

## From:

*Anne-Marie Reynaud*

### **Emotions, Remembering and Feeling Better** Dealing with the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement in Canada

July 2017, 330 p., 39,99 €, ISBN 978-3-8376-3918-6

As the largest class action suit in Canadian history, the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement (2007-2015) had a great impact on the lives of Aboriginal survivors across Canada. In a rare account exploring survivor perspectives, Anne-Marie Reynaud considers the settlement's reconciliatory aspiration in conjunction with the local reality for the Mitchikanibikok Inik First Nations in Quebec. Drawing from anthropological fieldwork, this carefully crafted book weaves survivor experiences of the financial compensations and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission together with current theorizing on emotions, memory, trauma and transitional justice.

**Anne-Marie Reynaud** completed her doctorate in Anthropology at the Freie Universität Berlin in cotutelle with the Université de Montréal. Her research interests include visual anthropology, Indigenous Peoples, emotions and transitional justice.

For further information:

[www.transcript-verlag.de/978-3-8376-3918-6](http://www.transcript-verlag.de/978-3-8376-3918-6)

# Contents

---

**Preface** | 9

**Note on Transcription** | 11

**Note on Terminology** | 13

**Introduction: Settlement and Reconciliation** | 17

## **Chapter 1**

Approaching Emotions and Reconciliation: Theoretical Perspectives | 41

## **Chapter 2**

Mitchikanibikok Inik: The People of the Stone Weir | 65

## **Chapter 3**

On *being the right way* in the Field | 91

## **Chapter 4**

Agency and Distrust: How the Past Shapes the Present | 111

## **Chapter 5**

Indian Residential School, Education and the Socialisation of Emotions | 137

## **Chapter 6**

Remembering Residential School: Survivor Perspectives | 163

## **Chapter 7**

“Shut-up Money”: The IRSSA and Financial Compensations | 193

## **Chapter 8**

At the TRC: Dealing with Difficult Emotions | 223

## **Chapter 9**

“Outsiders”, Reconciliation and Keeping Busy in the Bush | 247

**Epilogue** | 279

**Appendix** | 301

List of Acronyms

List of Figures

Glossary

**Bibliography** | 305

## Preface

---

The photograph on the book cover speaks to some of the pain that the memory process has awakened for survivors during the years of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement. It also shows their resilience. It is a picture of a broken floor tile thrown into what was once the window of an Indian Residential School church. I took this picture in 2006, on a day that was decisive for the writing of this book: it was the first time I heard directly from a survivor what had happened to him in residential school and what the proposed settlement meant for him. It was the day I realised that perspectives like his need to be heard. The ruins of this school have since been destroyed, but the brokenness and the strength that converge in this photograph are still there, palpable in the air and in the stories that survivors have shared.

This book is the result of my doctoral thesis in Anthropology, completed in January 2016. The first three chapters are for the theory-interested reader as they provide the bedrock to how concepts of emotions, memory and trauma are relevant to the study of transitional justice and reconciliation. The general interest reader might want to start directly with chapter four and find out how this interdisciplinary approach is put to use in the field, beginning with an exploration of the early childhood memories of residential school survivors. My hope is that general interest readers will read through the six empirical chapters and want to return to the first chapters in order to better understand the theoretical thread that connects the book as a whole. I trust that both readers will not miss the signs of agency and healing that this book also uncovers in its journey through the difficult topic of emotions and remembering in dealing with the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement.

Writing this book would not have been possible without the participation, knowledge, support and help of many people over the past years: My greatest thanks goes to all the Mitchikanibikok Inik community members who placed their trust in me and shared their stories. I have learned so much from you and for this I will always be grateful. Chi-meegwetch to all of you for your time, your kindness and your friendships. Thank you for welcoming me and my family onto your land, into your homes, your offices and your lives. Due to confidentiality reasons, I regretfully cannot name you personally, but a special

thanks goes to those of you who shared memories, sometimes very painful. Thank you for taking the risk to embark on this project in order to have your perspectives heard.

Likewise, I wish to express my gratitude to the Canadian, Québécois and other participants who were willing to share their diverse experiences and opinions with me. Working with you enabled me to put things into perspectives in ways that otherwise would not have been possible.

As part of an academic endeavour, my research benefitted from the guidance and support of several scholars whom I would like to thank: Birgitt Röttger-Rössler, Marie-Pierre Bousquet, Sina Emde, Victoria Kumala Sakti, Cynthia Milton, Anne Andermann, Roxana Paniagua and Dietlind Stolle.

My writing is indebted to the sharp eyes of three wonderful women: Susan Murwin, Tricia Reynaud and Molly Pope. I cannot thank you enough for your editing work. Thanks also to others who supported this book in various ways: Max Wilhelm and StarLynn Jacobs for transcriptions, Christian Artuso for linguistic tips, Frederic Reynaud for fieldwork assistance (among other things), and Delphine Arnaud for article searching and your encouragement. Indeed this book would not have been possible without the hospitality and support of my friends and family in Germany, France and Canada. To all the Reynauds and the Zieglers: Thank you. A special thanks to my late Gram for her generosity.

Finally, there are no words to thank my children Aljoscha and Abigail for their patience and for constantly reminding me that the path to *mino madiziwin* is not in front of a computer screen. And, above all, my most heartfelt gratitude goes to Rafael Ziegler, without whom this book would simply not exist. If there is one person I have been able to count on from the conception of this project to its final editing, it is you. For all you have done, from spending our family holidays doing my fieldwork to the countless hours you poured over my writings: thank you.

## Note on Transcription

---

Mitcikanâpikowinimôwin is the Algonquin dialect spoken by the Mitchikanibikok Inik. It is an oral language and though there have been projects to create a lexicon with a systematic or phonemic writing system, these have not been realised and there are therefore many orthographic styles in simultaneous use in the community (Artuso, personal communication February 15<sup>th</sup> 2014). When asked to write things down, most participants wrote as phonetically as possible and this has made it complicated to systemise the orthography of words used in this book.

There are several linguistic systems that have been applied to Algonquin dialects, which are themselves categorised in different groupings as there are considerable vocabulary differences between, for instance, the Algonquin dialect spoken in Kitigan Zibi (often referred to by French scholars as “Algonquin du Sud”: *Southern Algonquin*) and the one spoken in Kitiganik by the Mitchikanibikok Inik (referred to as “Algonquin du Nord”: *Northern Algonquin*).

There exist several Algonquin lexicons, however none are a perfect match for Mitcikanâpikowinimôwin (in the literature also often referred to more generally as Anishinaabemowin). Ernest McGregor’s 1994 dictionary is not useful as he worked in Kitigan Zibi (*Southern Algonquin*). Jean André Cuoq’s 1886 lexicon is somewhat helpful but limited, as he does not employ a systematic or phonemic writing system, meaning that the entries have to be cross-referenced in order to determine the phonemes (units of sound in speech). Marie and Manie Dumont’s 1985 glossary of *Northern Algonquin* as spoken in Lac Simon comes closest to being helpful, but it is limited in scope.

For this reason, linguist Christian Artuso explains that he used the Fiero Double Vowel system in his study of generational differences in Mitcikanâpikowinimôwin (1998) because it distinguishes between the long versus the short vowels, which are important in this dialect as well as in other Algonquian languages (Artuso, personal communication February 15<sup>th</sup> 2014).

For the purpose of this book, I have decided to leave aside the no-doubt much more precise but extremely complex Fiero Double Vowel System, as readers (including fluent Mitcikanâpikowinimôwin speakers) would have at first a harder time speaking the words out loud correctly.

