

**The Bear Island Day School, Anishnaabeg Seasonal Migrations, and Nomadic Colonialism,
1903-1950**

Robert Olajos, Nipissing University

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Academic Biography

Robert Olajos grew up near Peterborough, Ontario on the land of the Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg and now lives in the homeland of the Nibisiing Nishnaabeg, Robinson-Huron Treaty territory. He is a zhaaganash (settler) and an MA history student at Nipissing University in North Bay, Ontario. Robert holds a BA in international development from the University of Guelph (2000). As an activist environmental historian, Robert uses anti-colonial methodologies to respectfully and meaningfully refocus post-Confederation Nishnaabeg-zhaaganash relations.

Abstract

In 1903, the Teme-Augama Anishnabai lived a seasonal life. Family groups spent winters together on their hunting territories and summers in community on Bear Island. By 1950, most lived on Bear Island year-round. This period coincides with the operation of an “Indian day school” on Bear Island. Operated by the Federal Department of Indian Affairs, this seasonal school became a model for similar schools across Canada. Drawing primarily on Department archives, this article investigates the relationships between the Bear Island Day School; the “nomadic colonialism” of church, state, and Canadian society; the end of Anishnaabeg seasonality; and the Province of Ontario. Using anti-colonial methodologies for settler scholars, I demonstrate that Ontario’s

natural resource and northern development policies made it nearly impossible for the Anishnaabeg to continue living seasonally with the land and forced them to settle on Bear Island year-round, thus removing the rationale for seasonal schooling. Despite the absence of a provincial role in Indigenous education, Ontario assumed control of local schooling from the federal government in 1950 and opened a year-round school with compulsory attendance. This ended a system of schooling adapted to Anishnaabeg and nomadic colonial seasonality.

Introduction

It took the unveiling of over a thousand unmarked graves on the grounds of former residential schools in 2021 for many settlers to comprehend the reality of Canada's genocidal program of Indigenous child assimilation. Still, few know that from Confederation to 1947, most Indigenous children did not go to residential schools; rather, they went to either year-round or seasonal day schools. Drawing primarily on federal Department of Indian Affairs (DIA) archives, this article considers the relationships between the seasonal Bear Island Day School (1903-1950); the "nomadic colonialism" of church, state, and Canadian society; the end of Teme-Augama Anishnabai (TAA) seasonal migrations; and the Province of Ontario.¹ I find that Ontario's natural resource and northern development policies made it nearly impossible for the TAA to continue living seasonally with the land. The province forced them to settle on Bear Island year-round, thus removing the rationale for seasonal schooling. Despite the absence of a provincial role in

¹. "Teme-Augama Anishnabai" is an autonym for the Indigenous people of the Temagami region, as well as the name of a political organization with an elected chief and council and consisting of status and non-status Anishnaabeg. "Anishnaabeg" is the plural of Anishnabai and is the most common spelling in Temagami. The abbreviation TAA can be either singular or plural depending on whether it refers to the people or the organization. In this paper, the word "Indian" is used in historical context; "Indigenous" generally refers to non-TAA first peoples of Turtle Island (North America).

Indigenous education, Ontario assumed control of local schooling from the DIA and opened a year-round school with compulsory attendance, ending a system of schooling adapted to Anishnaabeg and nomadic colonial seasonality.

Like residential schools, day schools attempted to assimilate Indigenous children into Canadian society by stripping them of their language and culture. Unlike residential schools, which were financed by the DIA but managed by churches, most day schools were both financed and managed by the DIA, with church representatives playing only an advisory role. Year-round day schools were open from the beginning of September to the end of June, and usually had one teacher who taught all the children up to about grade six. Hundreds of these schools operated across Canada between 1867 and 2000.²

Besides the year-round day schools, there were a few dozen seasonal day schools. Open for a few weeks or months a year, usually in the summer, and often located in boreal forests without year-round rail or road access, these schools were established for Indigenous children whose families migrated seasonally across their lands. In the mid- to late nineteenth century, some day schools were operated seasonally with the expectation that they would eventually become year-round institutions. When the Bear Island Day School opened in 1903, it was the first to be established specifically as a seasonal school. Designed to accommodate both Anishnaabeg and colonial seasonalities, the Bear Island school became a model for seasonal schools across Canada. In Ontario and Quebec, seasonal schools were most common in Anishnaabeg, Cree, and Algonquin communities where the system of Algonquian family hunting territories was still intact. Under this system, small kinship-based groups stewarded family lands in the winter, often at significant

². Gowling WLG (Canada), “Schedule K,” *Federal Indian Day School Class Action*, Ottawa: Gowling WLG (Canada), (2020), <http://indiandayschools.com/en/>.

distances from their nearest neighbours.³ When river and lake ice melted in the spring, family groups gathered to spend the open-water months together.

Centred on Lake Temagami, k'Dakimenan, the unceded homeland of the Teme-Augama Anishnabai, covers about 10,000 square kilometres straddling the height of land between the Ottawa Valley and the Lake Huron watershed about 400 kilometres north of Toronto.⁴ The TAA are a borderland people whose unique dialect combines the Ojibwe, Algonquin, and Cree languages.⁵ In 1900, they numbered about 100, divided into 14 families, each caring for a hunting territory of 500 to 800 kilometres-squared.⁶ Before lakes froze in the autumn, each family travelled to its hunting territory for the winter, returning to Lake Temagami after the ice melted in the spring. When the Hudson's Bay Company moved their local post to Bear Island in 1876, it became the most common summer rendezvous for the TAA. Anishnaabeg seasonal migrations to family hunting territories began in time immemorial.⁷

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, winter's ice, snow, and frigid temperatures inhibited settler mobility in northern Canada so much so that colonial society there

³. Toby Morantz, "Foreword: Remembering the Algonquian Family Hunting Territory Debate," *Anthropologica* 60, no. 1 (2018), 15, <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/705320>.

⁴. The TAA refer to their homeland as n'Dakimenan, which can be translated as "our land." Because I am not Anishnabai, I refer to this area as k'Dakimenan, which can be translated as "their land." I intentionally do not italicize words in Indigenous languages because they are not foreign to Turtle Island. This practice was introduced to me by Katrina Srigley in "The Ethics of Zaagidwin: Relational Storytelling and Story Listening on Nbisiing Nishnaabeg Territory," *Studies in Oral History* 42 (2020), 6-7, https://oralhistoryaustralia.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020_journal_Srigley.pdf.

⁵. J. Randolph Valentine, "*Ojibwe Dialect Relationships: Volume 1*," (PhD diss., University of Texas at Austin, 1994), 32.

⁶. Mary Laronde, "The Teme-Augama Anishnabay at Bear Island: Claiming Our Homeland," in *Justice for Natives: Searching for Common Ground*, ed. Andrea P. Morrison and Irwin Cotler (Montreal: McGill Aboriginal Law, 1997), 83; June Twain, "The Joy of Unfolding Commitment: A Woman's View of the Teme-Augama Anishnabai Blockades," in *Blockades and Resistance: Studies in Actions of Peace and the Temagami Blockades of 1988-89*, ed. Bruce W. Hodgins, Ute Lischke, and David T. McNab (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University, 2002), 18.

