



‘...and yet there’s still no peace’ Catholic Indigenous Residential Schools in Canada

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Abstract

Pope Francis met representatives of the Indigenous peoples of Canada in Rome in April 2022 and in Canada in July 2022. At these meetings he offered sincere apologies for the ways in which the Catholic Church had colluded with the strategy of cultural assimilation of the Indigenous people in Canada. This was especially abhorrent in the residential schools, operated by the Catholic Church (and other Christian churches), that aimed to ‘evangelise’ and ‘civilise’ the Indigenous children. He emphasised that this was a ‘disastrous error’ and the ‘overall effects of the policies linked to the residential schools were catastrophic’. He was very clear at both meetings that this abuse was ‘incompatible with the Gospel of Jesus Christ’. These Catholic residential schools and the impact of these schools on the Indigenous people are discussed in this article.

Keywords Catholic residential schools · Canada · Pope Francis

1 Introduction

The visit of Pope Francis to Canada in July 2022 has assumed significant historical importance. During the visit, the Pope apologised to the Indigenous people for the role of the Catholic Church and religious communities in the cultural and religious abuses they have experienced. These abuses were experienced by many children who had been placed in the Indigenous residential schools. This article discusses the context for these apologies and the apologies themselves in three parts. First, the article will use forgotten histories and missing voices as a framework. This framework will enable a deeper understanding of the institutional significance of the revelations about the treatment of the Indigenous children in the residential schools. Second, the rationale for the residential schools and the treatment of the Indigenous children will be scrutinised, with a focus on religious abuse. Third, the apologies

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of Pope Francis will be examined, and some concluding remarks are offered about why it is important to remember this history.

2 Forgotten histories and missing voices

There are a number of ways to frame or contextualise the history of the Catholic residential schools in Canada and other parts of the world. They can be framed as a (misguided) opportunity for evangelisation, for spreading the word of God, or as destructive products of a rapacious colonial system and as instruments of power and social control (Aquash, 2013; Johnson, 2018). These are, of course, highly relevant frames and will be referred to in this article. There are other ways to frame this history using the lenses of *forgotten histories* and *missing voices*. Forgotten histories and missing voices are very closely related, but there is a distinction to be drawn between them.

All remembering is selective, and this can induce selective forgetting (Stone et al., 2017). Remembering is often used to support the sense of the ‘self-concept’ for an individual person. The self-concept includes the following dimensions but is not synonymous with any of them: self-esteem; self-worth; self-image; ideal self; identities or roles and personal traits and qualities (Ackerman, 2018). A person acts and interacts with others based on their own self-concept and, if others accept this self-concept in interactions, they help to affirm the self-concept for that person. The remembering associated with the self-concept can be a combination of positive and negative memories, but an emphasis on more positive memories can preclude more negative memories.

By extension and adaptation, this can be applied to the concept of an institution that can be held by those in leadership positions or positions of power – and this enables a deeper understanding of the internal conception and external projection of the institution. The institution can act and interact based on the held concept and this can be affirmed in interactions. The held concept and projection of an institution, for example, can be premised on the view that the institution is socially just, and the remembering and recall will be about the positive times that demonstrate this social justice. This then can lead to a hesitancy or a failure to recall times when social justice was not demonstrated – which would obviously contradict the held concept of the institution. This leads to a forgetting or suppressing of histories or parts of histories.

Forgotten histories refers to unacknowledged, overlooked, obscured or hidden histories that have not been recalled or remembered. They may have been forgotten because they were about persons or groups of persons who were not deemed to be important or relevant in the ways in which the narratives of the history of the institution have been configured and been projected. For example, the stories of lower placed members of the institution or women may have been forgotten because other narratives were more prominent, such as hierarchical and male dominated narratives. Or they were forgotten because the history was suppressed as it exposed uncomfortable or shameful attitudes, actions or events that disrupted the held concept and projection of the institution. There is a danger that the held conception becomes a form of self-deception. These forgotten histories will include the missing voices from the past which were not considered to be important or were deliberately excluded.