I therefore follow a system developed by a community member who participated in this study and helped me with language questions but whom I cannot name for confidentiality reasons. According to Scot Nickels (1999), it is also the system used by other non-linguists who have worked with the community, notably Anthropologist Sue Roark Calnek. Still, Nickels makes clear that although he tried to standardise his use of this “system of orthography with that of Dr. Roark-Calnek, differences may exist, mainly because of the way we hear various words, or because separate informants often have distinct pronunciations” (1999:XIII). This also applies to this book, and any mistakes are mine alone. I applied the phonetic orthography conventions as outlined by Nickels (1999) here below:

Pronunciation:

Fifteen consonants are used: b, c, d, g, h, j, k, m, n, s, t, w, and y.

c	c = sh (example: ship, sheep)
d	dj = j (example: judge)
dj	as in “judge”
h	h = sometimes silent
j	as in “je” (in French)
l	often pronounced as “n” (example: Basil = Basin)
t	pronounced as “ch”, as in “church”

The vowels required are a, e, i, and o, with each being assigned two different sounds called long and short, differentiated by the use of a diacritic or accent mark: “^”

They are enunciated approximately as follows:

a	as in butter, or nut
â	as in father, fate, and page. â = “aw” (example: paw)
e	whether long or short does not vary enough to require the diacritic. This letter, however, is never mute and is enunciated as in “red” or “dread”, whether at the beginning, middle or end of a word. Also pronounced as in “pay”, or “day”.
i	as in “bitter” “pig”, “tigwagan”
î	pronounced as “ee”, as in “see”, or “bleed”
o	as in “good”, or “hood”
ô	yields a sound somewhere in between “loon” or “moon” and “moan”.

(Nickels 1999: XIII-XIV)

## Note on Terminology

---

### **ON THE TERMS: INDIAN, ABORIGINAL, INDIGENOUS AND MITCHIKANIBIKOK INIK**

The original peoples of Canada self-identify in different ways, and various terms have been used (and are still in use) to identify them. One of those terms, no longer considered as politically correct, is the word *Indian*. While it is no longer commonly used by Canadians or heard in contemporary political discourse, the word *Indian* is still present in old but applied policy language (for example: “Indian Act”, “Status Indians” and “Treaty Indians”), serving as an indicator of how the colonial past is still a part of the present. In this book, the word *Indian* is therefore used in a historical context only (for instance as in “*Indian Residential School*” and archive materials), or if citing policy materials, scholars or participants.

Used as an umbrella concept to designate First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples, the term Aboriginal Peoples is currently the dominant term in Canadian policy and therefore recurrent in the language used in the IRSSA. To avoid confusion in this book, I consistently used the term Aboriginal Peoples to designate collectively the original peoples of Canada. I therefore do not use the term Indigenous Peoples (except in citations), though the latter suggests more of a political consciousness and worldwide solidarity towards those who have been dispossessed of their lands and colonised around the globe. Following “The National Aboriginal Health Organization Terminology Guidelines”<sup>1</sup>, I use the term Aboriginal *people* with a lower case when referring to more than one Aboriginal person, and I use the term Aboriginal *Peoples* (with a capital P) when referring to a collective of groups. Though I tried to avoid the term, when used (mostly in quotes) the term non-Aboriginal *people* is always singular and lower case.

To designate the key focus group in this book, I decided to consistently use the term that all community members self-identify as: Mitchikanibikok Inik.

---

1 | Last accessed January 8<sup>th</sup> 2016: <http://www.naho.ca/publications/topics/terminology/?submit=view>

Though it is hard to pronounce for non-native speakers, it is a term that brings people together as opposed to other designations that have become linked to internal political divides (for instance the appellation: “Barriere Lake Algonquins”, which off reserve community members do not identify with). Still, I included the designation “Barriere Lake Algonquins” (or “Algonquins of Barriere Lake”) when used by community members who explicitly referred to themselves as such, and within a historical context (archives, past research etc.). Accordingly, the term *community* is recurrent in this book as it is understood as transcending political divides, band status or other “insider/outsider” struggles to include all those who self-identify as Mitchikanibikok Inik.

### **On the term settler**

Ever since the publication of *Unsettling the Settler Within* (Regan 2010)<sup>2</sup>, there has been an increase in the use of the term *settler* to designate Canadians in scholarly works addressing the relationship between Canada and Aboriginal Peoples. Though it is an important recognition of colonial history and a reminder of the power imbalances that still exist, I do not use the designation *settler* outside its historical context or unless in citations. The reason for this is that I tried to apply the same logic of self-identification as I did with other participants, meaning that I had to be consistent in the use of the terms people used to designate themselves: Québécois, Quebecer, Canadian (and not “non-Aboriginal Canadians” or “settler Canadians”). Moreover, while a term like “non-Aboriginal Canadian” implies a denial of colonial history, terms like “settler Canadians” or “settler-descendants”, if important for the opposite reason, are also limited in that they exclude those who did not come to Canada as settlers (slaves, indentured labourers and refugees). That being said, I also report the words people used when creating “othering” discourses (us/them dichotomies through totalising racial signifiers such as “whites” for instance).

### **On the term survivor**

In this book the term *survivor* refers to former residential school students who are still alive. Just like the other socio-historical categories discussed above, the term *survivor* is not unproblematic. Still, in this book it is understood as an appellation that former students have, for the most part, adopted as reflecting the reality of what they have overcome. Inseparable from the language of trauma, the term survivor serves as a reminder that the psychological syndrome seen in survivors of rape, domestic battery, and incest is essentially the same as the

---

**2** | For earlier discussions of the term (and the nature of settler identity) see Epp 2003, Barker 2006 and Simon 2008.

syndrome seen in survivors of war (Herman 1992:32). In this context, the term residential school survivor offers recognition of the full impact of the repeated abuse and traumas children experienced in the schools that were used as instruments of a larger colonial assimilative apparatus. Being a *survivor* sounds more affirmative than being a *victim*, and for this reason former students have more readily adopted it.

# Introduction

---

## SETTLEMENT AND RECONCILIATION

The government recognizes that the absence of an apology has been an impediment to healing and reconciliation. Therefore, on behalf of the Government of Canada and all Canadians, I stand before you, in this Chamber so central to our life as a country, to apologize to Aboriginal peoples for Canada's role in the Indian Residential Schools system. [...] In moving towards healing, reconciliation and resolution of the sad legacy of Indian Residential Schools, implementation of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement began on September 19, 2007. Years of work by survivors, communities, and Aboriginal organizations culminated in an agreement that gives us a new beginning and an opportunity to move forward together in partnership. (Prime Minister Stephen Harper, *Apology* June 2008)

With this official apology delivered in the House of Commons on June 11<sup>th</sup> 2008, Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper claimed to have laid a strong foundation for reconciliation between Aboriginal Peoples and Canadians. He stated the removal of Aboriginal children from their families and communities had been wrong, apologised on behalf of the Government of Canada and all Canadians, and asked for forgiveness. He acknowledged the lasting detrimental impacts of the residential school system and described the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) as a unique opportunity to educate Canadians about this “sad chapter” of Canadian history: “It will be a positive step in forging a new relationship between Aboriginal peoples and other Canadians,” he said. “A relationship based on the knowledge of our shared history, a respect for each other and a desire to move forward together with a renewed understanding that strong families, strong communities and vibrant cultures and traditions will

contribute to a stronger Canada for all of us.” (Harper 2008) In this apology, the TRC was qualified as “the cornerstone” of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement (IRSSA), also known as the largest class action settlement in Canadian history.

This book investigates the IRSSA and its aspiration for reconciliation by binding it to an anthropological study of emotions at the local level for the Mit-chikanibikok Inik, one of nine Algonquin First Nations communities located in the Outaouais and Abitibi-Témiscamingue regions of Quebec. According to community members who participated in this study, two generations of Mit-chikanibikok Inik children went to residential schools between 1950 and 1973, more than eighty children in total. Of these, about forty are still alive and were included in the IRSSA. I worked from a qualitative approach with ten of these survivors<sup>3</sup>, aiming to reach a thick understanding of how they experienced the settlement agreement process. This therefore meant involving their families, the community nursing station staff and other relevant local actors in the research process.

## **THE INDIAN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT (IRSSA) AND RECONCILIATION**

The IRSSA kicked into force in 2007 and consists of five main components typically found in transitional justice processes that focus on restoration after large-scale human rights violations.