⁷. For more on Algonquian family hunting territories as practiced in Temagami, see Frank G. Speck, *Family Hunting Territories and Social Life of Various Algonkian Bands of the Ottawa Valley*, Memoir 70, no. 8, Ottawa: Department of Mines, 1915.

was seasonally nomadic, unlike the Indigenous peoples it denigrated as nomads. For Indigenous peoples, with their snowshoes and toboggans, and the skills to use them, the same ice and snow enhanced mobility, allowing access to areas not visited in the summer.⁸ Across Turtle Island's northern forests, Indigenous peoples enjoyed seasonal autonomy and ease of movement across landscapes that were inaccessible to settler-colonists.⁹ Instead, Indian agents, missionaries, teachers, surveyors, traders, developers, and tourists advanced north after spring breakup and retreated south before freeze-up, a phenomenon I call "nomadic colonialism." I introduce this term to highlight that settler societies and colonial governments are both hypocritical and unjustified in expropriating Indigenous lands by denigrating Indigenous peoples as nomadic. K'Dakimenan, with its 14 family hunting territories, is the permanent home of the Teme-Augama Anishnabai.

Nomadic colonialism brought profound changes to k'Dakimenan and the Teme-Augama Anishnabai family hunting territories. In 1903, the TAA lived the seasonal life described above. Their interactions with state, church, and settler-colonists were seasonal; who was in Temagami, when, and for how long, affected the area and the people in important ways. For the Anishnaabeg, the relative inaccessibility of their hunting territories shielded them from state and church, allowing them to raise their children as they always had, at least in the winter. Cold weather, difficult transportation, and Anishnaabeg seasonal migrations made winter church missions, state diplomacy, or schooling all but impossible. Nomadic colonialists could exert influence only in the summer. Seasonality shaped settler-colonialism in k'Dakimenan as well as Anishnaabeg responses

⁸. Craig Macdonald, "The Nastawgan: Traditional Routes of Travel in the Temagami District," in *Nastawgan: the Canadian North by Canoe and Snowshoe*, ed. Bruce W. Hodgins and Margaret Hobbs (Toronto: Dundurn, 1987), 185.

⁹. Thomas Wickman, "'Winters Embittered with Hardships': Severe Cold, Wabanaki Power, and English Adjustments, 1690–1710," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 72, no. 1 (2015), 60, <http://doi:10.5309/willmaryquar.72.1.0057>.

to it. The seasons influenced when state and church had access to the Anishnaabeg, and conversely when the Anishnaabeg had respite from interference.

Beginning in 1898, the TAA and the local Oblate missionaries lobbied a reluctant DIA to establish a day school fitting Anishnaabeg seasonal migrations and the church's nomadic colonialism. This followed a long tradition of Indigenous peoples across Turtle Island seeking European education to supplement, but not replace, Indigenous education, and to help "navigate the developing settler-colonial state."¹⁰ Despite there being no role for provincial governments in the education of Indigenous children under Canada's federal system, the Ontario government played a key role in the establishment and subsequent dismantling of seasonal schooling on Bear Island. During the Bear Island Day School's 47 years of operation, provincial natural resource and northern development policies disrupted Anishnaabeg subsistence activities and forced them to stop migrating seasonally and settle on Bear Island. Once most Anishnaabeg lived there year-round, the rationale for seasonal schooling disappeared. Ontario took advantage of the situation it created to gain control of education on Bear Island. The federal school closed in 1950 and was replaced by a provincial year-round school with compulsory attendance.¹¹ There is a lack of scholarship on the role of Canadian provincial governments in the genocide of Indigenous peoples.¹² Ontario's role in Anishnaabeg land dispossession and seasonal schooling suggests that more research is required.

¹⁰. Thomas Peace, "Want to Understand Egerton Ryerson? Two School Histories Provide the Context," *Active History* (blog), 12 July 2021, <http://activehistory.ca/2021/07/want-to-understand-egerton-ryerson-two-school-histories-provide-the-context/>.

¹¹. Bruce W. Hodgins and Jamie Benidickson, *The Temagami Experience: Recreation, Resources, and Aboriginal Rights in the Northern Ontario Wilderness* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1989), 219.

¹². National Inquiry Into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, *A Legal Analysis of Genocide: Supplementary Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls* (Canada: 2019), 5, https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Supplementary-Report_Genocide.pdf.

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I cannot find a scholarly article or section of the TRC or MMIWG reports which implicate provincial governments in genocide. Because of this, I have rewritten this sentence to suggest that more research needs to be done. Thus, I am claiming that Ontario is implicated in genocide, not suggesting that other people think so.

Historiography

The Canadian government, supported by the Canadian people and the main Christian churches, used education systems to assimilate Indigenous peoples into the country's body politic. Day schools, whether year-round or seasonal, were integral to these systems. Federal schools aimed to erase Indigenous spiritualities, cultures, languages, bodies, lands, and seasonalities. Unlike residential schools, day schools have received little scholarly or popular attention. Only a handful of books, chapters, journal articles, and graduate theses deal with local or regional case studies. None attempts a national overview or a regional comparison. None centres seasonal day schools and the provincial role in federal Indigenous schooling, or connects these to the dispossession of Indigenous lands. Seasonal day schools remind us that the forms of schooling employed in Indigenous communities were the product of choices and adaptations on the part of both colonial and Indigenous societies.¹³

The dominant approach to Indian day schools suggests that they were dysfunctional and failed to either educate Indigenous children or assimilate them into society.¹⁴ This dysfunction

¹³. Miigwich (thanks) to the anonymous reviewer who pointed this out, and for providing much useful feedback.

¹⁴. For the dysfunction of federal day schools, see Ken Coates, "'A Very Imperfect Means of Education': Indian Day Schools in the Yukon Territory, 1890-1955," in *Indian Education in Canada, Volume 1: The Legacy*, ed. J. Barman, Y. Hébert and D. McCaskill (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1986), 132-49; Susan Elaine Gray, "Methodist Indian Day Schools and Indian Communities in Northern Manitoba, 1890-1925," *Manitoba History* no. 30 (1995), unpaginated, http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/mb_history/30/methodistdayschools.shtml; W.D. Hamilton, *The Federal Indian Day Schools of the Maritimes* (Fredericton, NB: Micmac-Maliseet Institute, University of New

resulted from power struggles between federal, provincial, and church bureaucrats, as well as those far from the centres of power, from Indian agents, missionaries, and teachers, to Indigenous chiefs, parents, and children. These struggles contributed to indifference and underfunding from Ottawa, under-qualified teachers, high teacher turnover, and run-down buildings, which fed low attendance and poor academic achievement. Contrary to perceptions within the Department, Indigenous parents and leaders across Turtle Island were not neglectful with their children's education. When Ottawa failed to meet expectations, chiefs were not hesitant to lobby for the establishment of new schools, the hiring or firing of teachers, seasonally-adapted school terms, or the construction and maintenance of school buildings.

Wherever Indigenous peoples practiced seasonal migration, sporadic or low attendance in year-round schools frustrated church and state alike. According to Helen Raptis, parents on the Pacific coast took their children out of school when they travelled for seasonal work in fish canneries or logging camps.¹⁵ According to Brittany Luby and Kathryn Labelle, some children in northern Ontario left town to help with family hunting and trapping, while others stayed back to attend classes.¹⁶ In Yukon, Ken Coates indicates that some Anglican teachers demonstrated autonomy from a disinterested Ottawa by following migratory bands on their seasonal cycles.¹⁷

Brunswick Press, 1986); Anny Morissette, “‘Il connaît le chemin de l’école, il peut y aller s’il veut’: écoles de jour indiennes et vie scolaire chez les Anichinabés de Kitigan Zibi (1853-1958),” *Recherches amérindiennes au Québec* 46, no. 2-3 (2016), 125-44, <https://doi.org/10.7202/1040441ar>; Martha Walls, “‘Part of that Whole System’: Maritime Day and Residential Schooling and Federal Culpability,” *The Canadian Journal of Native Studies* 30, no. 2 (2010), 361-85, <http://www3.brandonu.ca/cjns/30.2/07walls.pdf>.