It would be a mistake to consign missing voices solely to past periods of time, to periods of forgotten history. Missing voices can refer to the present and voices that are missing

in the contemporary world. Within the Catholic Church, missing voices still refers to the voices of women, including Catholic women religious who are scrutinised, at times, and excluded by male hierarchies (Brigham, 2015). There are signs that Pope Francis is attempting to address this, and good recent examples have included the appointment of four women (three religious and a lay woman) as consultors to the secretariat of the Synod of Bishops and, at the time of writing, his intention to appoint two women to the Dicastery that helps him select bishops (Lamb, 2019, Vatican news, 2022a). Missing voices still refers to the voices of children and groups of children who are not heard. Very recently it has referred to the voices of children who identify as LGBTQ in Catholic schools (Huchting & Fisher, 2019).

A focus on forgotten histories and missing voices can have a positive outcome in the sense that some extraordinary histories can be uncovered, and missing voices heard and highlighted. The life of Saint Katherine Drexel, foundress of the sisters of the Blessed Sacrament in America is a good example of a Catholic educator who began to listen to the missing voices. She divided opinion during her lifetime and her legacy continues to divide opinion (Lipperini, 2013; Morton, 2014, 2022). For some she brought the message of Christ to the unchurched black masses, to others she 'imposed the U.S. Catholic Church's Jim Crow policies on Black education in the South'. Morton (2022, 19–20) argues for a move away from binary understandings and a more nuanced vision of the process of her life work:

In the Afro-Catholic Diaspora, Mother Katherine is neither hero nor villain; she is a beloved witness to this self-determined Black Catholic education...Mother Katherine experienced a shift from being a missionary to unchurched black souls to becoming an accomplice to the holistic survival of Black people – mind, body, and spirit.

Within this analysis of the work of Saint Katherine one of the greatest parts of the development of her vocation was that she began to listen to the missing voices of the African Americans.

While it is helpful to examine the more positive outcomes of a nuanced approach to forgotten histories, it is clear that forgotten histories and missing voices often refer to darker histories that have been deliberately forgotten or suppressed. Forgotten histories and abuses of power are being uncovered in the sex abuse scandals that have emerged in many Christian churches. The sex abuse has taken many forms and the impact of the scandals, certainly in the Catholic Church, has been exacerbated by the attempts to cover up or to deny, and even to bury the scandals (Dale & Alpert, 2007; Formicola, 2016) In other words trying to ensure they remain forgotten histories and that the missing voices of the victims of abuse are suppressed. This is beginning to be researched from different sociological, legal and theological perspectives (Moran, 2019; Formicola, 2020).

3 Indigenous children in Catholic schools – Australia and the USA

Forgotten histories and missing voices are revealed in the contemporary histories of the treatment of the children of Indigenous peoples by the Catholic Church in various locations including Canada, USA and Australia. In all three countries, the aim was to assimilate, not integrate, the Indigenous children into state languages, cultures and even accepted forms of

religion in the 19th and 20th centuries. This was partly a legacy of the Doctrine of Discovery and a series of papal bulls that had been used from the 15th century to legally justify the colonisation by the European powers (Miller, 2019).

This proposed assimilation was of a limited nature, in that it did not provide equal opportunities for the Indigenous children. It usually meant assimilation into the lowest socio-economic status and conditions: the boys were prepared for manual labour or farming, and the girls were prepared for some form of domestic service (Smith, 2009). It is useful to note that the assimilation in the early days did not extend to citizenship as this was only granted to all Indians in the United States in 1924 and in Canada in 1960 (Dawson, 2012). In Australia the 1967 Referendum granted rights and equality to the Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders – citizenship was granted in different states at different times prior to this (Gordon, 2018).

