all manifest a tragic range of symptoms emblematic of, “the silent tortures” that continued in their communities.”³⁷ Milloy goes on to state that:

Consultants working for the Assembly of First Nations detailed the beginning quote social pathologies and quote that have been produced by the school system: the survivors of the Indian residential school system have, in many cases, continue to have their lives shaped by experiences in the schools. Persons who attended the schools continue to struggle with their identity after years of being taught to hate themselves and their culture. The residential school led to a disruption in the transference of parenting skills from one generation to the next. Without these skills, many survivors had difficulties in raising their own children. And residential schools they learned that adults often exert power and control through abuse. The lessons learned in childhood are often repeated in adulthood with the result that many survivors of the residential school system often inflict abuse on their own children. These children in turn use the same tools on their own children.³⁸

The survivors of Indian residential schools often believed these experiences to be traumatic and resulted in long-term negative impacts across many areas of their lives.³⁹ Many of the survivors were left without any support or help to heal from the traumas they experienced in the Indian residential school system. As the survivors had families of their own, they unintentionally placed their children at risk of being exposed to these same long-term negative impacts.⁴⁰ In doing so, they transmitted their trauma and its effects to their children who were often unaware of their parents’ experiences in the Indian residential school system. Fournier and Crey write that “today, as more and more survivors break their silence about the physical, sexual and emotional

³⁷ Milloy, *A National Crime*. 295.

³⁸ Milloy, *A National Crime*. 299.

³⁹ Survivors stories are easy to find and share this common thread: Dave Chan. “Residential School Survivors and Their Descendants Share Their Stories,” May 15, 2018. *The Globe and Mail*, accessed August 28, 2019: <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/residential-school-survivors-and-their-descendants-share-their-stories/article24717419/>; Karina Roman, “St. Anne’s Residential School: One Survivor’s Story” December 18, 2015. *CBC News*, accessed August 28, 2019: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/st-anne-s-residential-school-one-survivor-s-story-1.2467924>; “Residential School Survivors Share Their Stories” June 2, 2015. *CTV News*, accessed August 28, 2019: <https://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/residential-school-survivors-share-their-stories-1.2403561>; and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission shares many stories as well.

⁴⁰ Authors such as Isobel, Goodyear, et al, “Preventing Intergenerational Trauma Transmission.” and O’Neill, “Hidden Burdens” touch on this as how historical trauma is transmitted.

abuse they suffered, it is clear that the traumatic impact of the schools will endure for many more decades.”⁴¹

J.R. Miller also argued that there would be a long-term legacy, and long-term negative impacts because of the residential schools for Indigenous peoples and their communities. In his epilogue, Miller writes “in retrospect, the legacy of the residential schools can be seen on every street corner in Canada. There are thousands of once-proud [Indigenous] people who have been reduced to... shells by their experiences in those institutions.” Miller goes on to recount his own family’s horrors and humiliations, such as his brother and father’s abusive experience in residential school, which inflicted a deep psychological scar on their family, and reflects the experiences of many Indigenous person in Canada.⁴²

Although the *Indian Act* and the residential schools were first developed in the 19th and early 20th centuries, the federal government continued to make policy proposals aimed at assimilating Indigenous peoples well into the 1960s. In 1969, the federal government introduced the ‘White Paper’, a policy proposal to redefine the relationship between Indigenous people and the Canadian government by reaffirming centrality of the federal government in Indigenous affairs, revoking status while still claiming to prevent discrimination, and create more equality.⁴³ The ‘White Paper’ outlined how Indigenous peoples could take back agency, and proposed to abolish the *Indian Act*. Unsurprisingly, the ‘White Paper’ was met with anger among Indigenous groups. Harold Cardinal, a Cree activist, wrote and published *The Unjust Society* as the voice for

⁴¹ Fournier and Crey, *Stolen from Our Embrace*. 61.

⁴² Miller, *Shingwauk’s Vision*. 439.

⁴³ Elisabetta A. Kerr, “Pierre Trudeau’s White Paper and the Struggle for Aboriginal Rights in Canada: An Analysis of the Extent to which the White Paper was a Turning Point in the Struggle for Aboriginal Rights and Land Claims in Canada.” *The Great Lakes Journal of Undergraduate History* vol 5, no 1. (2017) 51.

all Indigenous peoples in response, calling the ‘White Paper’ “no better than cultural genocide,” and a thinly disguised programme of extermination through assimilation.”⁴⁴

Sally Weaver concurred with Cardinal, arguing that the White Paper was the government’s response to decades of pleas by Indigenous peoples for help. Because of the adverse affects of colonialism and state paternalism, poverty, disease, and overall extremely poor conditions were suffered by many Indigenous people.⁴⁵ By abolishing the *Indian Act* and subjecting Indigenous people to the same everyday laws as the rest of Canadian society, Indigenous people saw it as the government being “less than serious” because it still did not solve the decades of injustices. Weaver writes that the politics of the ‘White Paper’ “merely increased [Indigenous peoples] resentment of their powerlessness in shaping the policies and programs that affected their future.”⁴⁶ She goes onto comment, that, “[Indigenous peoples] demands were hampered by another equally important obstacle. The simplistic view of ethnic minority survival led some policymakers to believe that ‘the past’ could be closed off in some fashion so as to reorient the [Indigenous peoples] worldview to ‘the future.’ The future, moreover, was envisioned largely as a white world, not one that recognized or accommodated Indigenous cultural values. While the White Paper does not mention child welfare issues (except to say that they will all be turned over to the provinces), the larger attitudes contained within it reveal a lack of knowledge or understanding of the vast problems created by legacies of colonialism.

⁴⁴ Kerr, “White Paper and the Struggle for Aboriginal Rights,” 56; Harold Cardinal, *The Unjust Society: The Tragedy of Canada’s Indians*. Edmonton: M.G Hurtig (1969), 1.

⁴⁵ Sally M. Weaver, *Making Canadian Indian Policy: The Hidden Agenda, 1968-1970*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press (1981), 49.

⁴⁶ Weaver, *Making Canadian Indian Policy*, 49.

In 1951, a federal amendment to the Indian Act gave some responsibility for children on reserves to the provinces, which is part of the critical background for understanding the emergence of the Sixties Scoop. Prior to 1951, Indigenous peoples were exclusively wards of the Crown - under federal jurisdiction - with very little to do with the province, unless they were enfranchised. And then, in 1951, the *Indian Act* was amended to allow for some provincial jurisdiction of Indigenous affairs. Section 88, in 1951, was as follows:

Subject to the terms of any treaty and any other Act of Parliament, all law of general application from time to time in force in any province are applicable to and in respect of Indians in the province, except to the extent that those laws are inconsistent with this Act or any order, rule, regulation, or by-law made thereunder, and except to the extent that those laws make provision for any matter for which provision is made by or under this Act.⁴⁷

This means that if there is no treaty in place stating otherwise, that federal laws still apply but provinces may make laws regarding the Indigenous populace within their borders. So long as those laws and regulations are not already accounted for or go against federal law and the *Indian Act*; the amendment provided the application of as much provincial law to Indigenous peoples as the provinces saw fit. Therefore, provincially legislated child welfare services were able to enter federal Indigenous land and remove children with no additional interference from the federal government, which explains why this happened across the country and was not isolated to one province. Because of child welfare services varying provincially, more Indigenous children were removed from their home in some provinces than others. In Saskatchewan, which has a very high rate per-capita population of Indigenous people, had a very high number of Indigenous children removed from their home. Child welfare agencies had a campaign of ad placements in newspapers and on television promoting the adoption of Indigenous and Metis children.

⁴⁷ Kent McNeil, "Aboriginal Title and Section 88 of the Indian Act" *UBC Law Review* vol 34, no 1 (2000), 163

Defining a family in Indigenous culture is multifaceted, a myriad of factors influences the perception of family, that “lines of the immediate family are blurred with the [Indigenous] context.”⁴⁸ Indigenous culture, however, plays a very important role in defining what a family is and that Indigenous identity is strongly linked to family. The importance of strong familial ties is crucial when also defining the Indigenous family; more specifically, familial relationships with extended family members, their involvement in a child’s life, and strong social ties in a family.⁴⁹

All of the major federal policies on Indigenous peoples, from the treaties to the *Indian Act*, the residential schools, the White Paper, showed a lack of knowledge and understanding of how Indigenous peoples traditionally define and view family structures. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) writes what hopes and dreams Indigenous peoples have for their children, “that education would open opportunities they never had; children would learn their language and histories; they would be safe from violence; not have to endure racist insults; they would gain control over their lives and life conditions; and that they would be able to live with dignity as [Indigenous] people.”⁵⁰ RCAP has a section dedicated to ‘The Family’ which details the views of Indigenous families and family structures, how the family dynamic happened in and between clans and tribes, and is very detailed about the interconnectedness and importance of family to one another, traditionally, but also within society. Indigenous families could see no clear break from the turmoil they had been experiencing. An article by Benita and Findlay, published in the *Journal of Family Studies*, states that “by the late 1940s, four or five generations had returned from residential schools as poorly educated, angry, abused strangers who had no

⁴⁸ Tam Y. Benita, Leanna C. Findlay, “Indigenous Families: Who Do You Call Family?” *Journal of Family Studies* 23, no 3 (2015): 249.