¹⁵. Helen Raptis, “Exploring the Factors Prompting British Columbia’s First Integration Initiative: The Case of Port Essington Indian Day School,” *History of Education Quarterly* 51, no. 4 (2011), 538, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1748-5959.2011.00356.x>. See also this autobiography of a teacher at BC’s Village Island Day School, 1935-36: Hughina Harold, *Totem Poles and Tea* (Heritage House, 2006).

¹⁶. Brittany Luby and Kathryn Labelle, “‘The New Generation’: Cooperative Education at the Day School on Dalles 38C Indian Reserve, 1890-1910,” *Ontario History* 107, no. 1 (2015), 103, <https://doi.org/10.7202/1050680ar>.

¹⁷. Coates, “A Very Imperfect Means,” 140.

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DIA attempts to manage Indigenous seasonality through education likewise frustrated parents. In Quebec, Anny Morissette finds that the Department occasionally accommodated the Indigenous calendar by scheduling holidays to coincide with fishing or hunting seasons, but in the Maritimes, as W.D. Hamilton notes, Ottawa was unwilling to “alter the school calendar to fit the circumstances of the pupils.”¹⁸ Martha Walls suggests that was an attempt to undermine day schools in the hope that parents would send their children to the more forcefully assimilative Shubenacadie residential school.¹⁹ In Manitoba, Susan Gray argues that parental frustration led to requests for on-reserve boarding schools, believing these would facilitate seasonality by allowing them to hunt and trap away from home while their children stayed safe in the community.²⁰ But when Ottawa forced families to choose between year-round schooling and seasonal mobility, most chose mobility, resulting in low attendance.²¹

Indigenous worldviews emphasizing individual autonomy allowed children to attend school, or stay away, as they wished.²² Low attendance and slow advancement does not suggest indifference or lack of intelligence; it illustrates that children could and did choose to resist assimilationist schooling and engage with Indigenous pedagogies instead; they wanted Euro-Canadian education, not assimilation. One of the reasons Indigenous peoples sought such education was to learn the ways of the colonizers. TAA Ogimaa (Chief) Gary Potts put it this way: “Only by acquiring a new language could we find a way to protect ourselves, to seek protection from governments, and hope to be able to continue the life that we had always lived.”²³ When

¹⁸. Morissette, “‘Il connaît le chemin de l’école,’” 129; Hamilton, *Federal Indian Day Schools*, 18.

¹⁹. Walls, “Part of that Whole System,” 371.

²⁰. Gray, “Methodist Indian Day Schools,” unpaginated.

²¹. Gray, “Methodist Indian Day Schools,” unpaginated.

²². Morissette, “‘Il connaît le chemin de l’école,’” 136.

²³. Gary Potts, “Bushman and Dragonfly,” *Journal of Canadian Studies/Revue d’études canadiennes* 33, no. 2 (1998), 190. <https://doi.org/10.3138/jcs.33.2.186>.

Ontario began expressing interest in Temagami in the late nineteenth century, the TAA correctly predicted this would come at their expense.²⁴ Anishnaabeg Elders and scholars emphasize that, after living as a self-governing people in relationship with k'Dakimenan for over 6,000 years, everything — education, identity, language, government, communal law — is connected to the land and to non-human life.²⁵ These were the connections that assimilation aimed to break, but while assimilation was a federal policy, the Province of Ontario provided much of the groundwork. In the words of the Anishnaabeg, Ontario committed human rights abuses by harassing, oppressing, prosecuting, and jailing them. It removed them from and then stole their homeland and resources. It committed genocide.²⁶ But, says Potts, “We were determined to get along with our neighbours.”²⁷ Potts suggests that the TAA saw their struggle as against the provincial government, not the settlers; they wanted co-existence with the citizens of Ontario, whom they believed were fundamentally in agreement with Anishnaabeg principles of land stewardship.²⁸

For many Ontarians, “wilderness” is fundamental to perceptions of stewardship. Jocelyne Thorpe argues that in Temagami, settler society constructed wilderness as feminine, virgin, savage, and quintessentially Canadian.²⁹ This racialized and gendered construction distorted Anishnaabeg presence while enabling (masculine) Canadian settlement, resource extraction, and recreation.³⁰

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Can you clarify if this was Potts’ view or if this was a common view among the TAA families?

²⁴. Bruce W. Hodgins and Jamie Benidickson, “Resource Management Conflict in the Temagami Forest, 1898 to 1914,” *Historical Papers/Communications historiques* 13, no. 1 (1978), 175, <https://doi.org/10.7202/030482ar>.

²⁵. Potts, “Bushman and Dragonfly,” 190; Laronde, “Teme-Augama Anishnabay,” 83.

²⁶. Laronde, “Teme-Augama Anishnabay,” 84, 88.

²⁷. Potts, “Bushman and Dragonfly,” 191-92.

²⁸. Potts, “Bushman and Dragonfly,” 187.

²⁹. Jocelyn Thorpe, *Temagami’s Tangled Wild: Race, Gender, and the Making of Canadian Nature* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2012), 4.

³⁰. Siobhan Angus, “El Dorado in the White Pines: Representations of Wilderness on an Industrial Frontier,” *Radical History Review* 132 (2018), 59 and 61, <http://doi.org/10.1215/01636545-6942391>; Kirsten Greer and Sonje Bols, “‘She of the Lighthouse Nest’: Gendering Historical Ecological Reconstructions in Northern Ontario,” *Historical Geography* 44 (2016), 53, <https://ejournals.unm.edu/index.php/historicalgeography/article/view/3573>; Alexandra Kahsenniio

Thorpe's view dovetails with Patricia Jasen's, that turn of the century tourism constructed a perception of wilderness as white and Canadian, allowing for colonization and control of land.³¹ Indigenous peoples were part of this imagined wilderness, but only insofar as they illustrated a savage past fading before an unstoppable "civilization."³² Bruce W. Hodgins does not disagree with Thorpe or Jasen, but he makes it personal by considering how he — an outdoor recreation enthusiast, environmentalist, and lover of wilderness — can reconcile these constructed beliefs with Indigenous perspectives and presence. Hodgins refigured his notion of wilderness over time, "from one comprising little or no human presence to a conception that includes a vital and permanent aboriginal presence."³³ For myself, as with Hodgins, refiguring wilderness is essential to my historical methodology.

Methodology

I am an activist environmental historian who draws on Elizabeth Carlson's anti-colonial methodologies for settler scholars. These methodologies aim "to help settler scholars work in concert with the resurgence work of Indigenous scholars towards relationally accountable decolonial change."³⁴ As a white male settler, this approach reminds me to push back against

Nahwegahbow, "Springtime in N'daki Menan, the Homeland of the Teme-Augama Anishnabai: Babies, Cradleboards and Community Wrapping" (MA thesis: Carleton University, 2013), 75, <https://doi.org/10.22215/etd/2013-10668>.

³¹. Nahwegahbow, "Springtime in N'daki Menan," 81-82.

³². Nahwegahbow, "Springtime in N'daki Menan," 83.

³³. Bruce W. Hodgins, "Refiguring Wilderness: A Personal Odyssey." *Journal of Canadian Studies/Revue d'études canadiennes* 33, no. 2 (1998), 12. <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/673053>.

³⁴. Elizabeth Carlson, "Anti-colonial Methodologies and Practices for Settler Colonial Studies," *Settler Colonial Studies* 7, no. 4 (2017), 496, <https://doi.org/10.1080/2201473X.2016.1241213>.

colonial institutions, structures, practices, mentalities, and land theft while not occupying spaces of Indigenous resurgence.³⁵ Carlson reminds me that, as an uninvited resident on Indigenous lands and a treaty partner, I am accountable to Indigenous peoples. I must ground my research in place; I must remain present in the research; I am responsible for learning the Indigenous teachings and languages of this place; I must give, not take.

