Omission by Design: The Need for an Overhaul of the Ontario Social Studies and History Curriculum

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Abstract

The intention of Ontario's Social Studies and History curriculum is to promote a better understanding of Canada's past. Ideally, students are encouraged to reflect upon, synthesize and critically examine periods in its development as a nation that are often problematic. The prescribed, provincially approved curriculum fails to meet this expectation by omitting the Residential School experience thousands of Aboriginal children were forced to endure. The social, cultural, physical and sexual abuse inflicted upon a generation of Native children is omitted entirely from the text teachers are instructed to share with Ontario's students. The author argues that Junior, Intermediate and Senior students are developmentally prepared to both receive and grapple with this dark era of Canadian history. Omitting the Residential School experience from Ontario's Social Studies and History curriculum prevents students from understanding this atrocity and what measures must be undertaken in order for such an occurrence to not be replicated within Canada and abroad.

Key Words: Ontario Social Studies/History Curriculum, Residential Schools, Teaching Difficult Subject Matter

The great themes of Canadian history are as follows: Keeping the American out, keeping the French in, and trying to get the Natives to somehow disappear.

~ Will Ferguson

1.0 Significance

Ideally, the outlined History and Social Studies curriculum in Ontario is intended to motivate children to connect with Canada's past and to contextualize the lessons learned in their everyday lives. Children should be exposed to troubling parts of our nation's history. The current History and Social Studies curriculum in place in our schools today effectively shapes the way children see our country and our place in the global community. The sanitized, largely historically inaccurate curriculum presented to students in Ontario is intended to shape the way they see our country. It is critically important to inject some of the key elements missing from the approved curriculum and to expose children to subject matter that is seemingly unimportant and buried in the annals of our countries checkered past. There is no mention of the horrors of Residential Schools in any provincially approved classroom textbook. The history in our classrooms is concealed and draped over with a curtain that masks the unmistakable truth (Binda & Calliou, 1998).

2.0 Introduction

The Canadian government's treatment of its Aboriginal peoples has been abominable. This injustice is excluded in the Social Studies and History curriculum school-aged children receive. More specifically, there is no mention of the Residential Schools established by the Canadian government and the subsequent treatment of a generation of Aboriginal children. The history text, which is monitored, sanctioned and approved by the Ontario government, is revisionary in nature and excludes the experiences of tens of thousands of Aboriginal children. Clearly, the history curriculum is designed to omit, or minimize the long-lasting effects of colonialism on Canada's Aboriginal peoples. As an educator, how does one approach teaching problematic subject matter to ones students that is not part of the prescribed curriculum? What topics should be included in our units of study that nurtures both objective and critical thought? What are the inherent dangers of excluding parts of our nation's past? The importance of including voices silenced by indifference, neglect and marginalization is critical when attempting to answer these questions. A brief examination of the history of Residential Schools in Canada will act as a starting point in this regard. An investigation of the current Social Studies and History curriculum will be explored.

More importantly, delving in to how to effectively include these buried voices in relevant instructional materials for Junior and Intermediate students will be this papers central focus.

2.1 A Brief History of Residential Schools in Canada

In order to fully understand what is missing from the current school curriculum with respect to the history of Native Residential schools and the treatment of Native Canadians, a brief overview of the historical facts, which shaped the current state of Native Canadian culture, is vital.

2.1.1 *1830-1890*

The Mohawk Institute, or "Mechanics Institute," was established in Ontario in 1830 to provide manual training and education for Native youth (Grant, 1996). In 1845, a government report to the legislative assembly of Upper Canada recommended that Indian boarding schools be established (Kuran, 2003). In the spring of 1847, the legislative assembly suggested that the residential schools be set up as a partnership between the government and church. Education for Native children was to be of a religious nature in focus (Kuran, 2003). Protestants, in 1880, condemned the Catholic system of Indian education and moved to create a federally run, compulsory school system for Native children (Grant, 1996). At the turn of the century, direct funding to the missions was halted. Laws were enacted and passed to withhold rations from parents who did not send their children to school. During this time, Natives were relocated to federally allotted parcels of land (Reserves). Native families were forced to become dependent on the government for their sustenance. At this point, there were 39 residential schools in full operation in Canada. Native students were beginning to feel a sense of separation from both the schools they had to live in and their respective communities they left behind (Grant, 1996).