⁴⁹ Benita & Findlay, “Indigenous Families.” 249-250.

⁵⁰ Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, *Gathering Strength*, 9.

experience in parenting.”⁵¹ RCAP states that Indigenous families “were dealing with the severe disruption caused by social, economic and cultural changes. In many communities, they were also coping with the stress of relocation.”⁵² RCAP also notes that child welfare workers truly believed that removal of children was in their best interest, but the issues were exacerbated by the fact many were dealing with cultural patterns far different than what they had known with no preparation or opportunities for learning or understanding, “it was expected that workers would get their training in the field.”⁵³

Family is very important to Indigenous peoples. Family does not mean mother, father, and children. Rather it means the community as well as immediate members along with aunts, uncles, grandparents, neighbours and Elders. Children are often seen to be at the top of the family structure to indicate how important children are to the family because they are the next generation, they are the ones who will continue on the traditions and customs and pass along the stories of their community and nation. RCAP describes the importance of children because “according to tradition, they are gifts from the spirit world and have to be treated very gently lest they become disillusioned with this world and return to a more congenial place.”⁵⁴ The purity of children is crucial because it allows them not only to be taught but to also be able to teach others. “They carry within them the gifts that manifest themselves as they become [a member of society]. They renew the strength of the family, clan and village and make the elders young again with their joyful presence.”⁵⁵ Because of the crucial role children play in Indigenous culture, the family and community dynamics that are at play within the community, the removal of an entire

⁵¹ Fournier and Crey, *Stolen from Our Embrace*. 82.

⁵² Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, *Gathering Strength*, 24.

⁵³ Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, *Gathering Strength*, 26.

⁵⁴ Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, *Gathering Strength*, 21.

⁵⁵ Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, *Gathering Strength*, 21.

generation that was sent to Indian residential school was devastating. Those same children having to cope with the trauma of being separated and with the abuses of the institution created unimaginable issues for Indigenous peoples. It is also crucial to understand this to recognize and empathize with the struggles that people have gone through and continue to go through, even today.

The Sixties Scoop

Originally coined by Patrick Johnston, the term Sixties Scoop arose from his observation that children were quite literally “scooped from Reserves on the slightest pretext” and placed into the child welfare system to be either fostered or adopted by non-Indigenous parents across Canada, into the United States, and in some cases different countries such as the UK and New Zealand.⁵⁶ When he wrote the book *Native Children and the Child Welfare System* Johnston was the executive director of the National Anti-Poverty Organization, and was formerly a social policy analyst with the Canadian Council on Social Development. He previously worked as a childcare worker and a special education teacher. Today, Johnston is involved in philanthropic work and organizations. The book presents facts and background to the controversy over Indigenous child welfare during the course of the Sixties Scoop, and the book attempts to explain the jurisdiction “tangle” involved in the issue, and presented data from across Canada on the treatment of Indigenous children in the child welfare system.⁵⁷

Even though it is known as the Sixties Scoop, the time period of increased removals of children by provincial authorities began in 1951 and lasted until the 1980s when policies began to shift. Approximately 20,000 children were “scooped”, which at first glance may not seem like a lot but to give perspective, before 1960, Indigenous children made up only 1 percent of children across Canada under child welfare services; By 1973 the situation changed drastically, with 30 to 40 percent of Indigenous children in Canada being under the care of child welfare services even though they only represented 4 percent of the general population.⁵⁸ “By 1977, an

⁵⁶ Patrick Johnston, *Native Children and the Child Welfare System*. Toronto: James Lorimer & Company Publishers. (1983): 24.

⁵⁷ Johnston, *Native Children and the Child Welfare System*, 1983.

⁵⁸ Marie Adams, *Our Son, A Stranger: Adoption Breakdown and its Effect on Parents*. Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press (2002): xxvi

estimated 15,500 Indigenous children in Canada were living in care of child welfare officials. They represented 20 percent of all Canadian children living in care, even though Indigenous children made up less than 5 percent of the total child population.”⁵⁹ Marie Adams, in her book *Our Son, A Stranger* wrote that “in Canada as a whole, the number of [Indigenous] children in care reached 34.4 per 1000 in the late 1960s and doubled to 62.9 per 1000 over the course of the 1970s, and, by 1980-81, 8.1 percent of [Indigenous] newborns were being placed in care. The last figure had fallen to 3.9 percent in 1988-89, but this [was] still five times higher than the rate in [non-Indigenous] communities.”⁶⁰

Analyzing annual reports from the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Developments shows something a little different, however. Between 1956 and 1981, there appears to be a steady and consistent increase in the number of Indigenous children being removed and put up for adoption.⁶¹ Between 1961 and 1974, the reports breakdown the number of children being adopted into Indigenous homes and non-Indigenous homes. The number going into non-Indigenous homes compared to Indigenous also steadily rises and increases drastically compared to the number of children that were being adopted into non-Indigenous homes.

Between 1956 and 1961 in Ontario alone, the number of Indigenous children increased from 32 going into care to 459 going into care. The number increased 11 times over a five-year span. The report states simply, “the number of foster children in private homes or institutions has shown a considerable increase in the past year. This is a result of increased services which child

⁵⁹ Patrick Johnston, “The Ontario Superior Court is Hearing a Lawsuit on a Dark Part of Our History – The Mass Removal of Indigenous Children by Child Welfare authorities.” *Policy Options*, July 26, 2016, accessed July 7, 2019, <https://policyoptions.irpp.org/magazines/july-2016/revisiting-the-sixties-scoop-of-indigenous-children/>

⁶⁰ Adams, *Our Son, A Stranger*. xxvii

⁶¹ Government of Canada, Department of Citizenship and Immigration, Indian Affairs Branch, Annual Report (Ottawa: Queens’s Printer, various years 1956-1981).

welfare agencies now provide for [Indigenous] families”. This is referring to section 88 of the 1951 amendment.⁶² After 1961, in Ontario it seems to drop significantly but rise again until 1965 when the numbers no longer reflect the provinces but Canada altogether. There was also an increase in Indigenous children being placed in non-Indigenous homes over time. In 1961, it was fairly equal with 63 children in Indigenous homes and 58 children in non-Indigenous homes.

By 1969, the number of children in non-Indigenous homes had increased drastically. That year only 57 Indigenous children went to Indigenous homes and 200 went to non-Indigenous homes. By 1974, 100 children went into Indigenous homes and 328 into non-Indigenous homes.⁶³ Although the number of children fluctuated from year to year, there is clearly a steady increase. From 1965 to 1981, the number of children going into child welfare systems, and into non-Indigenous homes across Canada increased by 250 percent.⁶⁴ After 1981, the reports no longer save information on the number of Indigenous children across Canada going into the custody of child welfare services.

While the numbers clearly show that Indigenous children were highly over-represented amongst children in care in Canada in the 1950s through the 1970s, explaining it has been more difficult. The biggest claim that scholars often make that the Sixties Scoop was of a different

⁶² Government of Canada. Department of Citizenship and Immigration - Indian Affairs Branch. *Annual Report, Fiscal Year 1959-1960*. By Roger Duhamel. Ottawa, ON: Queens Printer. Library and Archives Canada. 53

⁶³ Government of Canada. Department of Citizenship and Immigration - Indian Affairs Branch. *Annual Report, Fiscal Year 1961-1962*. By Roger Duhamel. Ottawa, ON: Queens Printer. Library and Archives Canada: 55; Government of Canada. Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. *Annual Report, Fiscal Year 1968-1969*. By Jean Chretien. Ottawa, ON: Queens Printer. Library and Archives Canada: 116; Government of Canada. Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. *Annual Report, Fiscal Year 1973-1974*. By Judd Buchanan. Ottawa, ON: Queens Printer. Library and Archives Canada: 33.