The first two components used the bulk of the overall funding (\$1.9 billion CAD) to offer direct financial compensation to survivors: the Common Experience Payment (CEP) made survivors eligible for \$10,000 CAD plus \$3000 CAD for every year they attended a residential school. Former students could also file an Independent Assessment Claim (IAP) for sexual and physical abuse. Though slightly less tedious than an actual trial in court, substantial proof and legal assistance were still required to file such a claim.

The other three components are the establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, a Commemoration Program and a body of measures to support healing.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) received \$60 million CAD and its mandate includes collecting and archiving survivor stories. This ongoing fact-finding process aims to expose the truth about residential schools and generate emotional changes both for survivors, whose experiences are supposed to be legitimised, and for Canadians who are called to change their

---

**3** | This is how former residential school students call themselves – see terminology note.

attitudes as a result of this educational, unsettling process (Regan 2010). The TRC is unique in the sense that it is the result of a court order (it is not liable to government), it has no subpoena power, and it is unfolding in a country which is not in political transition. With an initial five-year mandate it has been travelling throughout the country and has held numerous community events, individual statement-taking sessions, as well as seven national events. In January 2014 it received a one-year extension to fulfil its mandate (including its final report) and a four-day closing ceremony is planned in Ottawa in early June 2015.

The Commemoration Program is mostly coordinated with the TRC and has been allocated \$20 million CAD. The commemoration mission was to bear witness through the official state apology delivered by Prime Minister Harper, as well as by erecting monuments and memorials.

The last IRSSA component is a body of measures to support healing. The latter are administered through Health Canada and its Indian Residential Schools Resolution Health Support Program (IRS RHSP). Until September 30<sup>th</sup> 2014, the IRSSA also provided additional funding (\$125 million CAD) to the Aboriginal Healing Foundation (AHF) to support community-based healing initiatives that were already underway. In 2010, the federal budget made the controversial decision of not renewing the financial support for the AHF, meaning that by the fall of 2014 the foundation had closed its few remaining projects.

With these five components the IRSSA not only aims to compensate individuals for past harms, but it inscribes its work and mandate within a discourse of reconciliation. Yet, and as this introduction later explains in depth, beyond the general idea of forging a positive relationship between Aboriginal Peoples and Canadians, what reconciliation means and how it can be achieved is vaguely defined. The TRC website states:

We know that reconciliation is very hard to categorize or explain. It means one something to someone, and perhaps carries a very different feeling or meaning to someone else. It is at its core very individual, yet when considered collectively, reconciliation can change the very way we look at ourselves and at our fellow citizens. (TRC website<sup>4</sup>)

This kind of statement is inherently ambivalent as it at once implies that reconciliation is not collectively definable, while at the same time suggesting it is of tremendous collective importance. As I later develop, this book explores the hypothesis that despite hiding behind such statements the IRSSA shapes its aspiration for reconciliation through its five main components and the way it implements them: be it the TRC (see chapter eight), the apology or the financial compensations (see chapter seven), the settlement elements address very

---

4 | Last accessed November 4<sup>th</sup> 2014: <http://www.trc.ca/websites/reconciliation/index.php?p=356>

emotional issues and elicit emotions in this process. This book posits that we need to scrutinise emotions in order to understand what is at stake for people participating in such processes. Emotions constitute a sort of reconciliation barometer, and if this is what the IRSSA aspires to inspire, then it is important to find out how the actors involved in the process are experiencing the settlement agreement and what reconciliation means to them. The IRSSA frames its mandate as aspiring towards reconciliation. What does this mean for Mitchikanibikok Inik residential school survivors and their families? How have they experienced the settlement agreement?

By widening the space of reconciliation beyond the IRSSA structures and the spaces these create (while still including them), I attempt to move beyond the emotions these official structures elicit and explore how emotions are shaped and shared in processes of remembering the past, understanding the present and considering the future in the aftermath of residential schools for the Mitchikanibikok Inik. In doing so, I examine emotions in relation to the IRSSA (especially the financial restitution measures and the TRC) in the everyday life and discourse of the Mitchikanibikok Inik. This requires first looking at how remembering the past shapes the present. It also means examining how healing and reconciliation are locally understood. Finally it entails an exploration of the social, political and personal relational webs between the Mitchikanibikok Inik and the people and institutions with which they interact in order to detect healing and reconciliation challenges and strategies at work.

## THE MITCHIKANIBIKOK INIK, EDUCATION AND EMOTIONS

The Mitchikanibikok Inik (*People of the Stone Weir*) refer to themselves as Anishnabe, which means human being, and are also known as the Algonquins of Barriere Lake. They live in and out of the Rapid Lake reserve (also called *Kitiganik*<sup>5</sup>), on land never ceded by treaty (or conquered by war) in the province of Quebec. If the community recently counted 712 people on its band list (AANDC 2012), the population consisted of less than a fourth of that in the 1960s (there were 160 persons in the band in 1964 according to a field report by Sigrid Bechmann-Khera 1964:34). The departure to residential school of over eighty children in such a small community temporarily emptied the newly established reserve of Rapid Lake by nearly half, and most band members today are either survivors or their descendants (eighty per cent are descendants according to the

---

5 | *Kitiganik* translates as “place to be planted” or “plantation”. *Kitigan* means “cleared land” or “cultivated land” (ik is a locative that indicates in/to a place) and there was once a kind of tree farm there where jack pines (*okik*) were cultivated as the result of a natural forest fire.

community nursing station's wellness counsellor – Ishkote Ikwe, 60, August 2011, Rapid Lake clinic).

Interviews I carried out with study participants between 2006 and 2013 document that the first generation of children was sent in 1950 to two English-speaking residential schools in Ontario: Spanish Indian Residential School (in the town of Spanish), and St-Mary's Indian Residential School in Kenora. A second generation was then sent to the French-speaking Indian Residential School of Amos mostly between 1962 and 1972. Located at Saint-Marc-de-Figuery, the Indian Residential School of Amos (1955-1973) was one of the four schools in Quebec that was run by the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, a Roman Catholic community of missionary priests and brothers.

Until they started being sent to residential school in 1950, Mitchikanibikok Inik children had been brought up on the land following a semi-nomadic hunter-trapper way of life. Traditional education, rooted in the principles of respect, self-control, patience and endurance, encouraged learning through observation and letting children try things autonomously (Larose 1991; Bousquet 2012). As has also been observed in other Aboriginal groups (Briggs 1970; Anderson 2007) correction happened indirectly, usually through humour or mockery. By rejecting punishment and physical violence, traditional education was at odds with the formal instruction the children received in the residential schools, which were partly also created as an incentive to settle the Aboriginal population of that area in the 1950s (Bousquet 2012). Traditionally and to some extent still today, emphasis was put on control of emotions like anger (Bousquet 2009) and Algonquins have long been portrayed as discrete when it comes to emotional expression by Catholic missionaries active in their evangelisation since the 1830's. Still, high emotional control does not translate into a lack of emotions, but rather into specific *cultural codifications of emotions* that cannot necessarily be analysed against our own cultural norms (Ferrara 1999). According to Arlie Russell Hochschild (1983), *cultural codifications of emotions* specify when and how emotions are to be shown (so-called "display rules"), or even felt ("feeling rules"). They also vary within a culture depending on factors such as age and gender, and are internalised as norms by children during their socialisation process (Röttger-Rössler et al. 2013).

Aboriginal Peoples in Canada and Algonquins in Quebec have experienced major societal changes with Christianisation, the switch to sedentary lifestyles and residential schooling in the last century. These changes had a big impact on Aboriginal cultures and, it can be hypothesised, on cultural codifications (or codes) of emotions.

As is further developed in the first chapter, my interest in emotions is rooted in an understanding of the latter as much more than the irrational and subjective reactions that they have sometimes been described as. Rather, this book follows an approach that views emotions as central and powerful agents

of individual, social and political change, and as key elements of analysis when it comes to understanding processes of reconciliation. Shaped by an interest in emotions as they relate to culture and social contexts, I nevertheless agree with an approach that does not oppose biology and culture, and that claims that regardless of its biological or basic attributes *every* emotion can be shaped by culture in social situations (Röttger-Rössler et al. 2009:44). Accordingly, I suggest that a better understanding of Algonquin cultural codes of emotion and of the emotional conflicts and changes that unfolded due to residential school can help shed light on the way survivors are experiencing the IRSSA.