Zucker (2008) notes that the assimilation policy in Australia did not recognise the Aboriginal culture. The Aborigines were considered to have no culture, no history and to be without spirituality. The Indigenous people would be improved by adopting the superior white way of life and the Christian religion. Indigenous children were separated from their parents to be educated into Christianity and in many places by Catholic missionaries. While different stories have emerged, and some suggest that the children were often treated better in the homes run by the Catholic Church than government institutions, the children were still separated from their families and for a specific purpose – evangelisation and civilisation.

A similar story unfolds in the United States of America where a recent investigation has confirmed that the United States was responsible for supporting 408 boarding schools across 37 states between 1819 and 1969 (United States Department of the Interior, 2022). The Catholic Church was funded to run some of the Federal Indian boarding schools, as were other Christian denominations. Smith (2009, 5–6) argues that this was conceived as part of a deliberate choice of cultural genocide rather than physical genocide because, in the context of the United States of America, cultural genocide was perceived to be more economically efficient. Cultural genocide or ‘ethnocide’ does not involve the mass death of physical genocide but the attempt to ‘destroy culture, language and religion’ and steal land and outlaw customs (MacDonald & Hudson, 2012, 442). The rejection of the spirituality and religious practices of the children and the imposition of Catholic Christianity were components of the cultural genocide that had tragic consequences. The recent investigation has prompted the United States bishops to seek a greater understanding of this history, promising to share their findings and create a greater culture of inclusion (Ruff, 2022).

4 Indigenous children in Catholic schools – Canada

In Canada the strategies to ‘educate’ the Indigenous children (First Nations, Métis, and Inuit children) began before the opening of the residential schools in the late nineteenth century. There was an unsuccessful attempt at a Catholic boarding school for Aboriginal boys in the early 17th century (The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015a). Sir Peregrine Maitland, the lieutenant Governor of Upper Canada proposed a plan in the early 1820s to ‘civilise’ the Indians that would focus on the young as it was expected that this would be more successful than focussing on adults (Hutchings, 2016). Maitland’s chief advisor, John Strachan, who would become Toronto’s first Anglican bishop, believed that Aboriginal

children should be separated from their families and raised by pious white people. A number of small boarding schools, operated by different denominations, were set up in the early to mid 19th century.

In the latter part of the 19th century, Nicholas Davin was commissioned by Sir John A. Macdonald Canada's first prime minister, to write a report on *Industrial Schools for Indians and Half-Breeds* (published in 1879) (Indian Residential School History and Dialogue Centre Collections, 2022). Davin drew on the example of the Industrial schools in America which were deemed to be a 'principal feature of the policy of aggressive civilisation' (Davin, 1979). The evidence from America was that the day school did not work 'because the influence of the wigwam was stronger than the influence of the school'. Christian churches were, in the opinion of Davin, best placed to supplant Aboriginal spirituality with a better one (Johnson, 2018). Macdonald justified the residential schools in 1883 as follows:

When the school is on the reserve the child lives with its parents, who are savages; he is surrounded by savages, and though he may learn to read and write his habits, and training and mode of thought are Indian. He is simply a savage who can read and write. It has been strongly pressed on myself, as the head of the Department, that Indian children should be withdrawn as much as possible from the parental influence, and the only way to do that would be to put them in central training industrial schools where they will acquire the habits and modes of thought of white men.

The first industrial residential school was opened by the Canadian government in Battlefield in 1883 and the strategy to 'Christianise' and 'civilise' would be put into operation in many more Government funded residential schools, the majority of which were operated by the Christian churches until 1969 (White & Peters, 2009; Morcom, 2017). Over 150,000 children attended these schools between the late nineteenth century and the late 1990s when the remaining federally supported schools were finally closed. These schools were founded on the principles of the inherent superiority of whites over the uncivilised and savage Indians and attempted to implement the policy of the 'aggressive civilisation' of the children, as described by Davin in his 1879 report (Bombay et al., 2014; Hanson et al., 2020). Similar to America, this was an attempt at cultural genocide. Part of the impetus for the cultural genocide was to ensure the acquisition of the lands occupied by the Indigenous peoples and the natural resources on these lands (Rose, 2018).