For over 30 years I have lived in relation with Temagami and the Teme-Augama Anishnabai. My desire to deepen this relationship led me to the Bear Island Day School archives on the Library and Archives Canada webpage.³⁶ These records are more complete than those of most day schools. They begin five years before its establishment and end in 1949, the year before the provincial takeover of schooling on Bear Island. They cover a broader range of issues than do other day school records, including: the establishment, construction, and maintenance of the school; the procurement of and payment for school supplies; the determination of opening and closing dates; the hiring and firing of teachers; teacher salaries, accommodation and expenses; and teacher reports and attendance returns. This range allowed me to do three things: first, I situate the Bear Island Day School within the DIA policy of assimilation; second, I situate the TAA within a nomadic colonial society which was remaking Temagami to suit its desires; and third, I draw connections between these two processes. Because the most frequent contributors to the archive are Indian Affairs secretaries, Indian agents, Oblate missionaries, and teachers, I could piece together a broad understanding of school management, the relationship between teachers and headquarters, and the role of the church. The records do not provide much detail on curriculum, students, student-teacher interactions, or the typical school day. Anishnaabeg voices are nearly

³⁵. Carlson, "Anti-colonial Methodologies," 500, 503.

³⁶. As a masters student during COVID-19, I needed a major research paper topic that would work regardless of ever-changing pandemic restrictions. This is why I did not attempt to interview former Bear Island Day School students for this research, though that is an obvious next step.

absent, and where present are often filtered through Indian agents, teachers, or missionaries. An anti-colonial approach tries to read these records through Anishnaabeg ways of knowing, being, and thinking about the past, and considers how the work they intended to do shapes the truths they represent.³⁷ I believe in truth and reconciliation, but many Canadians bypass truth and attempt reconciliation with half-hearted apologies. Part of my role is bringing Canadian settlers to truth by connecting theory, practice, and land, and by avoiding the detachment and abstraction of Eurocentric academia.³⁸

The Bear Island Seasonal Day School

At the end of the nineteenth century, k'Dakimenan was within the federal government's nomadic colonial periphery, but provincial developments such as the railway, forestry, mining, and tourism were still a few years away. The main competitors for influence over the Tem-Augama Anishnabai were the Department of Indian Affairs, the Oblates of Mary Immaculate order of the Roman Catholic Church, and the Hudson's Bay Company. That these institutions helped create a seasonal day school on Bear Island is unsurprising, but it is surprising that the Province of Ontario, with no constitutionally mandated role in Indigenous education, also played a role.

³⁷. Despite being digital scans of old papers, these records contain information about the children who attended day schools, such as attendance or promotion reports. Though they rarely appear, the children are still there. Moreover, some of them and many of their descendants are alive today. I need to treat these archives with respect, as I would an Elder. Anti-colonial methodologies employ research ethics and protocols both when reading digital archives and when conducting in-person interviews.

³⁸. Carlson, "Anti-colonial Methodologies," 496.

When the province realized that northern Ontario was full of mineral, timber, agricultural, settlement, and tourism potential, it began to view the region as a provincial colony to exploit.³⁹

Though the TAA were not signatories to the Robinson-Huron Treaty of 1850 and thus did not have a reserve, they were in contact with the DIA annually. Ogimaa Ignace Toneré first asked to be taken into treaty in 1877.⁴⁰ Beginning then, the TAA consistently pressured federal *and provincial* governments for two things they saw as connected and necessary to protect against colonial encroachment: a reserve and a school. On his annual visit to Bear Island in 1889, Indian superintendent Thomas Walton and the TAA leadership **spent a long time** discussing ways and means for the schooling of Anishnaabeg children.⁴¹ Seven years later he reported that they

would willingly erect a school-house and appropriate a portion of their annuity money towards the salary of a teacher if they could have a school built on land that was part of their reserve. The want of the reserve is the impediment in educational as well as other matters.⁴²

The Department shelved the issue until 1898, when its second-in-command, Secretary J.D. McLean, asked Walton's successor, W.B. MacLean, for a report on the "lack of educational facilities at Bear Island."⁴³ Superintendent MacLean suggested, "It would be very difficult to get a white teacher to remain there" due to difficult access with the "outside world."⁴⁴ Two years later, the Oblate from nearby Temiscamingue, Quebec, Father Beaudry, indicated that there were 35

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³⁹. H.V. Nelles, *Politics of Development: Forests, Mines, and Hydro-Electric Power in Ontario, 1849-1941* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015), 51.

⁴⁰. Gary Potts, "Last Ditch Defense of a Priceless Homeland," in *Drumbeat: Anger and Renewal in Indian Country*, ed. Boyce Richardson (Toronto: Summerhill, 1989), 212.

⁴¹. *DIA Annual Report for 1889*, 86, <https://central.bac-lac.gc.ca/.item/?id=1889-IAAR-RAAI&op=pdf&app=indianaffairs>. Indian superintendents were the forerunners of Indian agents.

⁴². *DIA Annual Report for 1896*, 107, <https://central.bac-lac.gc.ca/.item/?id=1896-IAAR-RAAI&op=pdf&app=indianaffairs>.

⁴³. J.D. McLean to W.B. MacLean, Department of Indian Affairs (DIA), 21 November 1898, Library and Archives Canada (LAC), RG10, vol. 6172, file 439-1, part 1, reel C-7910, <https://data2.archives.ca/microform/data2/dm09/d09/006003/c-7910/pdf/c-7910-00484.pdf>.

⁴⁴. W.B. MacLean to J.D. McLean, DIA, 29 November 1898, LAC, RG10, vol. 6172, file 439-1, part 1, reel C-7910, <https://data2.archives.ca/microform/data2/dm09/d09/006003/c-7910/pdf/c-7910-00485.pdf>.

school age children on Bear Island and that a school there could be kept open from June to September.⁴⁵ DIA Clerk Martin Benson suggested that when similar experiments were tried elsewhere, they proved unsuccessful due to the difficulty of finding a competent teacher, the expense of a building, and the care of school supplies over the winter.⁴⁶

In 1902, an unlikely combination of personalities collaborated to push the issue: first, Ogimaa Tonené; second, Anishnaabeg hotelier John Turner; third, the “rebel Oblate” Charles Alfred Paradis, known for his frequent run-ins with authorities; and finally, prospector, lumberman, and government Member of Provincial Parliament for Lanark, William Clyde Caldwell.⁴⁷ Caldwell vacationed on Lake Temagami that summer; perhaps he stayed at Turner’s hotel and hired Turner’s guides.⁴⁸ Father Paradis, who operated a mission at the north end of Lake Temagami, paddled a 50-kilometre round trip every Sunday to give mass at Bear Island. Perhaps Paradis or Turner thought Tonené should meet the visiting politician.

However it came about, the TAA decided to petition provincial Minister of Education Richard Harcourt for a grant of \$300 to build a school, land on which to put it, and \$200 per year for a teacher. Paradis penned the letter; Tonené, Turner, and 29 other Anishnaabeg women and men signed it, and copied it to “W.C.C.,” i.e. William Clyde Caldwell.⁴⁹ They wanted funding for

⁴⁵. J.D. McLean, DIA, 17 September 1900, LAC, RG10, vol. 6172, file 439-1, part 1, reel C-7910, <https://data2.archives.ca/microform/data2/dm09/d09/006003/c-7910/pdf/c-7910-00486.pdf>.