## THE INDIAN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL SYSTEM AND ASSIMILATION

Before outlining the theoretical considerations central to this book, a contextualising sketch of the emergence of residential schools and their associated contemporary discourse of reconciliation is necessary. In his book *A National Crime* (1999), John Milloy traces the history of residential schools for Aboriginal children as initially introduced by various Christian missionary organisations in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. The first attempts at Christianising and “civilising” Aboriginal Peoples through education were already far from successful, as exemplified with the first boarding school experiment that took place in New France and only lasted from 1620 to 1629, when it became clear that it was a failure (the children ran away). The boarding school idea was then only fully revived in the 1830s, with church-run initiatives to which the federal government provided grants. Despite the existence of these schools, it is only as of 1883 that the *system* of residential schools was established (TRC report 2012:5-6). This system, with its clear goal of assimilation, operated well into the mid-20th century.

Over time, more than 139 residential schools existed across Canada in every province except New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Prince Edward Island. According to Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC 2008) about 150,000 children were removed and separated from their families and communities to attend the government-funded schools that were run by the Roman Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian, Moravian, and United Churches.

A significant amount of research on the abuse that took place in the schools across Canada has been produced in the last two decades, documenting the horrific experiences of sexual, physical, emotional and psychological abuse recalled by many survivors (Haig-Brown 1988; Miller 1996; Grant 1996; Chrisjohn, Young and Maraun 1997; Milloy 1999; Chartrand, Logan and Daniels 2006; Tremblay 2008; Ottawa 2010). Children were often used as cheap labour, lived in unfit conditions (malnutrition and disease were frequent) and were taught to look down upon their native cultures. They were shamed because they were Aboriginal. Frequently schools forbade them to speak their native

language amongst themselves, and punishment in general was excessive. The children devoted little time to their studies as they were expected to do manual or domestic labour, and most acquired no more than a basic literacy. Though exact numbers are currently under examination, there are reports of deaths (4000 deaths reported by the TRC as of January 2014), health experimentation (Mosby 2013), illnesses, and disappearances of children while at some residential schools. A culture of abuse permeated certain schools leading older students to also inflict abuse and bullying (TRC report 2012:44).

The existing body of literature on residential schools calls for an understanding of the schools within their historical context, one that takes into account religious intent, political intent and the use of law as a way to “get rid of the Indian problem” as said by Duncan Campbell Scott, deputy superintendent general of Indian Affairs from 1913 to 1932. It shows that the abuse went far beyond the standard of the time (strapping children for instance) and aimed at destroying cultures for the sake of Christianisation and assimilation: what Robert Jaulin defined in 1970 as *ethnocide*, that is the systematic “*négation de l’autre*” (*negation of the other* 1970:409) and the according destruction of its way of life (note the similarities and differences between the concepts of *ethnocide*, *cultural genocide* and *genocide* will be subject to discussion in chapter eight).

These types of ethnocidal colonial policies towards Aboriginal Peoples were also commonplace in other settler countries, and whether through forced schooling or foster care, similar methods were applied in the United States, Australia and New Zealand. In Canada, the RCAP report describes how residential schools were part of a national policy of displacement and assimilation that was cemented after the 1867 British North America Act (BNA). Indeed shortly after the birth of Canada as a country, the 1876 Indian Act was put into place and gave almost complete federal control over the lives of Indians and their interactions with settlers. It also made the Government of Canada responsible for the land, health and education of Indians, which meant it started to get involved in the administration of the residential school system in order to meet its educational obligation under the Indian Act. The Indian Act’s goal was to bring Indian status to an end in order to relieve the government of the economic and social responsibilities it had taken on through the treaty process (TRC report 2012:11)<sup>6</sup>.

---

**6** | Prior to the 1867 BNA, the British government had negotiated numerous treaties with Aboriginal nations in eastern Canada. The expansion of treaties out West accelerated as of the early 1870s (now with the federal government) in order to secure land for European settlers in the face of increasing conflicts with the Aboriginal population. Treaties were at first a one-off payment in exchange for land, and later provided reserves (land set aside for Aboriginal groups) and annual payments (TRC report 2012:6-7).

Inspired by the 1879 Davin Report<sup>7</sup> recommendations, the Canadian government, as of 1920, made attendance to the schools mandatory under the Indian Act and Indigenous children under sixteen years of age were forcibly removed from their families to attend residential schools. While the industrial school program had been brought to an end in 1911, the last federally run residential school closed in 1997.

## **SITUATING THE EMERGENCE OF A NATIONAL DISCOURSE OF RECONCILIATION**

In the last decade, the word reconciliation has increasingly invaded the realm of public discourse concerning Aboriginal Peoples in Canada. There is talk of reconciliation in child welfare, reconciliation in decolonisation processes and reconciliation after residential schools. In fact, reconciliation is used as such an all-encompassing term when it comes to discussing Aboriginal Peoples' well being and the relationships between Canadians and Aboriginal Peoples, that contextualisation is necessary before addressing the theoretical problems posed by its meaning.

The triggering factor for the emergence of a national discourse of reconciliation was a voluminous report published in 1996 by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) that called for radical changes in the relationships between Aboriginal Peoples, the Canadian government and Canadian society as a whole. With the perspective that it is impossible to make sense of the issues that trouble the relationship today without a clear understanding of the past (RCAP Dussault and Erasmus 1996: Vol. 1, part 1, ch. 3:1), the report took a historical approach and started off by delineating four main stages in the relationship between Aboriginal Peoples and non-Aboriginals: *Separate Worlds, Contact and Co-operation* (as of the 15<sup>th</sup> century), *Displacement and Assimilation* (starting in the late 18th century) and *Negotiation and Renewal* (already underway since the 1969 White Paper). Volume one of the five-part report constitutes an exploration of the *Displacement and Assimilation* stage, which is the backdrop for the call to renew relationships. This exploration exposed the roots of

---

**7** | This influential report that helped shape the Canadian residential school system was written by Nicholas Flood Davin, a journalist who was sent to the United States to study the Indian education system. The report made numerous recommendations including taking Indian children away from their parents at a young age, and it encouraged the Churches' involvement in education in collaboration with the government for mainly two reasons: a moral one (replacing Aboriginal spirituality by Christianity), and an economical one: they could pay substandard salaries to the missionaries and thereby save money (TRC report 2012:10).

the issues faced by many Aboriginal communities today and brought residential schools and their disastrous legacy to national attention.

Following pressure from the Assembly of First Nations, the Government responded to the RCAP report in January 1998. In its report entitled *Gathering Strength: Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan*, the Canadian government included a "Statement of Reconciliation" in which it stated:

Reconciliation is an ongoing process. In renewing our partnership, we must ensure that the mistakes which marked our past relationship are not repeated. The Government of Canada recognizes that policies that sought to assimilate Aboriginal people, women and men, were not the way to build a strong country. We must instead continue to find ways in which Aboriginal people can participate fully in the economic, political, cultural and social life of Canada in a manner which preserves and enhances the collective identities of Aboriginal communities, and allows them to evolve and flourish in the future. Working together to achieve our shared goals will benefit all Canadians, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal alike. (Canada, Minister of Indian Affairs and Development, 1997)

The intent to reconcile by "renewing the partnerships" in a meaningful and lasting change was one of four objectives including "Strengthening Aboriginal Governance", "Developing a New Fiscal Relationship" and "Supporting Strong Communities, People and Economies". The commitment to renew the partnerships included the "Statement of Reconciliation", which recognised historic injustices towards Aboriginal Peoples and expressed remorse with regards to the residential school system. It allocated \$350 million dollars to create and support the Aboriginal Healing Foundation (AHF), a not-for-profit private corporation with an eleven year mandate to research, fund and conduct Aboriginal-run healing initiatives addressing the legacy of abuse in residential schools. It also called for the implementation of an Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) program to avoid long and costly civil litigation for survivors of residential schools. Though the "Statement of Reconciliation" was criticised that it fell short of an apology, all together, the four objectives promoted fair, healthy and respectful relationships on the personal, community and wider political levels. They recognised that this would mean implementing the right of Aboriginal Peoples to self-government and a renewal of treaty relationships.