The Indian Act of 1920 allowed the government to 'compel any First Nations child to attend residential school', but it was never compulsory for the children to attend residential schools and some children attended day schools (The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015a, 62). These government funded residential schools were run on behalf of the government by the Catholic Church, the Anglican Church, the Presbyterian Church, the Methodist Church and later the United Church and other denominations. The Catholic Church was responsible for approximately 60% of the residential schools, the Anglican Church 30% and the remaining 10% was between the other denominations (Feir, 2016). The schools provided religious instruction and basic academic and industrial skills.

On arrival the children were given a new name (Euro-Canadian) to replace their Aboriginal name and were given a number (The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015a). It is reported that in many schools the numbers were used daily rather than names. Their hair was cut, and they swapped their traditional clothing for uniform. In many of the

schools, children were punished if they practiced their own customs/culture or used their own language. Most of the children spoke an Aboriginal language and had scant or no understanding of French or English, the languages used in the schools. This meant that the arrival at the school was a bewildering and frightening experience for the children as they could not communicate and could not understand what was being said to them. Over time, some children lost fluency in their own language or abandoned their own tongue. There were exceptions and in one of the Alberta schools, Fr Mullen translated the Bible and hymns into Cree for the children. In some schools the children were free to converse in their own languages in the playground.

Brothers and sisters were separated in the schools. There was a high death rate due to maltreatment, poor sanitation, under nourishment and inadequate health care (Mosby & Galloway, 2017; Wilk et al., 2017). Clearly the basic needs were not met for many of the children in terms of care, nourishment and health. Many of the survivors of the residential schools would suffer from long term physical and mental health problems.

5 Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada was set up in 2008 to reveal the 'complex history and on-going legacy of the church-run residential schools to the Canadian people' and 'guide and inspire' a process that would lead to reconciliation. The Commission travelled throughout Canada for six years to hear the voices of the Aboriginal people who had been educated in the residential schools and produced a lengthy report in 2015 with ninety-four Calls to Action (The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015a). A previous Commission had produced the *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* in 1996 that urged for a reconciliation process in Canada. This 400-page report and the 440 recommendations initially received some media attention but was largely ignored by the government (Hurley & Wherrett, 1999). Nevertheless, this report did begin the process of raising wider awareness of the treatment of the Aboriginal people (McGregor, 2018). The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada provided a second opportunity to examine and understand how the Aboriginal people had been treated and seek reconciliation.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015a, 1) used the term cultural genocide and distinguished cultural genocide from physical and biological genocide:

Physical genocide is the mass killing of the members of a targeted group, and *biological genocide* is the destruction of the group's reproductive capacity. *Cultural genocide* is the destruction of those structures and practices that allow the 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. Land is seized, and populations are forcibly transferred, and their movement is restricted. Languages are banned. Spiritual leaders are persecuted, spiritual practices are forbidden, and objects of spiritual value are confiscated and destroyed. And, most significantly to the issue at hand, families are disrupted to prevent the transmission of cultural values and identity from one generation to the next.

The Commission concluded that this separation of children from their families meant that 'the Canadian Government essentially declared the Aboriginal people to be unfit parents' (The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015a 4). The Commission heard over 6,000 testimonies from former students of the residential schools, family members, community members and interested participants. Some of the testimonies were from former staff of the residential schools.

The missing voices began to be heard in the testimonies of the adults who had been forced to attend the residential schools as children (Sedehi, 2019). The testimonies speak about physical, sexual, mental, cultural and religious abuse.