2.1.2 *1901-Present*

In 1911, formal contracts were signed between the Canadian government and the churches regarding the establishment and administration of residential schools. Additional money was to be allotted for Industrial and boarding schools. Promises were made to improve school conditions. The schools would now be subjected to increased governmental inspections to ensure that student needs were being met (Grant, 1996). In 1920, an amendment to the Indian Act made education mandatory for children between the ages of 7 and 15. Truant officers were authorized to penalize parents who refused to make their children available for school (Grant, 1996). In 1945, there were 9,149 Native students who were enrolled in residential schools. Only 100 students were enrolled over grade eight. There were no records of any students beyond grade nine (Kuran, 2003). In 1950, over 40% of the teaching staff in residential schools had no professional experience regarding student instruction whatsoever. (Kuran, 2003). In 1969, the formal partnership between the government and churches was dissolved. The federal government assumed full control of residential schools in Canada. The total enrollment of Native students in the residential school system was 7,704. Sixty percent of those students were then subsequently enrolled in the public school system (Kuran, 2003). The Blue Quills Residential School was the first of the residential schools to come under the control of First Nations administrators. This transition occurred in 1970 (Grant, 1996). In a landmark decision in 1973, the federal government of Canada agreed to allow Natives full control over Native education (Grant, 1996).

The last government operated residential school (The McKay Residence, in Dauphin, Manitoba) closed its doors in 1988 (Grant, 1996). A 1992 research study was conducted in British Columbia to examine the effects of residential schools on its students. A range of physical, sexual, and psychological abuses were formally identified (Kuran, 2003). The Royal Canadian Mounted Police created a Native Residential Schools Task Force in 1994 as a result of these disturbing revelations. The RCMP mandate was to fully examine all of the residential schools in operation in Canada between 1890-1988 (Kuran, 2003).

In 1995, The Assembly of First Nations released its report on the residential school experience entitled, "Breaking the Silence" (Kuran, 2003). Arthur Henry Plint, the former supervisor of the Alberta Indian Residential School, (1948-1953 and 1963-1968) pled guilty to 16 accounts of indecent assault in 1995. He was sentenced to 11 years in prison (Kuran, 2003). The Royal Commission on Aboriginal people's final report was released in 1996. A public inquiry into the effects of residential schools on Canada's First Nation peoples was requested (Kuran, 2003). John Watson, the highest-ranking Indian Affairs official from British Columbia, became the first government of Canada representative to readily admit that the residential schools were part of an assimilation policy of the Canadian government, which occurred in 1997 (Kuran, 2003). Furthermore, in 1997, National Chief Phil Fontaine outlined the elements that The Assembly of First Nations would seek as part of a healing strategy on residential schools.

This strategy included a full apology, an endowment fund, a language revival program, counseling for residential school survivors, and community healing programs (Kuran, 2003). In January 1998, Jane Stewart, then Minister of Indian Affairs, made a statement of reconciliation wherein which she apologized to those survivors of residential schools who had experienced the horrific social, psychological, sexual, and physical abuse while under the care of residential schoolteachers and administrators (Kuran, 2003). A Healing Fund was announced to help address the legacy of abuse (Kuran, 2003).

Thus, the history of Native Residential schools and the treatment of Canada's Native people's are both detailed and controversial. Although more recent politicians have attempted to inoculate past treatment of Native peoples, a more detailed look into the intricacies of the treatment of children in Residential Schools demonstrates this travesty of Canadian history with respect to Native Canadians, a history that many Canadian children, let alone adults, have little knowledge of.

2.1.3 The Residential School Experience – A Legacy of Pain and Suffering

The goal of the residential school program was to "civilize" Native children. The schools were established to deprive children of their Native languages, belittle and negate their familial ties, and rob them of the essence of who they were.The experiment of carrying out a program of cultural replacement and assimilation was willingly supported, both philosophically and financially, by the government of Canada (Wilson, as cited in Ing, 1991). Aboriginal children in residential schools were subjected to extreme degrees of cruelty, which took the form of physical, emotional, spiritual, cultural, and sexual abuse.

Children were traumatized by the separation from their parents and upon arrival at the school were immediately estranged from one another. Children were forced to have their hair sheared from their heads and were issued prison-like uniforms. These uniforms were often rough and itchy and made of crude materials. The dormitories the children were herded into were cold and lacked proper heating and ventilation. Diseases of all types ravaged the children. Brutal, and often arbitrary punishments were part of the routine of daily life. Children were often given public beatings for "misbehaving," or speaking their language.