As has been well documented by scholars (Castellano, Archibald and De-Gagné 2008; Chrisjohn and Wasacase 2009; Cassidy 2009; Jung 2009; Regan 2010), this is what paved the way for the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement. In 2001 the government created the Office of Indian Residential Schools Resolution Canada (IRSRC) to deal with abuse claims. The National Resolution Framework was launched in 2003 and included an Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) process. This was an out-of-court process compensating former students for abuse. Nevertheless, nineteen class actions were launched

across the country and survivors filed over 14,000 individual cases in the years following the RCAP report. In this light, the ADR soon proved to be unsuccessful (for various reasons including its extremely tedious application procedure for survivors) and the courts were so overwhelmed that a settlement for financial compensation to former residential school students was called for by both the Assembly of First Nations and the Canadian Bar Association in 2004-2005 in order to deal with things in a timely and affordable fashion (Stanton 2011).

In May 2006, the Canadian Government (represented by the Honourable Frank Iacobucci), the Churches involved in running the schools, the Assembly of First Nations and the plaintiffs (former students of Indian Residential Schools), as represented by the National Consortium and the Merchant Law Group, agreed upon the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement (IRSSA). Survivors across the country had until Christmas 2006 to object to the proposal. Once the proposal was through, there was an opt-out period until spring 2007, when the settlement came into force and former students were able to start applying for payments<sup>8</sup>. Those who chose to go ahead with the settlement lost their right to ever go back on the issue; that means they lost their right to bring the government or a former abuser to court. According to AANDC, 1074 former students opted out.

## **DEFINING RECONCILIATION AS UNDERSTOOD BY THE IRSSA**

The IRSSA's official court website lists the twenty-five IRSSA schedules, each giving procedural and/or legal information as pertains to an entity involved in the settlement or a settlement measure. Only two schedules directly address reconciliation: the TRC's mandate as detailed in Schedule "N", and the Commemoration Policy Directive as detailed in Schedule "J".

The first objective of the Commemoration Policy Directive is to "assist in honouring and validating the healing and reconciliation of former students and their families through Commemoration initiatives that address their residential school experience" (Schedule "J" page 1, IRSSA website<sup>9</sup>). Communities or groups of former students can submit commemoration initiative proposals to the TRC, who then makes recommendations to IRSRC.

---

**8** | Note that the settlement funds, \$2 billion CAD, are essentially government money. According to Daniel Tremblay the churches settled to provide \$100 million CAD in cash and services (2008:213).

**9** | Residential Schools Settlement Official Court Notice, last accessed online November 4<sup>th</sup> 2014: <http://www.residentialschoolsettlement.ca/settlement.html>

This means the task of giving meaning and facilitating the work of reconciliation rests essentially with the TRC. Therefore it is worthwhile examining how reconciliation is framed within the TRC mandate. The introduction states:

There is an emerging and compelling desire to put the events of the past behind us so that we can work towards a stronger and healthier future. The truth telling and reconciliation *process as part of an overall holistic and comprehensive response* to the Indian Residential School legacy is a sincere indication and acknowledgement of the injustices and harms experienced by Aboriginal people **and the need for continued healing**. This is a profound commitment to establishing **new relationships embedded in mutual recognition and respect** that will forge a brighter future. The truth of our common experiences will help set our spirits free and *pave the way to reconciliation*. (Italics and bold added, Schedule “N” page 1, IRSSA website<sup>10</sup>)

This helps clarify reconciliation as understood by the IRSSA in several ways:

First, the TRC’s mandate situates truth telling and reconciliation as part of “an overall holistic and comprehensive response to the Indian Residential School legacy”. This is important as it emphasises that it is part of a wider settlement and implies that the work of truth telling and reconciliation is also linked to the other settlement measures. Besides its role in the evaluation of commemoration proposals, it has among other responsibilities the duty of providing a context and meaning for the Common Experience Payment through its national events (TRC Mandate, Events, 10 [c]).

Second, the TRC’s mandate assures the “sincere indication and acknowledgement of the injustices and harms experienced by Aboriginal people **and the need for continued healing**.” Reconciliation is here framed as part of a healing discourse. It is interesting to note that the IRSSA’s logo itself actually puts emphasis on healing, not on reconciliation: “The residential schools settlement has been approved. The healing continues” (Indian Residential Schools Settlement – Official Court Website<sup>11</sup>).

Third, reconciliation is understood as a process as well as a long-term goal (see italics in quote). The FAQ section of the TRC website confirms this by explaining that “The Commission views reconciliation as an on-going individual and collective *process* that will require participation from all those affected by the IRS experience. We will move towards *achieving reconciliation* through

---

10 | Ibid.

11 | Last accessed November 4<sup>th</sup> 2014: <http://www.residentialschoolsettlement.ca/English.html>

activities such as public education and engagement, commemoration and recommendations to the parties” (italics added, TRC website<sup>12</sup>).

And the last point is that the commitment to the establishment of **new relationships embedded in mutual recognition and respect** in the above text alludes to the one between Canadian society and Aboriginal Peoples, but in its mandate principles, the TRC schedule clarifies that reconciliation is “an ongoing individual *and* collective process, and will require commitment from all those affected including First Nations, Inuit and Métis former Indian Residential School (IRS) students, their families, communities, religious entities, former school employees, government and the people of Canada. Reconciliation may occur between any of the above groups” (italics added, Schedule “N” page 1, IRSSA website<sup>13</sup>). This extends the work of reconciliation not only to large groups (national reconciliation), but also to individuals and their families (inter-personal reconciliation), as well as their communities. The fact that the new relationships are to be embedded in mutual recognition and respect implies the creation of bonds of trust between the above groups.

Beyond these rather general points, there are no further precisions in the TRC’s mandate concerning reconciliation and how it might unfold. In a 2008 report from the Aboriginal Healing Foundation Research Series, Jennifer Llewellyn pointed out that the lack of specific attention paid to the goal of reconciliation or how it might be achieved was out of necessary caution: the TRC and other community programmes alone cannot achieve reconciliation and do not promise to do so. But Llewellyn also warned that bridging the gap between truth and reconciliation is a substantial challenge that calls for attention. Truth-seeking and truth-telling, two pillars of the TRC, are necessary steps towards reconciliation, but they are insufficient on their own (2008:187).

The lack of guidance when it comes to reconciliation in the IRSSA is a reflection of what studies of worldwide transitional justice and conflict resolution cases tend to agree upon: there is no roadmap for reconciliation, and about 156 ways to define it, in English, according to TRC Chair Justice Murray Sinclair<sup>14</sup>. That is, without Aboriginal perspectives on reconciliation, which Commissioner Sinclair and his staff want to research as part of the work of the TRC.

---

**12** | FAQs last accessed November 4<sup>th</sup> 2014: <http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/index.php?p=10>

**13** | Residential Schools Settlement Official Court Notice, last accessed online November 4<sup>th</sup> 2014: <http://www.residentialschoolsettlement.ca/settlement.html>

**14** | Commissioner Sinclair in a lecture (unpublished) given as part of the *Indigenous Knowledge Seminar Series* offered by the Aboriginal Focus Programs at the University of Manitoba in the Aboriginal Education Centre, April 11<sup>th</sup> 2011. Last accessed on YouTube, September 25<sup>th</sup> 2014: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HuFc\\_Z9F-NA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HuFc_Z9F-NA)

## **THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS ON TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE AND RECONCILIATION**

By its design, the IRSSA calls attention to the way that reconciliation is embedded with processes of memory and healing. It raises questions concerning historical truths and calls for the dominant majority to listen to the minority. Specific spaces are being created as part of the TRC for this to happen, spaces where survivors can tell their stories either in front of an audience (live, retransmitted online) or in a smaller committee. These are spaces that engage peoples' emotions through the giving and receiving of difficult stories. The transformative potentials and challenges of these official spaces and how they relate to reconciliation are at the heart of an ongoing scholarly discussion in Canada. Most have, in one way or the other, asked about the meaning of reconciliation after residential schools and about what reconciliation entails.