6 Religious abuse

This section draws on the testimonies of survivors of Catholic residential schools as recounted to The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015b). Some former students appreciated the Christian upbringing they received through religious education and the daily rituals of prayer. However, there is also evidence of religious abuse that took a number of forms. First, the children were not allowed to practice their own religion and spirituality, and some were threatened with punishment if they participated in their own rituals. In some cases, this even applied to participation in rituals that were practiced outside school term time (Johnson, 2018). Sarah McLeod recalls returning to Kamloops school with a small totem pole, a birthday present. This was taken from her by one of the nuns and discarded; the nun described it as being 'all devil'.

Second, the imposition of a strict regime of daily Christian prayer was common: morning and evening prayers, before and after meals and before classes. Antonette White who had attended the Catholic school at Kuper Island near Vancouver Island, British Columbia commented:

I think the worst thing, is the praying. It's, it's like you pray, pray, pray, and yet there's still no peace in that prayer of what they made you do.

Noel Starblanket attended the Lebret (Qu'Appelle, St. Paul's, Whitecalf) Industrial School. This was operated by the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate and the Grey Nuns from 1884 to 1973 (University of Regina, 2022). He recalls a very similar strict regime, as does Victoria Boucher-Grant who attended Fort William (St. Joseph's) school, Ontario:

I learned how to pray. I learned how to, this became a way of life, kneeling on my knees, and praying to, to some, some God that made me feel guilty because I was, I was not a very clean person.

Third, fear of the judgment of God and the images of the devil and hell were used to coerce children in a number of ways. Joseph Martin Larocque at the Qu'Appelle school remembers being scared of images of the devil with a pitchfork in religious education classes. Father Lacombe's instructional ladder, a pictorial catechism, was used in a number of the Catholic schools. This represented stairs leading to heaven and Jesus and the angels. At the bottom of

the stairs was fire, and according to Fred Bass, Indian people. Bass stated that he was told at the Roman Catholic school, Kamsack, Sasatchewan that if he and the other children did not change their ways, they would end up in the fire. Strict prohibition of the children's spirituality and the denial of their right to practice their rituals and the imposition of Catholic religious instruction and practice, then, were used as weapons to evangelise and catechise.

7 The Christian churches and Canada apologise

The apologies by the Christian churches were for the collusion with the assimilationist policies of colonialism and for the work of the churches in the residential schools. These apologies began with the United Church of Canada in 1986 apologising for being an agent of colonialism (Bush, 2015). At this point, there was no explicit apology for the collusion with the Residential school system. Later apologies included contrition for involvement in the residential schools. Two Anglican bishops apologised in 1991 and 1993 and the Presbyterian Church in 1994. In the Catholic Church the apologies were issued, most notably, by the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate and different dioceses. On 24 July, 1991 Fr Doug Crosby, then President of the Oblates apologised on behalf of the members of the order for the damage caused by the schools they operated (Robinson, 2019). He apologised for three things. In the first instance, he apologised for the existence of the schools that separated children from their families. In the second instance, he apologised for the physical and sexual abuse. In the third instance, he apologised for dismissing the Indigenous religious tradition and the attempts at assimilation. On June 11, 2008 Stephen Harper, the Prime Minister of Canada, apologised on behalf of Canada for the role of the residential schools in the policy of assimilation.

8 The unmarked graves

The report of the discovery of unmarked graves of 215 Indigenous children in 2021 at the site of Kamloops Indian Residential School in South Central British Columbia, and later at the sites of other former residential schools, once again highlighted the tragic consequences of the injustices of the residential schools (Thorne & Moss, 2022). Kamloops was run by the Catholic Church. The exact number of children who died may never be known because of the practice of poor record keeping (Supernant, 2022).

There are parallels in other parts of the world. In Scotland, the unmarked grave of possibly as many as 400 children is in the cemetery of St. Mary's Parish Church Lanark (Gamble, 2018). The children had been residents at the Smyllum Park School run by the Daughters of Charity as an orphanage and for poor children (1864–1981) and they were buried in the 'Smyllum plot' in the graveyard. While the children appeared to have died from natural causes and economic cost may explain the lack of headstones, this is within the context of the grim evidence of emotional, physical and sexual abuse towards children in the school that has been uncovered in the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry Case Study no. 1 (Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry, 2018).