⁶⁴ The 1966 report states that 165 Indigenous children across Canada were in the child welfare system: Government of Canada. Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. *Annual Report, Fiscal Year 1965-1966*. By Arthur Laing. Ottawa, ON: Queens Printer. Library and Archives Canada. 64. The 1981 report states that 568 Indigenous children were in the custody of child welfare services across Canada: Canada. Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. *Annual Report, Fiscal Year 1980-1981*. By John C. Munro. Ottawa, ON: Queens Printer. Library and Archives Canada. 21

agenda than the residential school policy is the jurisdictional boundaries. Residential schools were the result of a single policy created by the Department of Indian Affairs and was carried out by the federal government. The Sixties Scoop was carried out provincially, largely at the municipal level as each municipal jurisdiction had different rules regarding nearby reserves. H. Philip Hepworth looks at this issue in his book, titled *Foster Care and Adoptions in Canada*. He has a chapter dedicated to Indigenous foster care and adoptions, a sociological account of the Sixties Scoop. He looks at the child welfare system, and how it was implemented regarding Indigenous peoples. He notes that the agreements between provincial and federal government often remained unsatisfactory and jurisdictional disputes were often not solved. Some status and on-reserve children received child welfare protection while others did not which resulted in negative consequences, such as injury or death.⁶⁵

Historian Veronica Strong-Boag also looks at Indigenous adoptions in her book that traces the history of adoption in English Canada from the nineteenth century to the 1990s and covers a variety of topics from multiple lenses including childrearing, legislation, gender, and religion.⁶⁶ She dedicates a chapter to Indigenous-settler contact. Starting from the nineteenth century, Strong-Boag covers how Indigenous peoples and settlers to Canada interacted and how children played a strong role in Indigenous-settler relations by being married to settlers to be able to build bonds between the two groups. She then looks at the residential school era and discusses shifts in policies and perspectives, specifically the assimilationist policies and the racist and discriminatory perspectives that were throughout mainstream society.

⁶⁵ Hepworth, *Foster Care and Adoption in Canada*. 111-112.

⁶⁶ Veronica Strong-Boag, *Finding Families, Finding Ourselves: English Canada Encounters Adoption from the Nineteenth Century to the 1990s*. Don Mills: Oxford University Press. (2006)

She then looks at the Sixties Scoop in a section called “The Mainstream Discovers ‘Citizen Minus’: 1940s-1970s”. In this section, she examines the changes in legislation – referring to the 1951 amendment allowing provinces jurisdiction on reserves - and the repercussion of past assimilatory practices of the residential schools. She argues that this created a society where Indigenous peoples were at the bottom of the hierarchy which along with lack of empathy by both the government and a lot of the general society created and exacerbated the problem.

Strong-Boag states, “one thing that many people either forget or simply do not realize is that social services, although offering help offered it very little to [Indigenous peoples]. Such comments [that offered aid], with their underlying assumption that [Indigenous peoples] too had rights to aid in bad times, were rare. For the most part, authorities said little, and probably did less.”⁶⁷ Strong-Boag argues that the Sixties Scoop was overwhelming to all involved. She notes the child welfare workers were in a particularly difficult position, as they were discouraged from entering the reserves, but more and more ended up having to do so because of the increasing social and family problems. They were also dealing with a very flawed system, little funding, and next to no information on the culture of the families they were breaking apart. She claims child welfare workers tried to bring attention to the fact that Indigenous people did not receive the same level or quality of social and welfare services as the rest of the population. The Sixties Scoop, according to Strong-Boag was a period of chaos, and child welfare workers, among other parties, did the best they could with the few resources they had.

⁶⁷ Strong-Boag, *Finding Families, Finding Ourselves*. 142.

Strong-Boag's perception of the Sixties Scoop aligns with the argument in this paper, in that it was mainly a result of negative effects of past colonial and assimilatory policies that put Indigenous children into a very dire position. As well, she notes that an 'equality agenda' – policies of the provincial and federal governments like the 1951 *Indian Act* amendment – that Indigenous peoples should be treated the same as non-Indigenous people propelled Indigenous children into the child welfare system. She claims the biggest error was the lack of cultural knowledge and understanding from the child welfare workers, and lack of assistance from both governments.

Another group of scholars who looked and analyzed the Sixties Scoop, Holly McKenzie *et al* argue that the trauma from residential schools contributed to the rise of the removal of Indigenous children. Indigenous children were often removed from their birth families due to the suffering of trauma of Indian residential school and the incongruence between Euro-Western notions and cultural practices and realities of Indigenous communities.⁶⁸ The article by McKenzie *et al* marries the idea that past and present colonial discourse had, and continues to have, severe ill effects on Indigenous people. The past and present colonial discourse is to blame for the high rate of poverty, substance abuse and disease in Indigenous populations. They see that colonial legacy, seen in the deep social problems, as the main cause of the Sixties Scoop.⁶⁹

Historian Allyson Stevenson's dissertation, *Intimate Integration: A Study of Aboriginal Transracial Adoption in Saskatchewan, 1944-1984* argues that lack of social services and supports contributed to the increase of child welfare authorities on reserves and the removal of

⁶⁸ Holly A McKenzie et al. "Disrupting the Continuities Among Residential Schools, the Sixties Scoop, and Child Welfare: An Analysis of Colonial and Neocolonial Discourse." *International Indigenous Policy Journal* 7, no 2 (2016): 6.

⁶⁹ McKenzie, "Disrupting the Continuities Among Residential Schools, the Sixties Scoop, and Child Welfare." 5-8.

Indigenous children. She argues the lack of support and the systemic racism of policy put Indigenous peoples in a position that explains that the Sixties Scoop was nothing more than further assimilatory policies. Stevenson argues that the provincial government enacted numerous policies, such as the Adopt Indian and Metis (A.I.M) program, which encouraged non-Indigenous families to adopt these transracial children, and how this was a “vivid example of state sanctioned intimacy” to integrate Indigenous children into non-Indigenous culture.⁷⁰ The government policies are not the same as the assimilationists goals put forth during the residential schools. While they may appear similar they ultimately were not. She is very critical of the overly simplified views that are often perpetuated, and strongly argues that the colonial past needs to be better understood for the Sixties Scoop to make more sense. Her argument, however, does seem to be very grounded in the fact it was an assimilatory policy.⁷¹ Stevenson writes that her dissertation seeks to bring together historiographical streams that situate “the history of transracial adoption in earlier [Indigenous] child removal policies that... functioned as a primary mode of [Indigenous] assimilation,” and frequently refers to these adoptions as cultural genocide.⁷²

While the correlation is strong, it does not equal causation. Systemic racism and past practices against Indigenous peoples caused them to live in less-than ideal. Causing children to be removed does not mean specifically that it was a deliberate assimilatory practice. It simply means that systemic abuse caused more generational issues, and systemic racism on the societal level kept them in an inferior position to the point where child welfare services had no choice but to step in. While government policy was, and to a degree currently is still racist and

⁷⁰ Stevenson, “Intimate Integrations” ii.

⁷¹ Stevenson, “Intimate Integrations” 14

⁷² Stevenson, “Intimate Integrations” 8.

discriminatory towards Indigenous peoples, wider societal attitude towards Indigenous people are the greater problem. Furthermore, the specific Saskatchewan experience Stevenson describes cannot explain the actions of all child welfare authorities across the nation. Her fits for Saskatchewan because as a province it had the proportion of Indigenous peoples in its population and therefore had the highest rate of children going into child welfare services. However, because Stevenson largely acknowledges the ill effects of colonialism and that devastation it caused to Indigenous peoples, the information she presents is still very useful. As Stevenson writes, “though it was not acknowledged at the time, communities were reeling from three generations of children are moved to attend residential schools, who returned to communities as young adults with unresolved grief and trauma. It has only been in recent years that the intergenerational effects of residential schools in historic trauma of Indigenous peoples are being recognized as impacting parenting skills.”⁷³

Stevenson notes that high numbers of Indigenous children going into care in Saskatchewan meant that child welfare authorities were resource deficient and had few homes in which to place children. In an extreme example of trying to deal with this situation, child welfare agencies in Saskatchewan actually placed advertisements for Indigenous children between the late 1960s and early 1970s. Authorities took pictures of Indigenous children, wrote a short piece on the child and published them in newspapers and on television in hopes that they would find homes sooner.⁷⁴ At first glance, advertising the children appears quite shocking and insensitive, but advertising Indigenous children for adoption shows the extreme lengths child welfare

⁷³ Stevenson, “Intimate Integrations” 14

⁷⁴ Benjamin K. Musampa, “Child Welfare Crisis Evokes Saskatchewan’s 1960s ‘Adopt Indian and Metis’ Campaign.” March 4, 2018, access July 14, 2019. <http://www.davidmckie.com/child-welfare-crisis-evokes-saskatchewan-1960s-adopt-indian-and-metis-campaign/>

agencies would go. This suggests that in the case of Saskatchewan, provincial welfare authorities' aims were assimilation of Indigenous children.