Informed by a large body of literature on transitional, restorative and reparative justice from legal scholars, political scientists and philosophers (Barkan 2000; Abu-Nimer 2001; Torpey 2006; Kymlicka and Bashir 2008; Murphy 2010), efforts have been made to understand the discourse of national reconciliation in Canada within a wider international context of transitional justice trends.

Transitional justice is a relatively young and interdisciplinary 'field of study' that emerged in the late 1980s when demands for justice in response to political changes in Latin America and Eastern Europe began (ICTJ 2009:1). It is from this wave of transitions from authoritarianism to liberal democracy (starting with Argentina in 1983) that "transitional justice" got its name. Human rights activists and others wanted to address systematic abuses by former regimes without endangering the political transformations that were underway (ICTJ 2009:1). Governments there adopted many of what became known as the basic approaches to transitional justice: mechanisms such as TRCs or financial compensation that deal specifically with systematic or widespread human rights violations (Minow 1998; Quinn 2011). The International Center for Transitional Justice defines transitional justice as an adapted form of justice that "seeks recognition for victims and promotion of possibilities for peace, reconciliation and democracy" (ICTJ 2009:1).

Scholars have identified three main paradigms within the field of transitional justice: retributive justice, restorative justice and reparative justice (Minow 1998; Quinn 2011). These paradigms of justice are driven by different goals and therefore work differently, but scholars seem to agree that in the case of transitional justice they should not be considered independently of one another (Boraine 2006; Fischer 2011). The IRSSA does not include retributive justice (no judicial investigations, no prosecutions), but a mixture reparative and restorative justice mechanisms. Typically, restorative justice mechanisms try

to establish a dialogue between offenders and offended (for instance through TRCs), with the aim of *restoring* them back into the community. Reparative justice aims to *repair* the suffering the victim has endured (for instance through an official apology) and is usually the result of restorative justice. In the case of the IRSSA, the financial compensations and the official apology fall under the reparative paradigm, and the healing measures and the TRC are restorative justice mechanisms.

Truth and reconciliation commissions have been adopted as a way to deal with victims and perpetrators of collective atrocity in processes of national reconciliation, and there have been over thirty commissions around the world since 1974. Most were created by the governments of the countries concerned, and some by the United Nations as well as by nongovernmental organisations (Minow 1998; Gibson 2004).

Though they often differ from one another in their application, truth commissions share a common aim of moving away from retributive justice (criminal verdicts) towards truth-seeking and reconciliation. This does not prevent them, by definition, from cooperating with judicial processes, and the extent to which commissions are involved in facilitating prosecutions (by handing over perpetrators' names for instance) or in granting amnesty is entirely dependent on their mandate. For instance, the well-known 1994 post-apartheid South African TRC had the power to grant amnesty to perpetrators who testified. This decision to encourage perpetrators to testify in order to receive amnesty was rooted in a Christian approach to reconciliation, which considers forgiveness as its central element.

While it was made clear that the Canadian TRC is not modelled on the South African one (as stated by National Chief Phil Fontaine at a conference in 2007<sup>15</sup>) and that it did not consider forgiveness as a requirement (as clarified in 2011 by Commissioner Sinclair<sup>16</sup>), the Canadian TRC, just like the South African TRC, has been designed with elements from the restorative justice approach that aims to facilitate reconciliation. According to law professor Martha Minow, restorative justice emphasises the humanity of both offenders and victims: "It seeks repair of social connections and peace rather than retribution against the offenders. Building connections and enhancing communication

---

**15** | Phil Fontaine "The Long Journey to Justice: The Personal as Political" (unpublished) lecture presented at a conference entitled: "Preparing for the Truth Commission: Sharing the Truth about Residential Schools. A Conference on Truth and Reconciliation as Restorative Justice", University of Calgary, June 15<sup>th</sup> 2007.

**16** | Commissioner Sinclair in a lecture (unpublished) given as part of the *Indigenous Knowledge Seminar Series* offered by Aboriginal Focus Programs at the University of Manitoba in the Aboriginal Education Centre, April 11<sup>th</sup> 2011. Last accessed on YouTube, September 15<sup>th</sup> 2013: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HuFc\\_Z9F-NA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HuFc_Z9F-NA)

between perpetrators and those they victimized, and forging ties across the community, takes precedence over punishment or law enforcement” (Minow 1998:92).

Much of the academic focus so far has therefore been on the particularities of the Canadian TRC within a non-transitional context and as a result of litigation, and while some have described it as a lesson for Australia and the United States<sup>17</sup> (Cassidy 2009), most have focused on its shortcomings and potential failures. Scholars have scrutinised its restorative application, which includes a ‘no-naming of perpetrators’ policy, as well as its focus on truth rather than reconciliation (Llewellyn 2008; Flisfeder 2010). Others have pointed out the TRC’s lack of focus towards institutional change of the kind of power structures that enabled residential schools in the first place, raising again the issue of accountability and questioning the scope of transitional justice in this application (Angel 2009; Jung 2009; Chrisjohn and Wasacase 2009; Bonner and James 2011; Stanton 2011). Attention has also been called to the way TRCs can be state tools which fail to address indigenous self-determination requests and therefore fail to change inter-group relations (Corntassel and Holder 2008). Proponents of this view (Alfred 2005; Simpson 2008, 2011) have articulated decolonisation and restitution “including land, financial transfers and other forms of assistance to compensate for past harms and continuing injustices” (Alfred 2005:152) as necessary elements of reconciliation, without which the process would constitute a further injustice.

This call for a form of structural redress points to a main area of debate when it comes to reconciliation: the question of justice. At this point it should be made clear that the debate in Canada has not centred on retributive versus restorative/reparative justice so much as to the scope and application of restorative and reparative measures in this (non-transitional) instance. It was indeed generally claimed that retributive justice would not bring much to survivors, their families and communities: most of the perpetrators of physical and sexual abuse are dead. It has also been claimed that the retributive justice system is adversarial and does not deal with the individual and collective consequences of the trauma generated by the abuses (R. Ross 1996, 2004).

Proponents of the restorative approach have essentially put forward three arguments that are relevant in the IRSSA context and for this study: the first argument is that restorative justice (TRCs) reduces the range of “impermissi-

---

**17** | The Canadian TRC is the first commission that is exclusively focused on harms carried out against Aboriginal peoples. Since 2013 there is also the Maine Wabanaki-State Child Welfare Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) whose mandate is to “uncover and acknowledge the truth about what happened to Wabanaki children and families involved with the Maine child welfare system” (Maine Wabanaki-State Child Welfare TRC website, last accessed November 12<sup>th</sup> 2014: <http://www.mainewabanakitrc.org/>).

ble lies” in the public realm (Ignatieff 2001; Regan 2010). Remembering the past becomes a polyphonic post-colonial emotional terrain where Aboriginal Peoples obtain a form of recognition and validation necessary for healing and reconciliation. The second argument is that restorative justice resonates with and owes much to the insights of Aboriginal conceptions of justice (R. Ross 1996, 2004; Llewellyn 2002, 2008). According to this view, retributive justice is based in Western principles that are incompatible with Aboriginal ways of thinking and feeling. And the third argument is that restorative justice promotes healing, especially emotional healing by reflecting a practical view about human psychology that seeks to repair and build social connections: “Unlike retributive approaches, which may reinforce anger and a sense of victimhood, reparative approaches instead aim to help victims move beyond anger and a sense of powerlessness” (Minow 1998:92). By bringing emotions into the foreground, the last argument makes a causal link between truth-telling (encouraged by the IRSSA) and healing: by sharing their stories and breaking the silence around the taboos of multiple forms of abuse, survivors and their families can set off on “healing journeys” that imply emotional labour.