The unmarked graves in Canada and Scotland are chilling indicators that the children were not to be remembered and would be part of forgotten history. This recovered history

of the unmarked graves and the abuse experienced by many of the Indigenous children in the residential homes in Canada demonstrates how far removed the care for the children was from the conception of social justice that is espoused by Catholic Social Teaching. The inherent God-given human dignity of all individuals as revealed in sacred scripture which underpins contemporary Catholic Social Teaching was not recognised (Genesis 1:26–27; Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2004). Christian 'dignity' was imposed with a European cultural form of Catholic Christianity with terrible consequences.

9 Pope Francis and the apologies to the Indigenous people in Canada

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015a, 221) noted that the Roman Catholic Church did not have a single spokesperson and the apologies had been issued by different diocese and the religious organisations. On April 29, 2009, Pope Benedict XVI met with Mr Phil Fontaine, the Grand Chief of the Assembly of First Nations of Canada and The Most Reverend James Weisberger, President of the Canadian Conference of Bishops (Vatican, 2009). In the short communique that was released, the Pope expressed his 'sorrow at the anguish caused' by the church involvement in the residential schools. These words of regret were not an official apology and he did not use the word apology. The Commission contrasted this with the pastoral letter of Benedict issued in Ireland in 2010 as a response to the child abuse in the church in Ireland. In this letter, the Pope stated: 'You have suffered grievously and I am truly sorry' (Pope Benedict, 2010, Sect. 6). This led the Commission to develop Call to Action number 58 which called upon the Pope to issue an apology to survivors and their families and communities for the 'spiritual, cultural, emotional, physical and sexual abuse' of the children in the Catholic residential schools. They called for an apology similar to the pastoral letter of 2010 and that the apology should be delivered by the Pope one year after he received the report of the Commission (The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015a, 223, 330).

On July 24 to 30, 2022, Pope Francis visited Canada on an apostolic journey. On July 25, he met with the Indigenous people (First Nation, Métis and Inuit) of Canada and described his visit as a penitential pilgrimage (Pope Francis, 2022a). The Pope had previously met some representatives of the Indigenous people in Rome in March/April 2022. At that meeting in Rome, the Pope apologised for the 'suffering, hardship, discrimination' and abuse experienced by the people and he drew attention to the role of the residential schools in the attempt to rob the Indigenous people of their cultural identity. Pope Francis stated that all of this had made him feel indignation and shame very strongly (Pope Francis, 2022b). He was emphatic that when confronted with historical memory we must have a commitment to learn from past mistakes. The Pope was very clear that the abuses the Indigenous people had experienced were 'contrary to the Gospel of Jesus Christ'.

In his address at Maskwacis in Canada on July 25, 2022, the Pope apologised again for the devastation of the Indigenous families and their culture caused by the assimilationist policies and the residential schools. He drew attention to the role of Catholic Church and the religious communities in the cultural destruction and the physical, verbal, psychological and spiritual abuse of the children in their care. Pope Francis emphasised that the 'overall effects of the policies linked to the residential schools were catastrophic' and that this was a 'disastrous error'. Once again, he was very clear that this abuse was 'incompatible with the

Gospel of Jesus Christ'. Pope Francis recognised the importance of memory and recovering the forgotten histories (Pope Francis, 2022a). The Pope acknowledged that the public apology is only a first step in a process that must seek to ensure there is no repetition of the damaging culture and practices that have caused such harm for a vulnerable group of people.