However, Otto Driedger, a former Saskatchewan director of welfare, who started the Adopt Indian and Metis (AIM) program, said that "its only goal was finding children permanent homes."⁷⁵ He emphasizes that placing the Indigenous children with white families was not the basis of the child welfare program, that the alternative was a neglectful or abusive foster home and family. The A.I.M program came about because of the large number of Indigenous children entering the system and the difficulty finding homes for them. "Within four years of its launch, hundreds of Indigenous children had been placed through A.I.M, 92 percent of them in white families."⁷⁶ Granted it is shocking, that 92 percent of Indigenous children under the care of child services in Saskatchewan were placed with white families. However, one must look at other factors including how many Indigenous peoples were in the province and how many were willing and able to take these children.⁷⁷

Historian Karen Dubinsky argues that the rise of Indigenous child adoptions was related to a multitude of effects of decades of colonialism. She writes that:

children took many routes into the world of child welfare, for [Indigenous] families imploded in way that ranged from the dramatic to the mundane. Fathers shot mothers and/or themselves. Fathers abandoned families. Fathers lost their jobs. Mothers went to jail. Parents responded to the pressures of dislocation, poverty, and violence by neglecting or bullying

⁷⁵ Jennifer Fowler, "Creator of Sixties Scoop Adoption Program says it Wasn't Meant to Place Kids with White Families." October 20, 2018, accessed July 12, 2019. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/indigenous/creator-of-sixties-scoop-adoption-program-says-it-wasn-t-meant-to-place-kids-with-white-families-1.4584342>

⁷⁶ Fowler, "Sixties Scoop Adoption Program"

⁷⁷ I have tried to look through Statistics Canada reports throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s in an effort to find the total Indigenous population in Saskatchewan, and other provinces for comparison, however, have been unsuccessful.

their children; they beat them, they abandoned them, they didn't feed or clothe them or keep them warm in the winter.⁷⁸

A Euro-centric perspective on what makes an appropriate home for a child may also have contributed to fewer Indigenous children being placed in Indigenous foster and adoptive homes.⁷⁹ This perspective is important to note because, through a combination of lack of cultural education and wanting the best for the child, a Euro-centric home was most normative for the child welfare workers to place Indigenous children. A Euro-centric post-WWII family was nuclear, a clean and kept house. A father worked to support his family while mother maintained the house and kept the pantry stocked. Children received a good public education and participated in extra-curricular activities. Gender boundaries were clearly defined and followed.

Euro-Canadian case workers, with little understanding of Indigenous family forms and lifestyles, may have judged Indigenous homes as shockingly abnormal and unsuitable because it went against the nuclear family norms of Euro-Canadian lifestyles. The judgement is also what lead case workers to remove children from homes due to the incongruence of lifestyle living. A non-Indigenous person coming to a reserve home may see an Indigenous home as less clean and kept, not recognizing the challenges of cleaning rural homes where people are constantly coming in from outside and hunting. Pantries may be stocked with food from the land - fish, game meat, and berries rather than packaged from the grocery store.⁸⁰ Children may not be wearing typical urban-style clothing but rather traditional Indigenous outfits, custom to the community including various animal hides, beads and woven fabrics. Families would include not only mother and father, but also aunts, uncles, grandparents, even neighbours taking part in raising children and

⁷⁸ Dubinsky, *Babies Without Borders*. 100

⁷⁹ Brittany Luby, "The 'Sixties Scoop': State Removal of Indigenous Children." HIST3196: Canada in the 20th Century, Selected Problems – Focus: Crisis and Conflict in Indigenous Communities (class lecture, Laurentian University, Sudbury, ON, March 11, 2014).

⁸⁰ Luby, "The 'Sixties Scoop'". Lecture, March 11, 2014.

keeping up with other responsibilities. As well, systemic discrimination and racism towards Indigenous peoples meant they were more likely to be impoverished or unemployed. Their homes were more likely to be run-down and in poor neighbourhoods. Parents would more likely be on social assistance, all of which made them less likely to be selected as foster or adoptive parents.⁸¹

Cultural misunderstandings, and lack of knowledge on state paternalism and colonial history that created social, economic and cultural problems also contributed to the high rate of child removals from Indigenous homes. Stevenson writes:

The elusive causes of Indian poor health, starvation and poor housing, were the consequence of federal Indian policies. However, these were brushed aside by social welfare experts to shift to their primary concern. Directly following the references to ill health and malnutrition was the concern over the increasing rates of prostitution and juvenile delinquency, the practice of custom adoption, illegitimate Indian children being forced off reserve, and lack of provincial legislation on reserves. The recognition that such outcomes were due to failed government policies was erased. Instead, attention was directed to the social pathologies and individual maladaptation that social work professionals felt could be alleviated with their specialized knowledge.⁸²

Stevenson is acknowledging that child welfare authorities knew little about how decades of colonialism and paternalism brought so much damage and devastation to Indigenous communities. She argues the child welfare workers looked at each case individually and blamed the immediate problem, such as alcoholism and unemployment. Child welfare workers ultimately placed the blame on being poor parents instead of looking at the larger societal problems.

⁸¹ Luby, "The 'Sixties Scoop'". Lecture, March 11, 2014; Strong-Boag also hints that this was the perception of society: Strong-Boag, *Finding Families, Finding Ourselves*, 145.

⁸² Stevenson, "Intimate Integrations." 295

Veronica Strong-Boag also argued that lack of resources also hampered the ability of child services to provide support. She writes:

Problems were essentially three-fold. First, social services were already hard-pressed to meet the needs of urban white populations, few of which received the ideal assistance desired by the social works. The personal, financial, and drug counselling, housekeeping services, daycare, and decent jobs that might have kept many biological families intact were noticeably absent everywhere in Canada. Social workers always struggled with enormous caseloads and limited resources. When [Indigenous children] entered the system, their needs were likely to be still greater than those of their white counterparts and all the harder to address.⁸³

The issues being faced by child welfare services seemed to be a vicious circle. Provincial authorities had been reluctant to encourage child welfare agencies to enter reserves, even after the federal government amended the *Indian Act* in 1951 to allow them to intervene. Despite this reluctant child welfare authorities entered the reserves because of the tragedies and emergencies that were occurring on them.

A point emphasized by many authors on Indigenous child adoptions is the child welfare agencies and reserves lacked resources. Lack of resources rather than a deliberate and malicious strategy led child welfare agencies to remove so many children as Strong-Boag notes. Agencies, overwhelmed with Indigenous children, often could not afford to spend time and money to find Indigenous foster or adoptive homes. The children had to be placed elsewhere which were often non-Indigenous homes.⁸⁴ And because of this lack of resources, new cases could not be opened on reserves to help children and families in preventative and rehabilitative manners. This created more emergencies and the need to remove children, with no Indigenous foster homes. Strong-Boag writes how child welfare authorities consistently struggled with the unmet needs of

⁸³ Strong-Boag, *Finding Families, Finding Ourselves*. 146

⁸⁴ Strong-Boag, *Finding Families, Finding Ourselves*. 147.

Indigenous children as they entered the system at faster rates than before, and states that all children had a right to a safe and secure home.⁸⁵ Boag argues the system was so overwhelmed and under-resourced that child welfare workers paid little attention to the race of the prospective foster parents, as long as they were good parents. Strong-Boag continues, saying that these struggles were amplified due to the specific cultural needs of Indigenous children, the lack of resources, and few Indigenous homes in which to place the children.⁸⁶

Hepworth also comments on the placement of Indigenous children, and states that many children often went to non-Indigenous homes, usually a distance away because there was a shortage of Indigenous homes in general. Even extended family member's homes often filled quickly. Because children were often brought into care under extreme circumstance, child welfare authorities had to act quickly, and utilize what little they had.⁸⁷ As changes to communication came about through the 1950s and 1960s, news of tragedy started to seep out from reserves. Child welfare services were increasing on reserves due to neglect and abuse being suffered, due to historical trauma and lack of social resources for help. Also, the remoteness of some reserves made dealing with emergencies challenging. However, the government did not provide the necessary funds to compensate, leaving little options for the workers.⁸⁸ Child welfare and social services seemed to want to work to rehabilitate and keep families together, but every obstacle was in front of them. Child welfare and social services were always facing a combatant and did their best with the options, resources and tools they had to use.

⁸⁵ Strong-Boag, *Finding Families, Finding Ourselves*. 152-153

⁸⁶ Strong-Boag, *Finding Families, Finding Ourselves*. 160.