⁴⁶. Martin Benson to J.D. McLean, DIA, 24 September 1900, LAC, RG10, vol. 6172, file 439-1, part 1, reel C-7910, <https://data2.archives.ca/microform/data2/dm09/d09/006003/c-7910/pdf/c-7910-00487.pdf>.

⁴⁷. For Ignace Tonené, see Bruce W. Hodgins and James Morrison, “Tonené, Ignace,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* 14, University of Toronto/*Université Laval*, 2003, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/tonene_ignace_14E.html; for Charles Paradis, see Danièle Lacasse and Bruce Hodgins, *Le Père Paradis: Missionnaire Colonisateur* (Quebec City: Presses de l’Université Laval, 2014); for William Caldwell, see Larry Turner, “Caldwell, William Clyde,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* 13, University of Toronto/*Université Laval*, 2003, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/caldwell_william_clyde_13E.html.

⁴⁸. Turner, “Caldwell, William Clyde.”

⁴⁹. Email communication with author, 20 July 2020. Paradis biographer Danièle Lacasse recognizes Paradis’ handwriting in the TAA petition.

a four-month summer school on Bear Island, built and run by the TAA. This proposal was radical for two reasons. First, it suggested that the TAA, not the DIA, run their education system, predating “Indian Control of Indian Education” by seventy years.⁵⁰ They wanted a school that fit their seasonal lifestyle and allowed them to immerse their children in Anishnaabeg culture, without state interference, in the winter. Second, the petition was sent to the provincial Ministry of Education, not the federal Department of Indian Affairs. Surely they knew that Indigenous education was a federal, not provincial, responsibility. Bear Island’s leadership discussed a school with the DIA’s Walton as early as 1884, even using it as a bargaining chip, suggesting that once they received a reserve, they would build a school and set aside one dollar per capita per year for a teacher.⁵¹ Perhaps they knew that the Department saw seasonal schools as precursors to year-round schools (which the TAA had *not* asked for), or that federal schools were for so-called “treaty Indians,” not “non-treaty” children, of which there were many on Bear Island.⁵² Did they feel they had reached a dead-end with the DIA on the school file? Were they trying to curry favour with Ontario, anticipating its growing influence? Did the MPP imply that involving the province might spur the federal government to act?

Involving an MPP known to be “independent in thought and straightforward in manner” did not immediately lead the province to intervene in federal jurisdiction over schooling for Indigenous peoples.⁵³ The Ontario deputy minister forwarded the petition to Ottawa, where

⁵⁰. National Indian Brotherhood/Assembly of First Nations, *Indian Control of Indian Education: Policy Paper Presented to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development*, Ottawa: National Indian Brotherhood/Assembly of First Nations, 1972, <https://oneca.com/IndianControlofIndianEducation.pdf>.

⁵¹. *DIA Annual Report for 1884*, 94-95, <https://central.bac-lac.gc.ca/.item/?id+1884-IAAR-RAAI&op=pdf&app=indianaffairs>.

⁵². Treaty Indians here refers to people considered Status Indians under the *Indian Act*, 1985, while non-treaty refers to Indigenous people without Indian status, sometimes referred to in the archive as “half-breeds.” Over the life of the Bear Island Day School, the student body was roughly split between treaty and non-treaty children, with a small number of white children.

⁵³. Turner, “Caldwell, William Clyde.”

Secretary J.D. McLean wrote his subordinate, superintendent W.B. MacLean. He wrote that Father Beaudry thought the idea impossible — recall it was the Oblate who first suggested a seasonal school — and added that “unless the conditions have greatly changed since that time, I do not see how the wishes of the petitioners can be met.”⁵⁴ Superintendent MacLean’s reply overlooked the *seasonal* part of the seasonal school proposal when he wrote that the children

are frequently absent from Bear Island for long periods with their parents who roam through the Temagami country hunting. A considerable number live at White Bear Lake distant about 20 miles so that the children of the Indians could not attend the school if established at Bear Island unless their parents settled down at this place which I think is hardly likely.⁵⁵

Once more the issue seemed dead. At this juncture, MPP Caldwell, apparently without cabinet approval, suggested that Ontario would pay for a building and school supplies if the DIA would pay for the teacher.⁵⁶ Minister Harcourt’s secretary, H.M. McKinnon, dismissed the idea, saying that “owing to the migratory habits of our northern Indian people, the erection of a permanent school building would scarcely be warranted. In no case does the Department of Education give grants for building purposes.” But then McKinnon made an unexpected suggestion:

Would not a camp school answer the immediate necessities of the case? A suitable tent could be provided by the Federal Government, and its equipment and maintenance for the Spring, Summer, and early Fall would not be a great expense. I understand that in other parts of Canada provision is made by the Dominion Government for grants to various organizations for the education of its wards. Would not the case of the

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⁵⁴. J.D. McLean to W.B. MacLean, DIA, 18 September 1902, LAC, RG10, vol. 6172, file 439-1, part 1, reel C-7910, <https://data2.archives.ca/microform/data2/dm09/d09/006003/c-7910/pdf/c-7910-00496.pdf>.

⁵⁵. W.B. MacLean to J.D. McLean, DIA, 26 September 1902, LAC, RG10, vol. 6172, file 439-1, part 1, reel C-7910, p. 1, <https://data2.archives.ca/microform/data2/dm09/d09/006003/c-7910/pdf/c-7910-00499.pdf>.

⁵⁶. Francis Pedley, DIA, 8 April 1903, LAC, RG10, vol. 6172, file 439-1, part 1, reel C-7910, <https://data2.archives.ca/microform/data2/dm09/d09/006003/c-7910/pdf/c-7910-00501.pdf>.

Temagami Indians, who are on an Indian Reservation, under the control of your government, come under your general provisions?⁵⁷

Benson thought an experiment might be worthwhile.⁵⁸ A month later, McKinnon offered school supplies if the DIA would pay for the tent and teacher.⁵⁹ That sealed it. The Bear Island Camp School, as it was first known, opened on 21 July 1903. Twenty-three pupils enrolled, though attendance averaged 13.⁶⁰ The tent was not used; the TAA rented a “large, bright, clean room” instead.⁶¹ By Ottawa’s metrics, the school was a success. Over the next ten years, attendance averaged 57 per cent of enrolment, higher than the national day school average of 48 per cent. It was open an average of 20 weeks a year, roughly mid-May to the end of September, though opening was often delayed by late ice-out on Lake Temagami. The school worked as intended, complementing Anishnaabeg seasonal migrations and state and church nomadic colonialism.

Bear Island was the first DIA day school intended to operate seasonally; it was not a temporary solution. After the experiment proved successful, Ottawa adapted the model for use across Canada. Over the next five decades, it opened more than sixty seasonal day schools concentrated in two geographic areas: first, boreal Quebec, Ontario, and Manitoba, and second, coastal and northern British Columbia, Yukon, and the southwestern Northwest Territories.

⁵⁷. H.M. McKinnon to Francis Pedley, Ontario DIA, 25 April 1903, LAC, RG10, vol. 6172, file 439-1, part 1, reel C-7910, <https://data2.archives.ca/microform/data2/dm09/d09/006003/c-7910/pdf/c-7910-00506.pdf>. Despite McKinnon’s statement, Bear Island was not at the time a reserve. While a tent may sound insufficient, even condescending, such schools were common at the time in logging and mining camps; see James Brown MacDougall, *Building the North* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1919), 150.

⁵⁸. Martin Benson to Francis Pedley, Ontario DIA, 28 April 1903, LAC, RG10, vol. 6172, file 439-1, part 1, reel C-7910, <https://data2.archives.ca/microform/data2/dm09/d09/006003/c-7910/pdf/c-7910-00508.pdf>.