In the second address on July 25, 2022, at a meeting with Indigenous peoples and members of the parish community of Sacred Heart Edmonton, the Pope again recalled the role of the residential schools in 'robbing communities and individuals of their cultural and spiritual identity' (Pope Francis, 2022c). This was part of the 'violation of dignity, the experience of evil, the betrayal of trust' and shameful for believers. He does not offer a simple solution but urges that the way forward is to be reconciled in the crucified Christ, and he used this powerful image to stress the betrayal that took place in the residential schools:

This is the way forward: to look together to Christ, to love betrayed and crucified for our sake; to look to Christ, crucified in the many students of the residential schools. If we truly want to be reconciled with one another and with ourselves, to be reconciled with the past, with wrongs endured and memories wounded, with traumatic experiences that no human consolation can ever heal, our eyes must be lifted to the crucified Jesus; peace must be attained at the altar of his cross.

Pope Francis, despite limited physical mobility, undertook the penitential pilgrimage to deliver frequent apologies to the Indigenous Peoples for the harm inflicted on them and damage caused by the cultural suppression in the residential schools. The repeated apologies emphasised the severity of the harm and damage. His final public statements were delivered in a Homily at Vespers with Bishops, Priests, Deacons, Consecrated Persons, Seminarians, and Pastoral Workers in the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Quebec on July 28, 2022 (Pope Francis, 2022d). He discussed the cultural coercion of the Indigenous peoples and also asked forgiveness of the victims of sexual abuse.

10 Concluding remarks

This article has examined the history of the residential schools in Canada, the meetings of Pope Francis with the Indigenous people of Canada and his apologies for the cultural and religious injustices imposed on the Indigenous people and the grievous harm caused by the residential schools. This has been discussed within the frameworks of forgotten histories and the missing voices of the survivors of the Catholic residential schools. The Pope has listened to the voices and urges that the history is investigated, and a healing process can begin.

The Pope did not refer to the term cultural genocide during the encounters with Indigenous people in Rome and Canada, despite this being the term used by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. However, he did use this term in his response to a reporter on the flight back to Rome from Canada. Pope Francis said the following (Vatican News, 2022b):

...I didn't use the word because it didn't come to my mind, but I described the genocide and asked for forgiveness, pardon for this activity that is genocidal. For example,

I condemned this too: taking away children, changing culture, changing mentality, changing traditions, changing a race, let's put it that way, an entire culture. Yes, genocide is a technical word. I didn't use it because it didn't come to my mind, but I described it... It's true, yes, yes, it's genocide.

It is vitally important that the forgotten history of the Indigenous Residential schools is being recovered and the missing voices are heard. Education is needed to ensure that people, especially non-Indigenous people in Canada and beyond, are aware of this history (Neufeld et al., 2022). This history impacts not only on the Canadian people but also on the associated Christian churches and, for the purposes of this study, especially the Catholic Church. Education in this history is crucial for current and future generations – that they avoid the deeply harmful mistakes of the past (Kuhl, 2017).

Significant numbers of the children did not receive an adequate education in the harsh environment of many of the residential schools. The education in the residential schools, for the most part, did not cohere with the vision of education described by Pope Francis in his address to the parish community of Sacred Heart Edmonton (Pope Francis, 2022c):

Education must always start from respect and the promotion of talents already present in individuals. It is not, nor can it ever be, something pre-packaged and imposed. For education is an adventure, in which we explore and discover together the mystery of life.

Further, the Catholic culture and religious education in the residential schools did not cohere with the vision of Catholic education based on the love of Christ that is outlined in the series of contemporary church documents on Catholic education. This series begins with *Gravissimum Educationis* (1965) through *The Catholic School* (1977) to the *Identity of the Catholic School for a Culture of Dialogue* (2022) (Pope Paul VI, 1965; The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977; Congregation for Catholic Education 2022).

These documents offer a vision of Catholic education that is free of coercion; an education that is not imposed to support a strategy of cultural genocide. This education respects the inherent God-given dignity of every person and aims to ensure that all people have opportunities to develop their talents and gifts, enabling them to contribute to the common good of society. Often, the children in the residential schools were not provided with sufficient opportunities to develop their talents and gifts - opportunities which would have enabled them to fulfil their potential and make a meaningful contribution to the common good of society (Brady, 2010).

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