⁸⁷ Hepworth, *Foster Care and Adoptions in Canada*. 118.

⁸⁸ Strong-Boag, *Finding Families, Finding Ourselves*. 145.

Another issue scholars address is the low incidence of Indigenous giving up parental right voluntarily. Hepworth in *Foster Care and Adoption in Canada*, and also cited by Stevenson, writes that “in 1979, [Indigenous] mothers rarely relinquished children voluntarily.”⁸⁹ Hepworth identified that a high proportion of [Indigenous] children were ‘illegitimate’, but, unlike ‘illegitimate babies’, very few were relinquished for adoption after birth. Hepworth found that the primary reason that Indigenous children came into care was “due to neglect. In the years 1973 to 1974 the numbers vary between 94 percent and 96 percent while for non-[Indigenous] children, that number was between 68 percent and 73 percent. Thus, a ‘typical adoption’ involving an [Indigenous] infant only took place between 4 percent and 6 percent of the time.”⁹⁰ Stevenson states that “this suggests that the majority of [Indigenous] mothers attempted to parent children despite economic and social challenges and rarely saw an option as a voluntary solution.”⁹¹

Dubinsky sheds more light on this arguing that mothers relinquished their children for a variety of reasons, but usually not without emotion. She writes about how mothers gave their children up because they knew they could not take the best care of them, or the child’s father had abandoned them. Some were raped and others had several children already and could not cope with another. Some white mothers gave up their children they had with Indigenous men. Another mother gave up her child in order to continue education and better her future, knowing she could not do that with a child. Dubinsky writes, “in a trove of remarkable stories, these offer a kaleidoscope of emotions - among them chiefly grief and forgiveness - and testify to the immense continuing damage this era of adoption inflicted. But here, too, the lines between

⁸⁹ Hepworth, *Foster Care and Adoption in Canada*. 115; Stevenson, “Intimate Integrations.” 13

⁹⁰ Hepworth, *Foster Care and Adoption in Canada*. 115; Stevenson, “Intimate Integrations.” 13

⁹¹ Stevenson, “Intimate Integrations.” 13.

kidnap and rescue are sometimes difficult to see.”⁹² She goes on to tell a specific story she found about a mother who relinquished her children after suffering abuse, alcoholism, poverty and more, and used “the last bit of decency” to put her children up for adoption so they could have a better life, and states that “even a handful of [Indigenous] women narrated their stories of relinquishment like this, as decency, obliges historians not to let such voices disappear.”⁹³

It is important to understand why many children were painfully but voluntarily given up. It stems from the narrative that colonialism and state paternalism has written that Indigenous people were incapable of being proper parents. Some Indigenous parents felt they could not live up to white society’s expectations in order to be a good parent

Scholars and researchers have also been more direct at making the connections between past colonial practices and the contemporary social issues Indigenous peoples face. McKenzie *et al* explores the continuities among residential schools, the Sixties Scoop and child welfare in Canada and specifically analyzes how colonial practices and discourse operated through and justify these policies.⁹⁴ Brenda Restoule *et al* writes how the experiences at residential school were traumatic and resulted in long-term negative impacts across many areas of Indigenous peoples lives such as relationships, parenting, health, mental health, natural world and spiritual beliefs and coping, all roots of having a healthy and able family.⁹⁵ These and other scholars argue that the trauma from the residential schools was continued into the next generation, resulting in family dysfunction, contributing to the removal of children in the Sixties Scoop. Those children, now adults, some with children of their own, must also deal with the effect of

⁹² Dubinsky, *Babies Without Borders*. 105-108

⁹³ Dubinsky, *Babies Without Borders*. 108

⁹⁴ McKenzie, “Disrupting the Continuities Among Residential Schools, the Sixties Scoop, and Child Welfare.”

⁹⁵ Brenda Restoule et al, *The Soul Wounds of the Anishnabek People: The Psychological and Intergenerational Impacts of the Indian Residential School*. Creative Impressions (2013): 3

family and culture disrupted. These events, while appearing isolated, can be connected to past policies and the longer history of colonialism in Indigenous communities. Other continuing problems attributed to this legacy include addiction, alcohol and/or drug abuse, physical, mental, emotional, psychological abuses, dysfunctional families and interpersonal relationships, poor parenting such as rigidity, neglect, abandonment, emotional coldness, teen pregnancy, fear of personal growth, transformation and healing, fetal alcohol syndrome and fetal alcohol effect, and suicidal acts, thoughts and behaviours.⁹⁶

One or more of those is what Indigenous peoples, who went into the child welfare system as children and aged out of the system, are left to suffer with. More than likely, they are left to suffer without other supports because, as a society, we perceive this behaviour as isolated rather than a result of colonial policies toward Indigenous people. Dubinsky makes a good point by saying:

of the vast majority of the stories that were gathered by researchers over the years, many speak of children being relinquished or apprehended as a result of neglect, abuse, or some form of family dysfunction. These stories, of course, represent a tiny fraction of the total, and, in making the argument for a more complicated understanding than the discourse of ‘scoop’ provides, I in no way diminish or disbelieve the pain of those who had horrific experiences. But ‘scoop’ is heavy-handed and leaves out a lot.⁹⁷

Scholars such as Patrick Johnston, H. Philip Hepworth, and Veronica Strong-Boag have examined the Sixties Scoop in its complexities and claim that it is more complicated than simply being assimilation, which also seems to be a theme that Dubinsky touches upon, that there is more to the discourse of the Sixties Scoop that can be fathomed. They argue that the Sixties Scoop was the repercussions of the legacies of the residential schools and overall colonial

⁹⁶ Restoule et al, *The Soul Wounds of the Anishnabek People*. 9-10

⁹⁷ Dubinsky, *Babies Without Borders*. 106

oppression, both of which caused significant damage to Indigenous peoples, their families and their communities.

Cultural Repercussions

As discussed earlier, the Indian residential school system had a massive impact on Indigenous cultures. Historians like Miller and Milloy, and groups such as the Union of Ontario Indians and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) have published works that detail how detrimental the impacts, both short but especially long term, would have on Indigenous people.⁹⁸ While law made it acceptable for children to be removed from homes on reserves and placed into the schools, it made it even easier for culture and heritage to be lost. There is conversation about cultural loss that surrounds the Indian residential schools, but cultural loss has also been fundamental to the Sixties Scoop.

Reserves that lost a large portion of their children to residential schools - some reserves lost all of their children - also lost a huge piece of their culture and heritage as there was no one to receive and carry it to the next generation. The TRC states that the residential schools are to blame for the fact that “cultural loss has been recognized as a significant determinant of health in the [Indigenous] community,” and that the “loss of culture and family relationships continue to reverberate, and poses challenges for today’s child welfare system.”⁹⁹

Erica Neegan addresses the consequences of the loss of children on reserves in her article on the historical analysis of Indigenous education in Canada. She explains how crucial children were to the culture and why their removal was so detrimental. Juxtaposing her argument against,

⁹⁸ As discussed in depth in Milloy’s *A National Crime*, Miller’s *Shingwauks’s Vision*, Union of Ontario Indians, *Overview of the Indian Residential School System* and Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s *Gathering Strength*.

⁹⁹ Truth and Reconciliation Commission, *The Legacy*, 110, 49; discusses the loss of culture because of the residential schools throughout the document.

as previously stated, a Eurocentric perspective, it also highlights how destructive Eurocentrism ideologies were.

Neegan writes, “it was the duty and responsibility of the parents, Elders and members of the community as a whole to teach younger people and ensure they led a good life. This was done by sharing experiences.”¹⁰⁰ Children participated in the same daily activities as adults did to develop skills and learn that each skill has a social, economic, spiritual and historical context. The learning children did, the teaching that the community did was crucial to living and survival and provided the children with the specific skills, attitudes, and knowledge they needed to function in everyday life. “This type of learning ensured cultural continuity and *survival of the mental, spiritual, emotional and physical well-being of each individual* [emphasis mine]. Life values were learned through extended family and was best exemplified by the grandmother and her teachings through legends, family patience, and love.”¹⁰¹

Miller, referencing Indian residential schools, writes:

For [Indigenous] children, their conditioning in early childhood ill prepared them for the structure, routines, and discipline of boarding schools. In [Indigenous] societies, child-rearing strategies and instructional techniques were sharply different from those used by Euro-Canadians. The deeply entrenched ethic of observing the autonomy of individuals ensured that very little coercion and physical punishment were employed to caution, restrain, and reprove children. Ridicule, exemplary stories, and emphasis on familial obligation were what [Indigenous] parents used in place of the Euro-Canadians’ threats, deprivation, and corporal punishment.¹⁰²

The separation of family, community and culture ultimately started to result in a feeling of powerlessness and hopelessness for Indigenous people. It contrasted deeply with the Indigenous worldview that had lasted for so many years and generations that children are full participants in

¹⁰⁰ Neegan, “Excuse Me” 4. Emphasis added.