These three arguments, and their implications in the case of the IRSSA, point to a theoretical dilemma when it comes to restorative/reparative justice and emotions: the fundamental tension between the competing imperatives of fidelity to legitimate emotions stemming from injustice (such as anger, rage or sorrow) and the seeming countervailing need to overcome these emotions for the sake of reconciliation (Ure 2008:285-287). Effectively the IRSSA promotes emotions (and emotional expression) in the sense that it legitimises the anger of residential school survivors through its victim-centred emotional TRC process, yet at the same time its objective to repair and renew personal and political relationships (and come to a “*resolution* of the sad legacy [...]” see 2008 apology opening quote, italics added) calls for an “overcoming” or a “healing” of negative emotions for the sake of creating a viable political community: a new emotional regime. How do survivors deal with this emotionally tense process? How do they make sense of the reparation payments in this context? How do they experience the TRC?

To begin exploring these questions requires an understanding of the nature of the wrong that the IRSSA attempts to address, as well as a culturally sensitive approach to emotions and healing. It also calls for a distinction between interpersonal reconciliation (and healing) and political reconciliation both at the community level and at the wider national level. Though the IRSSA mentions these various levels, it does not distinguish its application according to the specificities involved in the various processes at each level. Doing so sheds light on the importance of distinguishing between what Trudy Govier and Wilhelm Verwoerd (2002) call issues of *quantity* and issues of *content*. They understand *quantity* issues as those concerning the level at which reconciliation is sought:

national, community, small group or interpersonal. *Content* issues concern the way reconciliation is approached: as either non-violent coexistence (also coined as minimalist, weak or thin reconciliation) or as the restoration (or creation) of a friendship (also coined as maximalist, strong or thick reconciliation). It seems logical to deduce from this that ending the violence has to be a prerequisite to strong reconciliation, and this calls for an understanding of violence not only as an acute event but also as the slow erosion of community through the soft knife of settler policies that severely disrupted the life worlds of people (Das and Kleinman 2001).

Govier and Verwoerd claim that by underestimating the differences between the different levels of reconciliation, the maximalist approach to reconciliation is likely to opt for a simplistic application of a richly emotional conception of reconciliation to the large-group level (2002:181). This kind of confusion between interpersonal and group level reconciliation, they argue, generates theoretical and attitudinal problems: On the one hand “if one envisions reconciliation as a kind of richly emotional Holy Grail, one is likely to conclude that the fabulous goal is unreachable for large groups” (2002:181). The results are pessimistic and cynical attitudes that undermine political processes of national reconciliation. And on the other hand, the minimalist approach to reconciliation (reconciliation as co-existence) neglects “to consider links between the large-group and individual levels, thus underestimating the significance of attitudes and feelings” (2002:181).

It therefore seems key to avoid either conflating or unrealistically separating the interpersonal and national levels. Govier and Verwoerd suggest that a way to do this is to opt for an understanding of reconciliation as the building or rebuilding of trust in relationships, whether at the interpersonal, community and national intergroup-levels. They insist on the fact that “maintaining a working, trusting relationship is per definition an ongoing process, not a singular event marking success” (2002:186).

This book therefore does not approach reconciliation as a noun, but as a verb that involves, as Marc Howard Ross put it: “changing the relationship between parties in conflict both instrumentally and emotionally in a more positive direction so that each can more easily envision a joint future. Reconciliation is not one thing (Kriesberg 1998a) and is best viewed as a continuum, meaning that there can be degrees of reconciliation rather than just its presence or absence; furthermore, there are strong and weak versions of reconciliation” (2004:200). By approaching the relational shift as aiming for the building or rebuilding of trust, this work also acknowledges the key role that emotions play in constructing relationships at all levels of reconciliation.

In this light, I attempt to explore reconciliation by approaching it as an umbrella concept that regroups three interrelated key processes that are taken into

account in conjunction with emotions: remembering the past, experiencing settlement, and the deployment of healing strategies.

## **ANTHROPOLOGY AND RESTORATIVE JUSTICE**

A disciplinary outlook reveals that anthropologists have tended to focus either on the legalistic aspects of formal reconciliation processes (Wilson 2001; Blackburn 2012; Niezen 2010), or on local conflict resolution practices (White and Watson-Gegeo 1990; Avruch 1991; Lederach 1991; Bousquet 2009). They have also increasingly shown interest in exploring the linkages between memory and violence and how those relate to individual and collective healing and reconciliation processes (Antze and Lambek 1996; Scheper-Hughes 1998; Das, Kleinman et al. 2001; Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004; Labelle et al. 2005; Robben 2005; Baussant 2006). Though emotions have been recognised as playing an important role in constituting identity and community after political violence and trauma, very few anthropological studies bring them to the foreground (exceptions are: Scheper-Hughes 1998; Zarowsky 2004; Mlodoch 2012; Kumala-Sakti 2013). As developed in the first chapter, I therefore also draw from an inter-disciplinary pool of Native studies, women's studies, political science and psychology research (Ahmed 2004; Nadler and Saguy 2004; Hutchison and Bleiker 2008; Million 2009; Regan 2010) in order to explore emotions in relation to the IRSSA.

Though it would seem likely for anthropologists to be mostly in support of national restorative justice projects due to a long-standing interest on legal pluralism in the discipline, they have actually been quite critical in two main ways:

The first main area of anthropological critique revolves around the methods surrounding human rights documentation and official history-writing in restorative processes at the national level (F. Ross 1997; Buur 2000; Wilson 2000, 2001, 2003). The main arguments here are that in South Africa positivist methods were used in statement gathering resulting into the break down of individual narratives into quantifiable acts (Buur 2000) and only forensic truth was granted epistemological value in the process of creating knowledge about the past. Therefore the truth of the past became a theological one (about evil) and not about history (Wilson 2003). In this light, Paulette Regan's (2010) call for unsettling Canada's foundation myth as a peacemaking nation is important and addresses this potential pitfall of losing the master narrative due to too much focus on individual perpetrators.

The second main area of anthropological critique, as articulated mainly by Richard Wilson (2003), concerns the legitimacy of restorative justice as a national tool for reconciliation. He claims restorative justice is used by governments to justify impunity in relation to past political violence. Wilson shows

how the state narrative of reconciliation in post apartheid South Africa, which tried to merge a Christian understanding of reconciliation with the concept of *ubuntu*<sup>18</sup> to justify its restorative approach, clashed with local applications of retributive justice and reconciliation in the *lekgotla* township courts (Wilson 2000, 2001). Wilson urges anthropologists to look at the unintended social consequences created by national reconciliation projects and often ignored by policy makers and globalisation theorists alike. Following his recommendation, I explore how Mitchikanibikok Inik survivors understand reconciliation and their views on the IRSSA's restorative and reparative approaches, as well as the settlement's impacts at the local level. Is the IRSSA of any use to Mitchikanibikok Inik survivors and their families? What is at stake for them with this settlement?

Moving away from the legalistic aspects of national restorative reconciliation processes, anthropologists have shown the importance of placing conflict and conflict resolution processes in a larger sociocultural context, which does not isolate them from the world-of-meaning in which they are embedded (Avruch 1991:15). This means, according to Kevin Avruch, paying particular attention “to the native’s understanding of human nature and personhood (of self and others) – and affect – as the starting point of our enquiries” (1991:15).

In Canada, Aboriginal public discourse, along with many studies, in general reiterate what has been articulated as a pan-Indian understanding of self which is defined in relation to other humans (family, community) and also importantly: to the land. While anthropological studies of conflict resolution and reconciliation in South-East Asia and Oceania show how metaphors of blockages and entanglements (White 1991; Kumala Sakti 2013) reveal the local social and cultural ruptures at stake in conflict situations, in Canada what is recurrent in public speeches made by Aboriginal leaders and wellness workers is the concept of *disconnection*. Aboriginal discourse tends to articulate residential schools as having fostered emotional disconnections (from the land, the traditions, the languages, as well as the inability to perceive and stop inter-generational patterns of abuse etc.). Healing becomes about how to bring back *connection* between individuals, and between what they are and what they once were (or what used to define them) as a people. What implications does this have? What strategies are the Mitchikanibikok Inik using to do this inside and outside the official IRSSA spaces?