⁵⁹. H.M. McKinnon to Francis Pedley, DIA, 19 May 1903, LAC, RG10, vol. 6172, file 439-1, part 1, reel C-7910, <https://data2.archives.ca/microform/data2/dm09/d09/006003/c-7910/pdf/c-7910-00510.pdf>.

⁶⁰. *DIA Annual Report for 1904*, 799, <https://central.bac-lac.gc.ca/.item/?id=1904-IAAR-RAAI&op=pdf&app=indianaffairs>.

⁶¹. Quarterly return from Mrs. Woods, DIA, 10 November 1903, LAC, RG10, vol. 6172, file 439-1, part 1, reel C-7910, <https://data2.archives.ca/microform/data2/dm09/d09/006003/c-7910/pdf/c-7910-00535.pdf>.

Despite this, misgivings about the effectiveness of seasonal schools soon emerged. By 1925, Secretary J.D. McLean thought them “more or less unsuccessful.”⁶² The number of seasonal day schools reached a peak in the late 1940s and were all closed by the mid-1960s.⁶³

Only about half of all TAA children attended the day school, even if they lived on Bear Island in the summer. For example, Madeline Katt Theriault, who was born in 1908, lived on the Katt family hunting territory in the winter and on Bear Island in the summer, but never attended the school. Instead, she stayed at home to look after her great-grandmother:

In my time, there was not much schooling, just four months a year and you only could go up to Grade Five. An Indian Affairs representative said that was the highest school of all, and we believed him for the longest time. Anyway, I regret to say I did not go to school at all. My great-grandmother was very old and she needed looking after. So, my grandfather wanted me to watch her. She smoked a pipe and we were afraid she might set fire to herself. She was also stone deaf. Grandpa thought it was more important for me to watch over her than go to school. Anyhow, the Indian children did not learn much during four months of schooling.⁶⁴

But staying out of school does not mean Theriault was uneducated:

Indians were highly educated in their own way of life. They used their own experience to do many different things and knew how to survive and exist in the wilderness. There is so much to learn about bush life. You have to know what game to get at what time of the season and what animals are ready for the season. As well it is necessary to know what animals are good to eat and at what time of the year, what kind of animal furs are good to sell and what time of the season they are good to kill. All those things have to be remembered.⁶⁵

Much of Theriault’s early education came from Elders:

⁶² J.D. McLean to Jos. E. Guinard, DIA, 16 March 1925, LAC, RG10, vol. 6111, file 335-1, part 1, reel C-8188, <https://data2.archives.ca/microform/data2/dm09/d09/006003/c-8188/pdf/c-8188-02230.pdf>.

⁶³ *DIA Annual Report for 1965-1966*, 64, <https://central.bac-lac.gc.ca/.item/?id=1965-ARFY-RAAF-e&op=pdf&app=indianaffairs>.

⁶⁴ Madeline Katt Theriault, *Moose to Moccasins: The Story of Ka Kita Wa Pa No Kwe* (Toronto: Natural Heritage/Natural History, 1992), 116.

⁶⁵ Theriault, *Moose to Moccasins*, 33-35.

When I was around six or seven years old, I remember this particular time. There was an old gentleman by the name of David Missabie living on Bear Island in a birch bark tepee. It is said he lived to be one hundred years old, if not more.... Anyway, this old man Missabie used to sit beside his tepee with an open fire in front, smoking his clay pipe. We Indian children used to gather around at his open fire and sit beside one another. He would be telling us his life story which was very interesting to hear.⁶⁶

Theriault's education illustrates that the Anishnaabeg saw federal day schooling as optional, something they could engage with fully, partly, or not at all, depending on individual or family preference or circumstance.

Ontario Forces the Anishnaabeg off k'Dakimenan

Despite Ontario's role in the establishment of the federal school in 1903, provincial natural resource and northern development policies soon undermined Anishnaabeg seasonal migrations, k'Dakimenan, and the Bear Island Day School. Over the next 47 years, the province's push to develop northern Ontario, its interference with Anishnaabeg land stewardship, and its refusal to allow a reserve for the Teme-Augama Anishnabai forced more and more of them onto Bear Island year-round, eliminating the rationale behind seasonal schooling. These actions led to the demise of the seasonal school and the establishment of a year-round school run by the province.

Because the TAA were not signatories to the Robinson-Huron Treaty, they did not have a reserve. Lands not part of a reserve fell under provincial authority, meaning the federal government could no longer unilaterally negotiate a reserve with the TAA. The province needed to surrender its interest in the proposed land, which it was unwilling to do. In the last quarter of the nineteenth

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⁶⁶. Theriault, *Moose to Moccasins*, 18-20.

century, reports from provincial surveyors, foresters, and geologists described Temagami's economic potential in glowing terms.⁶⁷ Despite legal and moral appeals from the federal government and the TAA, Ontario was inflexible, citing rich pineries as the main reason to deny the TAA a reserve over their lands. Lobbying visiting federal and provincial representatives for a reserve and a school became a summertime affair for the TAA, a seasonal activity like maple sugaring or beaver trapping.⁶⁸

Ostensibly to secure a sustained yield of pine, Ontario created the Temagami Forest Reserve in 1901 and the Anishnaabeg felt the influence of the provincial government for the first time.⁶⁹ From its experiences in the southern part of the province, Ontario knew that settlement and agriculture could destroy valuable timber. For this reason, the forest reserve excluded competing resource uses.⁷⁰ In the eyes of the province, the Anishnaabeg became squatters on k'Dakimenan. In 1910, new regulations restricted timber harvesting for construction or firewood, which harmed Anishnaabeg families on Bear Island.⁷¹ Because students needed accommodation, the timber restrictions undermined the day school, especially in spring and fall when cool weather is common. By restricting homebuilding, Ontario's prohibitions also ran counter to its desire for the Anishnaabeg to "stop being 'scattered.'"⁷²

Construction on the provincially owned Temiskaming and Northern Ontario Railway began in 1903 and reached Lake Temagami the following year. Northeast of k'Dakimenan, railway

⁶⁷. For example, see R.W. Demorest, G.E. Silvester, George R. Gray, and J.L. Rowlett Parsons, "Report of Exploration Survey Party No. 3," in *Report of the Survey and Exploration of Northern Ontario, 1900* (Toronto: L.K. Cameron, 1901), 83-113, <http://www.geologyontario.mndmf.gov.on.ca/mndmfiles/pub/data/imaging/NSP014/NSP014.pdf>.

⁶⁸. Laronde, "Teme-Augama Anishnabay," 85.

⁶⁹. Hodgins and Benidickson, "Resource Management Conflict," 150; Laronde, "Teme-Augama Anishnabay," 84.

⁷⁰. Hodgins and Benidickson, *The Temagami Experience*, 76-77.

⁷¹. Potts, "Last Ditch Defense," 216.

⁷². Hodgins and Jamie Benidickson, "Resource Management Conflict," 171-72.

construction crews discovered silver on Temiskaming Algonquin land, sparking a stampede to the Cobalt mining camp. As Cobalt's surface silver depleted, miners dug deeper, requiring more electricity for underground lighting and air compressors. Developers turned to nearby rivers for hydroelectric power.⁷³ The province permitted the damming of two rivers in k'Dakimanan, the Montreal and the Matabitchuan. To regulate flow on the Matabitchuan, developers dammed Rabbit Lake, flooding Ogimaa White Bear's village, destroying buildings, gardens, traplines, spiritual sites, a graveyard, and a rich lake trout spawning site.⁷⁴ Ottawa secured financial compensation for White Bear, but Ontario still prohibited rebuilding within the forest reserve. At least four other families lost their villages to dams. In 1921, the Cross Lake Dam flooded the Nebenagwune, Egwuna, and Mathias family settlements, and in 1948, the A.B. Gordon Lumber Company flooded Madeline Katt Theriault's cabin on Diamond Lake.⁷⁵ There was no financial compensation for these families. In this way, provincially regulated activities forced Anishnaabeg families off their winter hunting territories and onto Bear Island year-round, where the children lived from October through May without schooling of any sort.