¹⁰¹ Neegan, “Excuse Me”, 5.

¹⁰² Miller, *Shingwauk’s Vision*. 425.

the household, community and culture.¹⁰³ The message continually sent by ‘dominant whites’ throughout the residential schools and, to a degree, the Sixties Scoop to Indigenous children was that they should be ashamed of their culture, that it was inferior to European culture. Indigenous parents, when they could, were unwilling out of fear and discrimination to teach their culture to their children. Communication between families and the community as a whole began to break down as Elders and children were no longer able to understand each other. The eldest people generally had the most knowledge of tradition and customs, and age was respected and accommodated in Indigenous communities.¹⁰⁴ Therefore, the residential school era and the Sixties Scoop forcibly divided young and old, creating an unrepairable generation gap.

As many survivors of the Indian residential schools came together to reconnect in strength and solidarity to share stories in hopes of healing, Sixties Scoop survivors have started to come forward and share stories in hopes to reconnect with families but also their culture. Regarding the family breakdowns that occurred, it has been mentioned that siblings were often separated, and some were never reunited.¹⁰⁵ Siblings were often sent to different homes, and sometimes those homes were in a different country. The few that were able to be reunited still struggled to figure out who they were as a member of a family, and how to reconnect those family values and the family core. A National Film Board movie, *Birth of a Family*, follows four

¹⁰³ Neegan, “Excuse Me”, 6.

¹⁰⁴ Neegan, “Excuse Me” 7.

¹⁰⁵ Brandi Morin, “Sixties Scoop Survivors Then and Now; Stories of Separation and Healing.” *APTN News* February 21, 2017, accessed September 4, 2019. <https://aptnnews.ca/2017/02/21/sixties-scoop-survivors-then-and-now-stories-of-separation-and-healing/> - Freda’s story highlights separating from her sibling and continuously searching for her; Bryan Eneas, “Saskatchewan Family Seeks Sibling Separated in Sixties Scoop as Deadline Looms.” *CBC News* August 29, 2019, accessed September 4, 2019: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatchewan/sask-family-seeks-sister-sixties-scoop-1.5265053>; Christine Miskonoodinkwe Smith, “Opinion: Where is Home? A Perspective from a Sixties Scoop Survivor.” *Anishinabek News* May 21, 2019, accessed September 4, 2019: <https://anishinabeknews.ca/2019/05/21/opinion-where-is-home-a-perspective-from-a-sixties-scoop-survivor/>

siblings after they reunite after 30+ years. Betty Ann, the eldest, searched over the course of several decades but finally found her siblings – two sisters and her brother. Their one sister, Esther, was sent to an adoptive home in California, so it is quite incredible that all four of them were able to discover one another.

Tasha Hubbard, the director, follows the days while they reconnect and share their experiences of growing up separately and how they will continue to keep in touch. This is just one happy story, sadly, of few.¹⁰⁶ The documentary also follows their journey as they attempt to learn about their culture. Growing up in white homes, they were not taught much about their heritage. They knew so little that at one point in the film, Betty Ann is talking to an Elder, and says “we were told that giving tobacco is a traditional thing,” which speaks to how little they knew and how they had to teach themselves. She speaks about how she has reconnected with family members who know how to tan hides. They have learned it from their parents, but it was very new to her. There are many points where they get very emotional because of the culture they have lost from being removed from their birth families and communities. Betty Ann makes it very clear that, while she had good, loving adoptive parents, she still lost something very important that she and her siblings were very, very fortunate to rediscover.¹⁰⁷ It highlights certain points where they are learning their culture for the first time in their lives.

With the generation and knowledge gap widening, loss of culture and heritage becomes more and more significant, and harder to reconcile and rediscover. The TRC comments, “with each successive generation, there was a greater weakening of community cultural strength.”¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ Tasha Hubbard, *Birth of a Family*. Directed by Tasha Hubbard. National Film Board of Canada, 2016.

¹⁰⁷ Hubbard, *Birth of a Family*, 2016

¹⁰⁸ Truth and Reconciliation Commission, *The Legacy*, 104.

This contributes to even further problems because many Indigenous peoples who had been adopted know nothing about their backgrounds or birth families and may never regain them. Many experienced mental, emotional and spiritual loss because of a lack of connection with their culture and heritage. Both situations can cause great confusion and stress. Many Indigenous adoptees were raised and brought up in families and in a society where they were consistently told they were inferior, that they should be ashamed of who they are. They were left to figure out why they feel so empty, with little to no support. As Colleen Cardinal writes, the state was not concerned with her health or well-being because she was Indigenous which is something that resonated through many stories.¹⁰⁹

These feelings are consistently highlighted throughout Colleen Cardinal's book *Raised Somewhere Else*. Cardinal talks about her journey through the child welfare system, being adopted by a family in Ontario, and suffering a variety of abuses. At the age of 17, she ran away, and her life spiraled out of control as she battled addictions, abuse by partners and the social welfare system. In her last chapter, she writes

The trauma and loss I experienced compelled me to write my story and speak out about the abuses I endured. The same I felt [for being Indigenous] might have silenced me forever so I am grateful for the helpers who came who came into my life and encouraged me to change that shame into courage. As painful as it was, it also set me on a healing journey that has lasted a lifetime and is still going. There is no more protection for my abusers and I have left it in the Creator's hands.¹¹⁰

Her story tells how she was ashamed and lost because she knew she was Indigenous, and she was treated with racism because of it, saying she could not secure a job or a decent apartment for herself and her children because of the colour of her skin.¹¹¹ Fortunately for Cardinal, she was

¹⁰⁹ Colleen Cardinal, *Ohpikiihaakan-Ohpimhah – Raised Somewhere Else: A 60s Scoop Adoptees Story of Coming Home*. Winnipeg: Roseway Publishing (2018), 198; Smith, "Opinion: Where is Home?"

¹¹⁰ Cardinal, *Raised Somewhere*, 198-199.

¹¹¹ Cardinal, *Ohpikiihaakan-Ohpimhah – Raised Somewhere Else*, 69.

able to reconnect with her culture which helped her physically, emotionally and spiritually heal.¹¹²

As mentioned in the previous section, some children were adopted into homes that were loving, supportive and caring, but many still experienced difficulties and cultural estrangement. *In Our Son, A Stranger*, Marie Adams tells the story of her own and five other families' experiences adopting an Indigenous child. She focuses on the difficulties each family faced even though they provided the ideal home life and setting for these children.¹¹³ Adams tells her story first, speaking of how she and her family loved and cherished their adopted son, Tim, who was Indigenous. They provided everything and anything they could as parents. She reflects on all the good times and memories her family made with Tim, but then comments, "but the good times did not last, for Tim's troubles became more severe. When he was eleven, Rod (Adams' husband) and I arranged for him to visit a psychiatrist. He told us that Tim was a time-bomb and thus, potentially dangerous."¹¹⁴

Adams chronicles Tim's severe and dangerous downward spiral, him leaving home at the age of twelve, his anger and aggression, drug and alcohol abuse, and how she and her family watched him self-destruct. Adams recalls, "he called himself an apple Indian (the white values inside, covered by red skin)" which was ultimately the root of all his issues and suffering.¹¹⁵ Tim

¹¹² Cardinal, *Ohpikiihaakan-Ohpihmeh – Raised Somewhere Else*, 121-127. In these pages, she chronicles how by going back to school to become a Native Community Worker helped her reconnect with her Indigenous culture and background, and she learned things like the medicine wheel and smudging, she was able to connect with others for healing as well.

¹¹³ Adams, *Our Son, A Stranger*, viii; the forward is written by Dr. Harvey Armstrong, a psychologist, writes that the background of the problem adoptees stemmed from failures of early nurturing combined with brutal trauma, because of dysfunctional and unsupported Indigenous parents and communities.

¹¹⁴ Adams, *Our Son, A Stranger*. 9. The doctors exact diagnosis – whether it was mental illness, emotional issues, or something else, is never explicitly stated by Adams, but given the nature of her book, it is easy to extrapolate that the issues were due to the failures of early parental nurturing from being taken very young and the historical trauma that was placed upon him from his mother and grandmother - Adams, *Our Son, A Stranger*, 3.