---

**18** | *Ubuntu* according to Wilson is a term that former Archbishop Tutu keenly used to express and create a romanticised sense of “rural African community” that emphasised reciprocity, respect for human dignity, community cohesion and solidarity. Wilson claims that the language of reconciliation and rights talk became synonymous with *Ubuntu* to prevent vengeance and retaliation after the South African TRC was set-up in 1995 (for more see Wilson 2001).

Indeed while state processes of redress are an undeniable element of societal change in the face of injustice, Veena Das and Arthur Kleinman remind us that “it is not only in the Commission but in small communities and families away from the eyes of the Commission that work is being done to come to terms with painful memories and to domesticate the terror of the past. [...] Reconciliation is not a matter of confession offered once and for all, but rather the building of relationships by performing the work of the everyday” (2001:13-14).

Das and Kleinman wrote these words in the context of the South African TRC, but they also resonate in the Canadian situation that unwillingly excludes people in its public TRC rendering. Excluded are those for whom the suffering is too great, for whom the past opens wounds so painful it is unbearable to articulate them, let alone think about them. Excluded are also the misinformed, and those who are simply unable to attend. Finally, excluded are those who resist participation in the TRC in the face of what they articulate as blaring contradictions between government words and actions. Yet those who resist have nevertheless been included in the settlement (unless they opted out of the IRSSA, went to a day school or to a school in Labrador<sup>19</sup>) and have received compensatory payments.

In what is perhaps due to a post-modern paralysis of not “speaking for” or of approaching the difficult terrain of human suffering (Scheper-Hughes 1998), anthropology has so far not addressed Aboriginal perspectives on reconciliation and the IRSSA *outside* the official spaces of encounter generated by the settlement agreement and its funds. More importantly, (collective and individual) emotions which have been recognised in playing a key role in better understanding how people remember the past, understand the present and consider the future in the aftermath of violence, are not being investigated in conjunction to (and outside of) the IRSSA.

From the outset it should be made clear that this book does not aim or claim to provide an answer on how to implement reconciliation. In fact, it takes a step back to consider the IRSSA in relation to the problematic concept of reconciliation, and tries to better understand how Mitchikanibikok Inik survivors and those around them experience the settlement by focusing on the emotions involved in the process.

---

**19** | There were five residential schools in Labrador. The reason for their exclusion is that they were established before Labrador (and Newfoundland) joined Canada in 1949.

## THEMES AND STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

The first three chapters set the scene to my research and provide the background necessary to the main arguments and findings I put forward in this book. These chapters consist of a theoretical chapter, a chapter introducing the participants and the research site, and a chapter on methodology. The theory chapter outlines my research framework, providing an approach to the anthropology of emotions as well as an exploration of reconciliation through three interrelated key processes: emotions in link to remembering, to the settlement and to healing. The second chapter provides a general introduction to the study participants and the research site. It also provides a historical introduction to the community in order to provide the necessary contextual background to chapters four, five and six which deal with memory. The third chapter mainly addresses methodology and begins with a section on Algonquin discourse, interaction etiquette and emotions. It then outlines the methodology applied to my fieldwork through some main points: gathering data, arrival into the field, ethical considerations, limitations and data analysis. It also examines the concept of *generations* and how it applies to the participants and my research approach.

Chapters four, five and six focus on emotions, remembering and residential school to provide the bedrock necessary for contextualising the IRSSA experiences analysed in chapter seven and eight, and in so doing they seek to better understand emotions in link with remembering the past. This past includes the violence of residential school and the emotions associated to that, and calls for the contextualisation of this violence within a historical context. Through an exploration of the narratives of the past that were shared with me by former students and other elders, chapters four, five and six put forward that the emerging collective memory shaped by the IRSSA (and its historical trauma discourse encouraged through TRC events and AHF programs) is only part and partial to what former Mitchikanibikok Inik students remember of their past. Chapter four and five provide explorations of this broader narrative of the past and the key elements it provides to understanding the emotional conflicts that arose in residential school. More specifically, chapter four explores what Mitchikanibikok Inik elders remember of the past and of their childhood before residential school. It examines what these broad narratives reveals about the Mitchikanibikok Inik sense of self and how this “fits” with the historical trauma framework encouraged in the context of the IRSSA. In so doing, it highlights how participants make use of a *bricolage* approach to the past, borrowing from trauma and historical trauma discourses while also moving beyond. Chapter five looks at what is known and remembered of traditional Algonquin child-rearing methods while fleshing out “socialising emotions” (Röttger-Rössler et al. 2013). It compares and contrasts those with the modus

operandi in place at the Indian Residential School of Saint-Marc-de-Figuery (“Amos”). Drawing from this, chapter six then examines how survivors remember life at Amos and the emotional conflicts that arose there and were brought home as a result of their re-socialisation by the Oblates (and the Sisters) who ran and taught at these boarding schools. Chapter six also outlines the impacts this process had on their lives after residential school and how it ties in to the emotional suffering and disorientation traceable in the community today.

Chapters seven, eight and nine explore emotions as they relate to the settlement and to “feeling better”. They seek to better understand how survivors experience the IRSSA and conceptualise reconciliation. More precisely, they focus on how emotions of distrust (towards the government and Canadians in general) Mitchikanibikok Inik participants revealed in their narratives of the past (see chapters four, five and six) shape their experiences of the IRSSA, along with their self-understandings as resisters more than as victims.

Focusing on the IRSSA measures that had an impact at the local level (the financial compensations and the TRC) means these chapters do not focus on the 2008 apology delivered by Prime Minister Stephen Harper, or on official commemoration and healing initiatives. Indeed, participants made it clear from the start that they did not consider the apology seriously and that they were initially not aware of available community funding application possibilities towards healing or commemoration initiatives (at least until 2013). Examining instead the unintended social consequences created by this national reconciliation project while comparing it to others within a more global context, chapters seven to nine draw from other countries’ experiences with similar transitional justice measures so as to make the links between this local experience and the wider theoretical implications it suggests. Accordingly, I argue the “mundane” aspects of the settlement implementation were key and impacted the way participants apprehended the various measures explored in chapters seven and eight.

Chapter seven investigates emotions in relation to the IRSSA’s financial measures (CEP and IAP). It explores what is at stake for survivors receiving money and whether they are experiencing these payments in conjunction with the rest of the settlement package. More precisely, this chapter looks at how survivor responses complicate Regan’s claim that financial compensations are necessary, and at their repercussions on the attempted process of reconciliation as promoted by the IRSSA. Chapter eight looks at how, for some Mitchikanibikok Inik survivors, the Montreal 2013 TRC national event became a platform for contestation (for the recognition of genocide, of sovereignty and of land claims). In doing so, this chapter explores the TRC event as an amplifier of the fundamental tension underlying processes like the IRSSA: the competing imperatives of fidelity to emotions stemming from injustice (such as anger or sorrow) and the seeming countervailing need to overcome these emotions

---

for the sake of reconciliation (Ure 2008:285). Chapter nine begins by posing the challenge of local “outsider” perspectives and emotions in link with the IRSSA in order to understand part of the backdrop for Mitchikanibikok Inik seeking external healing strategies. It contextualises these emotions within the local relational dynamics and examines their role in helping or hindering socio-emotional reconciliation as defined by Arie Nadler (2003). It also looks at “feel better” practices and tries to better understand what healing means for the Mitchikanibikok Inik.

These final three chapters put forward that, for the Mitchikanibikok Inik, the ‘reconciliatory agency’ of the IRSSA is extremely limited. In the light of the local context, scepticism was high and participants showed that they had to draw from their own resources to implement necessary actions towards “feeling better” outside the official spaces created by the IRSSA.