Steamer service began on Lake Temagami in 1905 and the province began leasing cottage lots the next year.⁷⁶ Temagami soon became one of central Canada's preeminent tourist destinations, with dozens of cottages, youth camps, and resorts occupying prime Anishnaabeg

⁷³. Colin Campbell and Robert Olajos, "International History of Silver Mining in Cobalt" (MA paper, Nipissing University, 2020), 4.

⁷⁴. Jamie Friday, *Dams on n'Daki Menan* (Bear Island, ON: Temagami First Nation, 2015), 2, <http://temagamifirstnation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Dams-on-nDaki-Menan-Draft.pdf>; Thor Conway, "Whitebears Go Fishing for Lake Trout," *Temagami Secrets* (Facebook page), 27 July 2019, https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=2311599332437336&id=2234579350139335.

⁷⁵. Friday, *Dams on n'Daki Menan*, 2.

⁷⁶. Bruce W. Hodgins, Jamie Benidickson, and Peter Gillis, "The Ontario and Quebec Experiments in Forest Reserves: 1883-1930," *Journal of Forest History* 26, no. 1 (1982), 26, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4004566>.

campsites.⁷⁷ Without access to these sites, more families and schoolchildren were forced onto Bear Island. Though Ontario prohibited settlement in the forest reserve, there were exceptions, including Bear Island and the other islands of Lake Temagami, the town of Temagami, railway service stops, mine and sawmill company townsites, as well as Paradis' mission. Because Bear Island was not a reserve, Ontario decided in 1929 to charge Anishnaabeg residents rent. The TAA and DIA objected, suggesting that the Anishnaabeg should remain until the province allowed a reserve for them. Throughout the 1930s, Ontario maintained that Temagami's pineries were too valuable to give up any portion. In 1943, Indian Affairs, using \$3,000 they held in trust for the TAA, purchased Bear Island from the province.⁷⁸ While not officially a reserve — that did not happen until 1971 — at least the Anishnaabeg were free of provincial harassment there.

Outsiders had severe impacts on the fish, game, and furbearer populations of k'Dakimenan. As early as 1879, Ogimaa Tonené warned his people that “the white men were coming closer and closer every year and the deer and furs were becoming scarcer and scarcer as each year passed so that in a few years more Indians could not live by hunting alone.”⁷⁹ In 1905, the province prohibited beaver and otter trapping except under regulation, eliminating a major source of Anishnaabeg food and income.⁸⁰ Six years later, Ontario established the Temagami Game and Fish Reserve and prohibited all hunting and fishing. Anishnaabeg travelling on their family hunting territories had their nets, guns, furs, and game confiscated by government agents. The province ultimately backtracked after public (i.e. white settler) outcry.⁸¹ Regardless, some Anishnaabeg

⁷⁷. Hodgins and Benidickson, *The Temagami Experience*, 117-18.

⁷⁸. Hodgins and Benidickson, *The Temagami Experience*, 216. The DIA moved to the Department of Mines and Resources in 1936 and became known as the Indian Affairs Branch. For simplicity, I will continue to refer to it as the DIA.

⁷⁹. Hodgins and Benidickson, *The Temagami Experience*, 43-44.

⁸⁰. David Calverly, *Who Controls the Hunt: First Nations, Treaty Rights, and Wildlife Conservation in Ontario, 1783-1939* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2018), 48.

⁸¹. Hodgins and Benidickson, *The Temagami Experience*, 142.

were prosecuted and jailed under this regulation, reducing their ability to support themselves on their hunting territories. More families and schoolchildren moved permanently to Bear Island.⁸²

Railways, and beginning in 1931, provincial highways, also brought white hunters, anglers, and trappers into k'Dakimenan. In 1913, Ogimaa Aleck Paul told anthropologist Frank Speck that it was not the Anishnaabeg, but

the white man who needs to be watched. He makes the forest fires, he goes through the woods and kills everything he can find, whether he needs its flesh or not, and then when all the animals in one section are killed he takes the train and goes to another where he can do the same.⁸³

Tourists and market hunters depleted the animals the Anishnaabeg depended upon. Unable to support their families by hunting and trapping, many entered the summer wage economy as guides or hotel maids. With their parents working off the island, some children lived with relatives while attending school. Family hunting territories were visited less and less. A memo written by DIA deputy superintendent general Harold McGill in 1933 illustrates this shift:

Formerly the Indians at this point were at Bear Island only during the summer months, going to their hunting grounds in the fall and winter. As the hunting is gradually becoming exhausted, the Indians are more and more remaining the entire year at Bear Island.⁸⁴

The TAA's forced abandonment of family hunting territories, the end of seasonal migrations, and their reluctant settlement of Bear Island was not sudden. It took place during the 47-year life of the Bear Island summer school and was exacerbated by global events such as the Great Depression and the two world wars. Many Anishnaabeg men volunteered for service in the First World War,

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⁸². Laronde, "Teme-Augama Anishnabay," 84.

⁸³. Speck, *Family Hunting Territories*, 294.

⁸⁴. Harold McGill to George F. Buskard, DIA, 15 May 1933, LAC, RG10, vol. 6172, file 439-1, part 1, reel C-7910, p. 1-2, <https://data2.archives.ca/microform/data2/dm09/d09/006003/c-7910/pdf/c-7910-00970.pdf>.

“an entirely predictable response to the disruptive impact of the war on the fur trade economy and, at Temagami, the sense of dislocation occasioned by the Ontario government’s management of the forest reserve.”⁸⁵ While these men were overseas, some of their families moved to Bear Island for social and economic support.

In 1939, with Anishnaabeg men heading to war once again, Ontario began requiring trappers to be licensed. It also created traplines based on geographic townships, squares of land six miles by six miles bearing no semblance to family hunting territories based on natural landscape features. Upon returning from overseas, some Anishnaabeg veterans found that the province had allocated their traplines to white trappers, “losing both their cabins and their hunting territory.”⁸⁶ Nor were Anishnaabeg war veterans shown leniency under Ontario’s game laws. For example, shortly after returning from overseas, veteran Bill Twain was jailed, with neither charges nor a trial, for hunting out of season; he had cut the leg of a drowned moose for dog food.⁸⁷ By late 1940s, most Anishnaabeg and their children lived on Bear Island year-round because provincial regulations made it impossible for them to survive on the land. Some families even put a new spin on seasonal migration by moving to nearby towns for the winter so their children could attend school.⁸⁸ A summer school no longer made sense. With these developments, the province saw an opportunity to take control of education on Bear Island.

⁸⁵. Hodgins and Benidickson, *The Temagami Experience*, 147.

⁸⁶. Laronde, “Teme-Augama Anishnabay,” 85.

⁸⁷. Thor Conway, “An Indigenous Veteran’s Bitter Return to His Land,” *Temagami Secrets* (Facebook page), 13 November 2019, https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=2395744114022857&id=2234579350139335.

⁸⁸. Thomas McGuire to Philip Phelan, DIA, 17 July 1947, LAC, RG10, vol. 6172, file 439-1, part 1, reel C-7910, p. 1-2, <https://data2.archives.ca/microform/data2/dm09/d09/006003/c-7910/pdf/c-7910-01092.pdf>. See also Bernard F. Neary, DIA, 27 May 1948, LAC, RG10, vol. 6172, file 439-1, part 1, reel C-7910, p. 1-2, <https://data2.archives.ca/microform/data2/dm09/d09/006003/c-7910/pdf/c-7910-01102.pdf>.