¹¹⁵ Adams, *Our Son, A Stranger*. 11.

was never nurtured early by his birth mother, who was in jail for most of his young life before adoption. While his grandmother did care for him as a baby, she was also caring for his five siblings, and could not give him the attention he needed. This created an early home life that was not ideal.¹¹⁶ After his adoption, according to Adams, Tim learned about his indigeneity, but claims it frustrated him and caused more issues. Adams writes that “he said that he had learned the white men’s values and the white mans cultures,” learning about the assimilationist attempts which confused and angered him more.¹¹⁷ Ultimately, it will never be known the true cause of Tim’s issues, but Adams firmly believed it was the confusion and loss of his cultural identity.

The other five families she interviewed and shared the stories of are similar. Each family adopted an Indigenous child and loved, cared and provided an ideal atmosphere for the child. But each family also had great trouble with their adopted child because of systemic racism and discrimination that persisted throughout these children’s lives and the deep historical trauma they carried from their past. Each of the families had at least one family member, or close family friend who clearly frowned upon them adopting and Indigenous child. They also shared stories of how the children were treated differently, such as in school.¹¹⁸ Adams writes, “we and the families we interviewed adopted during the late 1960s and 1970s, a period where many people felt they could make a difference.”¹¹⁹ She even says that the families did their best to support their Indigenous backgrounds, getting the children in contact with Anishnabek groups, going to ceremonies and events, and even support groups to help them rediscover and reconnect with their roots. She points out that through these experiences, none of the adoptive parents received

¹¹⁶ Adams, *Our Son, A Stranger*. 4.

¹¹⁷ Adams, *Our Son, A Stranger*. 11.

¹¹⁸ Adams, *Our Son, A Stranger*. 25; the Roethler family talks about how their son, Jimmy, was segregated and teased by the other children because of the colour of his skin.

¹¹⁹ Adams, *Our Son, A Stranger*. 101.

additional support from the child welfare agencies despite requesting and asking on multiple occasions.

Adams also states that “none of the parents interviewed in this study were told by any of the professionals they encountered, during the adoption process or afterwards, that the child they were considering adopting had not bonded with their birth parents and that this absence of early parental attachment might hold trouble for the future.”¹²⁰ As adults they suffered ongoing mental health issues, physical, emotional, psychological and mental abuses, suffered with alcohol and drug addictions, and were consistently in precarious situations. Some died as a result of these issues or suicide. In the defence of the child welfare agencies, knowledge of the full impacts of these early traumatic experiences on child development was limited.¹²¹ Crey and Fournier also comment on this by saying, “there were many non-[Indigenous] foster and adoptive homes who did their very best to nurture, heal and raise the [Indigenous] children entrusted to their care. Tragically, the outcome of adoptions even by conscientious non-[Indigenous] parents was often disastrous, as the adoptee reached adolescence only to suffer the triply painful identity crisis of being adolescent, [Indigenous], and adopted.”¹²² They go on to cite an interview they conducted with Lizabeth Hall, a worker with the United Native Nations’ family reunification program, who noted many children who were removed were taken from already communities broken by

¹²⁰Adams, *Our Son, A Stranger*.97.

¹²¹ Hayne W. Reese, “Developments in Child Psychology from the 1960s to the 1990s.” *Developmental Review* 13, no 4. This article discusses how child psychology developed throughout the mid to late twentieth century and discusses how experimental and theoretical child psychology still was. That it wasn’t until the 1980’s into the 1990’s that the understandings of how children developed and how a variety of external factors influenced their development.

¹²² Fournier and Crey, *Stolen from Our Embrace*. 90.

government policies. Bands tried to piece their communities back together, but it was very difficult with the lack of support and funding.¹²³

Indigenous culture and heritage have always been a defining factor for Indigenous people across the country. The residential school era and the Sixties Scoop caused immense damage and scarring to Indigenous peoples. It is not surprising then, when it is threatened or damaged, that resources and energy, such as the TRC and RCAP, go into restoring it. It is through these efforts, and with the help of Canadian people, that it will hopefully one day be fully restored and appreciated.

¹²³ Fournier and Crey, *Stolen from Our Embrace*. 108.

In the End

This paper takes the perspective that historical trauma stemming from the residential schools and the Sixties Scoop has had a devastating impact on all aspects of the lives and families it affected. Throughout this paper, the perspectives and arguments of many historians and scholars who have made different arguments about the causes, origins, and nature of the Sixties Scoop have been examined. While portraying the Sixties Scoop as a deliberate attempt at assimilation on the part of the government satisfies the anger for many, it does not fully encompass what the Sixties Scoop was, and why it happened. Ironically, viewing the Sixties Scoop as a huge, catastrophic mess with layers of complexities, provides a clearer understanding. The Indian residential schools, while unsuccessful in their assimilatory purposes, still significantly damaged the Indigenous cultures and people, and carried through the generations. The 1951 amendment to the *Indian Act* allowing provincial jurisdiction on reserves compounded the problems. Child welfare workers were ill equipped to deal with the culture and lacked resources to provide proper homes and money to help support Indigenous families. This added more problems for these children and families. The Sixties Scoop was not purely assimilation but was the result of ill and damaging effects of colonialism and state paternalism, creating historical trauma that was unchecked. Lacking supports and education, the child welfare agencies' actions damaged group of people and culture.

Stigmas and stereotypes about Indigenous people exacerbated the Sixties Scoop as well, leading child welfare workers to be more likely to remove children from Indigenous homes. This may also be related to lack of education, as many child welfare workers had little knowledge of Indigenous cultures. Racism and discrimination played a role in the way child welfare authorities

dealt with Indigenous children, although it tended to be less overt and related to broader society stereotypes about Indigenous people.¹²⁴

While the Sixties Scoop was not primarily motivated by an assimilationist agenda, it “was in *some* measure simply transferring of children from one form of institution, the residential school, to another, the child-welfare agency.”¹²⁵ Stevenson is the only author that has argued that the Sixties Scoop was assimilation, and she was specifically speaking about the Saskatchewan experience, where provincial authorities actively encouraged and promoted white families to adopt Indigenous children.¹²⁶ Her work is similar to the work of other historians, however, who argued that the ill effects of state paternalism and colonialism created a situation in which Indigenous parents were not in a position to properly care for their children due to historical trauma. Furthermore, the historical trauma the children experienced was not understood, creating more problems in the child welfare system.

Many of the historians and authors that are mentioned in this paper argue that it was not assimilation, but rather many layers of complexities that resulted in the chaos that is now known as the Sixties Scoop. Historians Miller and Milloy, who discussed the residential school era, describe how and why the survivors could not cope with the ‘real world’ after the schools, because of the trauma that they endured and the lack of supports Indigenous people received.

¹²⁴ Negative attitudes and notions towards Indigenous peoples are discussed in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, discussed by authors such as Patrick Johnston, Crey and Fournier, Dubinsky, Strong-Boag, and also implied that racist and discriminatory attitudes would have long-lasting effects were discussed by Miller and Milloy.

¹²⁵ First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada, “Summary of Orders from the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal.” February 1, 2018, accessed July 14, 2019. <https://fncaringsociety.com/sites/default/files/Info%20Sheet%20Summary%20of%20Orders%202018%20CHRT%204.pdf>; emphasis added to explain that while it’s very possible it was the reason behind some child welfare agencies apprehending Indigenous children, it does not argue the Sixties Scoop in its entirety.

¹²⁶ Stevenson, “Intimate Integrations.” 8. Stevenson writes, “this dissertation seeks to bring together... historiographical streams by situating the history of transracial adoption in earlier Aboriginal children removal policies that in large measure functioned as a primary mode of Aboriginal assimilation.”

Authors such as Dubinsky and Strong-Boag argued that when provinces were able to enter reserves, child welfare workers were mainly concerned with ensuring the safety and security of the children over their culture which in hindsight, only added to the problem. They also argued how the lack of resources and funding meant child welfare agencies were unable to fully inspect proper homes for the influx of children. Many child welfare workers did what they felt was right and reasonable for a home. Their cultural biases and perspective, however, may have led them to be less likely to approve Indigenous homes for the child they removed.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) discussed the negative cultural impacts from the Indian residential schools which contributed to the social and familial problems that contributed to the Sixties Scoop. The TRC as well as other authors argued that in Indigenous cultures, the community is very important in child-rearing. Coming out of the residential schools, many survivors lost that community which in turn affected their own child rearing abilities, contributing to the problems that led child welfare agencies to remove thousands of Indigenous children from their homes.

As O'Neill, Goodyear *et al* argue the negative implications of historical trauma transferable and affects subsequent generations. This historical trauma is directly linked to the "legacy of traumatic events experienced by historically oppressed communities over succeeding generations," and is often unintentionally and unknowingly transmitted to succeeding generations.¹²⁷ Indigenous peoples cannot move forward on their journey of healing if the rest of society cannot or refuses to start understanding the reasons and causes behind it. At the same time, it's been stated that, at least in terms of child welfare, the government ultimately gives

¹²⁷ O'Neill, "Hidden Burdens." 178.

more incentive for children to end up in the foster care system than to give the reserves and bands the money and supports they need for social services such as counselling, better health care, and intervention initiatives.¹²⁸ This is an area where Canadian people need to demand better from their government.

Miller poses a few insights that are still applicable and can be drawn from, even today. He writes:

as Canadians wrestle with the heritage of failed [Indigenous] policy in the 1990s and beyond, they should remember both the nature of the problem and their legal and moral responsibility. The problem is that Euro-Canadian society, believing that it knows best or that ‘it couldn’t turn control’ over to [Indigenous] people, has consistently perverted what [Indigenous] people have asked of it in return for sharing the land and resources in Canada. Now, as always through the history of [Indigenous] policy, it is up to the Euro-Canadian majority to decide if they will help or hinder, facilitate or oppress, support or tyrannize.¹²⁹

The residential schools created multiple generations of trauma-stricken Indigenous people who unwillingly and unknowingly placed that trauma onto their children which created a legacy of historical trauma. This historical trauma ensued and compiled and there is no doubt massive amounts of damage was done. But where is the blame to be placed? Personally, everybody. And nobody. Hepworth also argues that addressing the crisis of Indigenous children needs to be a priority:

The disadvantaged status of [Indigenous] peoples in Canada is not of their own making. While the social, political and economic handicap continues, the admission of large numbers of [Indigenous] children to the care of the child welfare services will continue; the one is a reflection of the other. Children are highly regarded by [Indigenous] peoples; as for all peoples they are a symbol of hope and rebirth. [Indigenous] children should be the first priority in negotiations between [Indigenous] leaders and the federal and provincial governments. [Indigenous] children come before [Indigenous] land claims. While politicians

¹²⁸ Kyle Edwards, “Why Indigenous Children are Overrepresented in Canada’s Foster Care System.” 2017, accessed July 14, 2019. <https://www.macleans.ca/politics/why-indigenous-children-are-overrepresented-in-canadas-foster-care-system/>

¹²⁹ Miller, *Shingwauk’s Vision*. 437; 438.

and lawyers are arguing, [Indigenous] children are dying and [Indigenous] families lose both their children and their hope. The message is simple. Put [Indigenous] children first.¹³⁰

In today's society, everyone needs to "check" themselves in how they deal with others. We need to stop choosing the easiest target as scapegoats, whether that be the homeless Indigenous person 'wasting' away the commoner's tax dollars, the government who gives and gives with no results, the racist Canadian that constantly calls authorities on the Indigenous person who lives next door. What we need to start thinking about is how we as individuals, and as a collective can help make the whole better. Better education, better support systems, transparency, and general kindness. We need to move away from the idea that Indigenous people should be assimilated and look at the detrimental inflictions Indigenous people have suffered that have caused much of their behaviour, appearance and larger issues. We need to look at what the government is doing, and as a collective, demand better.

As a collective, Canadian society seems to think one of three ways with their views on Indigenous peoples: they are fully supportive and helpful toward Indigenous peoples; they are racist and discriminatory against Indigenous peoples; or, and possibly the most likely, that people do not have the education or are ignorant towards the education about Indigenous peoples. One way to combat racism and discrimination is education. Those who went through the public education system in Ontario received little exposure to Indigenous history, culture and heritage. The Ontario curriculum briefly covers topics such as the fur trade, the Indian residential schools, Indigenous involvement in the world wars, and depending on the teacher's knowledge, perhaps a bit more about their customs, culture and heritage to but does little to uncover and discuss the issues that have led up to today. Secondary school provides more depth into

¹³⁰ Hepworth, *Foster Care and Adoption in Canada*. 121.

Indigenous topics but is dependent on the teacher's knowledge and the schools resources. Unless otherwise sought the general population in Ontario does not have the education to fully understand and comprehend how the system inhibits Indigenous peoples.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission did a study in 2016, an attempt to get Canadians perspective on Indigenous peoples.¹³¹ The study broke down the general impressions of Indigenous peoples into five categories with 33 percent associating them with negative experiences in Canada which would include residential schools, assimilation, oppression, colonization and state paternalism. 22 percent associate Indigenous people with impoverished conditions and poor social issues, and 13 percent of the sample had a negative view and perceptions of Indigenous people. 29 percent identified Indigenous people as the first people of Canada and 17 percent noted they have a rich history and culture.¹³² The low numbers indicate that on average, Canadian people know little about Indigenous people of the difficulties they have faced. The TRC considered that if more people had knowledge of the history of Indigenous people in Canada, and how the past has affected present conditions, then problems could be addressed more fairly.

While the TRC has heavily promoted education and creating positive connections between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada to create more equity and justice, some Indigenous bands and reserves have been working at the ground level to make immediate steps to make life better for their children. Children have always been important in Indigenous cultures, so it is no surprise that Indigenous people would want to have authority and agency

¹³¹ Truth and Reconciliation Commission, *Canadian Public Opinion on Aboriginal Peoples*. (2016) http://nctr.ca/assets/reports/Modern%20Reports/canadian_public_opinion.pdf. The study looked at a representative sample of 2,501 people, age of majority, who did not self identify as Indigenous across 10 cities.

¹³² Truth and Reconciliation Commission, *Canadian Public Opinion on Aboriginal Peoples*. (2016) http://nctr.ca/assets/reports/Modern%20Reports/canadian_public_opinion.pdf

over the welfare of their own children. In the twenty-first century, most reserves and bands have nearly full control, if not total control over their children on reserve; there is also support for Indigenous peoples who live off-reserve by their band.¹³³

In a few areas across Northern Ontario, one major advancement for child welfare is the creation of NogDaWinDaMin, or Nog. Nog, incorporated in 1990, assists the community in their “responsibility to strengthen families and communities for the safety and well-being of children by providing community-based services grounded in Anishnawbek values.”¹³⁴ Across Ontario, there are 11 other child and family service agencies, and many more across the country.¹³⁵ Presumably, they all operate with the same goal in mind: to protect the welfare and culture of Indigenous children while strengthening the community and families.

However, there still exists a large problem for Indigenous children. As of 2016, Indigenous children under four years old represented about 50 percent of the total children in child welfare care, even though they only represent 7 percent of the total population.¹³⁶ No doubt a side effect of past practices, but the federal government underfunds child welfare, social and health care services on reserves even though the government is very aware of these issues. The Department of Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada funds child services, and reimbursed the foster families taking in Indigenous, but often these families are not Indigenous.¹³⁷ This funding formula creates an incentive to promote foster care as an option for dealing with family problems

¹³³ Anna Kezlowksi, Vandna Sinha & Kenn Richard, “First Nations Child Welfare in Ontario, 2011.” *CWRP Information Sheet #110E*. Montreal: McGill University, Centre for Research on Children and Families. (2011) <https://cwrp.ca/information-sheet/first-nations-child-welfare-ontario-2011>

¹³⁴ NogDaWinDaMin Family and Community Services, “Mission.” Accessed July 14, 2019. <http://www.nog.ca/about-us/>

¹³⁵ “First Nations Child and Family Service Agencies in Canada.” Accessed July 14, 2019. <https://fncaringsociety.com/child-and-family-service-agencies-canada>

¹³⁶

¹³⁷ Edwards, “Why Indigenous Children are Overrepresented in Canada’s Foster Care System.”

rather than finding and carrying out the support services that Indigenous peoples need. In 2016, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal found that the Department of Indigenous and Northern Affairs' First Nations Child and Family Services Program was inadequate and discriminatory on the basis of race and national ethnic origin.¹³⁸

Canada has been praised for its kindness, for its peace keeping, for our humanitarian efforts. However, Canada has some pretty dark secrets that they try to keep well hidden, especially about Indigenous peoples. Miller also speaks to this sentiment:

If we are 'to move forward together', it is essential, that we 'learn from our past'. too, that, while healing precedes, we strive to ensure that the terrible facts of the residential school system, along with its companion policies - community removal, the Indian Act, systemic discrimination in the justice system - become part of a new sense of what Canada has been and will continue to be if our historical record is not recognized for what it has meant to indigenous people and repudiated generation by generation.¹³⁹

After all, "those who cannot remember [or do not learn from] the past are condemned to repeat it."¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada, "Summary of Orders."

¹³⁹ Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision*. 305.

¹⁴⁰ George Santayana, "The Life of Reason: Reason in Common Sense." 1905: 284.

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