Ontario Takes Over Schooling on Bear Island

According to DIA annual reports from 1903-32, average attendance at the Bear Island school was 122 percent of the national average, indicating a sustained high level of community engagement. Headquarters, Indian agents, the Oblates, and crucially, Bear Island leaders, were generally happy with the school, at least according to the archives. Despite this, Indian Affairs closed the school in 1933, at the depth of the Depression, citing budget restraint.⁸⁹ Less than a month later, William Finlayson, Ontario's minister of lands and forests, wrote to his federal counterpart about year-round schooling on Bear Island.⁹⁰ Note that this proposal came not from Ontario's Department of Education, but from Lands and Forests, showing that the province saw schooling in Temagami as primarily a natural resource, not an education, issue. Perhaps alarmed by Ontario's interest, the DIA reopened the Bear Island school the next year.⁹¹ That summer, provincial inspector Dr. J.B. MacDougall visited the school. MacDougall's report led Ontario's chief inspector of public schools, V.K. Greer, to offer provincial funding for non-treaty children if the DIA were to institute a year-round term.⁹² Indian Affairs offered only to consider the offer.⁹³ Unsatisfied with this response, Ontario launched a takeover bid in February 1935:

⁸⁹. A.F. MacKenzie to George Cockburn, DIA, 13 April 1933, LAC, RG10, vol. 6172, file 439-1, part 1, reel C-7910, <https://data2.archives.ca/microform/data2/dm09/d09/006003/c-7910/pdf/c-7910-00965.pdf>.

⁹⁰. George F. Buskard to Harold McGill, DIA, 12 May 1933, LAC, RG10, vol. 6172, file 439-1, part 1, reel C-7910, <https://data2.archives.ca/microform/data2/dm09/d09/006003/c-7910/pdf/c-7910-00968.pdf>.

⁹¹. George Cockburn to Secretary, DIA, 17 July 1934, LAC, RG10, vol. 6172, file 439-1, part 1, reel C-7910, <https://data2.archives.ca/microform/data2/dm09/d09/006003/c-7910/pdf/c-7910-00985.pdf>.

⁹². V.K. Greer to A.F. MacKenzie, DIA, 6 September 1934, LAC, RG10, vol. 6172, file 439-1, part 1, reel C-7910, <https://data2.archives.ca/microform/data2/dm09/d09/006003/c-7910/pdf/c-7910-00986.pdf>.

⁹³. T.R.L. MacInnes to V.K. Greer, DIA, 10 September 1934, LAC, RG10, vol. 6172, file 439-1, part 1, reel C-7910, <https://data2.archives.ca/microform/data2/dm09/d09/006003/c-7910/pdf/c-7910-00988.pdf>.

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Your edit suggests that the DIA "responded coldly to the offer." I would not characterize it as "cold" so I have edited to remove reference to either "cold" or "cool".

At the request of several people of the community in the Bear Island vicinity who think that the children of that area are not receiving an adequate education, the Department of Education has deemed it wise to establish a public school there.... [W]e are now taking steps to have a trustee board elected.... This school, like all public schools, will be open to all children of school age who are not Separate School supporters, and that will include the Indian children.... We intend to put a fully qualified teacher in the school and give the children as good a chance as possible for an education.⁹⁴

Ontario's deputy minister of education, Duncan McArthur, suggested that Temagami's tourism potential influenced the decision: "[I]n a district which is becoming so widely known through its tourist connections in the summer months, this community should be brought into harmony with other schools of the Province."⁹⁵ At this point, the DIA records fall silent on the issue of a provincial takeover. Perhaps it was a mid-Depression bluff. Regardless, Ontario did not lose interest in the school.

Ontario finally took over the Bear Island school in 1950, likely with the cooperation of the DIA. That year "severe difficulties" led the province to assume control of the school as "part of a general trend toward greater provincial involvement in the social life of native communities across Ontario."⁹⁶ Classes were year-round, went from grades one to nine, and attendance was no longer optional. Provincial authorities threatened Bear Islanders: put your children in school or else they will be taken.⁹⁷ That year, the DIA negotiated several agreements with provincial governments to "increase the number of Indian pupils attending [provincial] schools."⁹⁸ There are no documents in the Bear Island school archive pertaining to the provincial take-over.

⁹⁴. P.W. Brown to George Cockburn, DIA, 16 February 1935, LAC, RG10, vol. 6172, file 439-1, part 1, reel C-7910, <https://data2.archives.ca/microform/data2/dm09/d09/006003/c-7910/pdf/c-7910-00999.pdf>.

⁹⁵. Duncan McArthur to A.F. MacKenzie, DIA, 10 April 1935, LAC, RG10, vol. 6172, file 439-1, part 1, reel C-7910, <https://data2.archives.ca/microform/data2/dm09/d09/006003/c-7910/pdf/c-7910-01005.pdf>.

⁹⁶. Hodgins and Benidickson, *The Temagami Experience*, 219.

⁹⁷. Potts, "Bushman and Dragonfly," 191.

⁹⁸. *DIA Annual Report for 1950*, 44, <https://central.bac-lac.gc.ca/.item/?id=1950-IAAR-RAAI&op=pdf&app=indianaffairs>.

Commented [14]:

Edited this to comply with CMS 17 guidance on the capitalization of civil titles (8.22, p. 468-69). If I am mistaken, please edit appropriately.

Commented [15]:

The exact quote in Potts (1998) is "In 1950 the Ontario government said to the parents on Bear Island that if you don't put your children in school they would take them from you."

I believe then that this sentence should not have quotation marks, and have edited it as such.

But if I am mistaken, then please keep the quotation marks as you have edited, even though that is not exactly what Potts said.

Here is what you wrote:

Provincial authorities threatened Bear Islanders: "put your children in school or else they will be taken."

Conclusion

Federal day schools were key to the Department of Indian Affairs' policy of assimilation through schooling. When the Bear Island Day School opened in 1903, the Teme-Augama Anishnabai lived a seasonal lifestyle, spending winters on their family hunting territories and summers together on Bear Island. The school fit Anishnaabeg seasonal migrations as well as nomadic colonialism, allowing children to receive Anishnaabeg education primarily in the winter and Euro-Canadian schooling in the summer.

Ontario soon began exerting more control over natural resources and development in northern Ontario. Because the TAA did not have a treaty or a reserve, the province harassed, arrested, prosecuted, and jailed Anishnaabeg in order to stop their seasonal migrations, force them off k'Dakimenan, and end their centuries-long relationship with family hunting territories. Ontario refused to provide a reserve; regulated wood harvesting for construction or firewood; flooded villages in the name of hydroelectricity; regulated or prohibited fishing, hunting, and trapping; built a railway, then highways, through k'Dakimenan; leased campsites for cottages and resorts; gave traplines to settlers; allowed, or failed to stop, white hunters and trappers from depleting animal populations; and tried to charge Anishnaabeg rent for living on Bear Island. In the mid-1930s, it tried, unsuccessfully, to take over the Bear Island school. By the late 1940s, decades of provincial oppression had forced most Anishnaabeg onto Bear Island year-round. With no rationale for a seasonal day school remaining, Ontario opened its own school on Bear Island in 1950, likely in collaboration with the DIA. The province was the primary contributor to the

collapse of the system of Teme-Augama Anishnabai family hunting territories, the end of their seasonal migrations, and the end of federal day schooling adapted to those migrations. This examination of the provincial role in Anishnaabeg land dispossession and seasonal schooling illustrates that the Province of Ontario is implicated in the genocide of the Teme-Augama Anishnabai.

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