Chrisjohn and Balleau (1991) outlined a list of physical and sexual abuses suffered by Native children while in residential schools in Canada. According to Chrisjohn and Balleau (1991), Native children suffered physical and sexual abuses: sexual assault, including forced sexual intercourse between men or women in authority and girls and or boys in their charge; forced oral and genital masturbatory contact; arranging or inducing abortions for female children impregnated by men in authority; forced sexual acts between children while authorities watched; the burning or scolding of children; beating children into unconsciousness; using electric shock on children who were restrained; forcing children to eat their vomit; unprotected exposure to the elements; and withholding needed medical attention. Moreover, children were beaten with leather and rubber straps, straps with tacks, nails or wires embedded in them, boxing gloves, wooden boards, belts, sticks, classroom pointers, whips and horse harness straps.

Chrisjohn and Balleau (1991) went on to list the psychological and emotional cultural abuses endured by Native children which included: administration of beatings to naked children before their peers and institutional officials; verbal abuse, belittling, and threatening children; public, race-based vilification of all aspects of Aboriginal forms of life; withholding presents, letters, and other personal property of children; locking children in closets; denying the use of Aboriginal religious or spiritual practices; forced labour; forced children to participate in the beatings of their peers; denying young women sanitary pads; and forcing children who wet their beds to publicly parade around their dormitory wearing soiled sheets.

It is obvious that administrators of Native Residential schools doled out significant harsh abuses against children forced to reside under their care. It is often the voices from the past that capture the real horrors experienced by Aboriginal children who were forced to endure life in a residential school. The following testimonial is just one of the many stories that continue to surface to this day about life in a residential school in Canada. A haunting account of the abuses suffered at the hands of residential school oppressors has been presented. Norman's (1998) testimonial captures the essence of the pain experienced by those who were forced into residential schools. The following is an excerpt from this testimonial. "I was taken to a "boarding school" run by Carmelite Brothers. They cut my hair. They did not give me a starched uniform. They did take my buckskins and gave me clothing fashioned out of burlap. It was dirty and itchy. I had run away the first night after I was brought there but was caught and beaten. There were other boys and girls there.

Most were older than I and stronger. Our beds were made of burlap and straw. Mine was pretty thin. Survival of the fittest ruled. Sometimes a Brother would come in, select a boy or girl (most times a girl) and they would leave. One time a boy and a girl were having sex. They were caught at it by a Brother and taken from the room. The next morning we had to visit the school cemetery. There were two fresh mounds there. We were fed three times a day. The food, most of the time, was a grainy porridge. Sometimes there were little worms in it and we would pick them out and make them crawl around the table. There was a raised platform at one end of the food hall. The Brothers ate there. Sometimes they would throw a chicken leg down to one of their favorites. If the wrong boy or girl grabbed it, he or she was beaten.

We were beaten for speaking our language, for recounting our heritage, for not responding quickly enough in class, for not scrubbing the floor hard enough, for not working hard enough in the fields, for crying, or just at the whim of a Brother. All the beatings were with bullwhips. I still have scars from these beatings, both physical and emotional. I learned Latin, Greek and Hebrew as well as English. I learned History from the European perspective, Geography, Mathematics and the other subjects normal to Stateside High Schools. We learned shop skills only as necessary to fix things up at the school. Our physical education was the work assignments. As I grew older, a girl (one of the Brother's castoffs) decided to sleep with me. Up to that time, I had slept alone and was always cold. The warmth of her body was glorious." (Norman, 1998, p. 64)

Norman (1998) noted that recanting his abuses and experiences was one of the most painful experiences of his life. His hope was to connect with other survivors and to inform those who are unaware of these schools. The impact of abuses experienced by the Native children is as enduring as it is heartbreaking.

2.1.4 Impact of Abuse

The impact of such abuse has left a profound and lasting effect on Canada's Native peoples. Natives suffer from the highest rates of unemployment, poverty, alcoholism and suicide in Canada (Heart & Debryn, 1998). According to the Assembly of First Nations (1995) and the Nishnawbe-Aski Nation (1995) (as cited in Claes & Clifton, 2003) the most significant outcome of the residential school experience on multiple generations of people include: loss of meaning in life; loss of community and identity; a loss in confidence; impairment of parenting and life skills, loss of family; loss of culture, language, and pride; a loss in trust for others; a loss in morality and self-control; a feeling of inferiority; complete demoralization; a dependency on non-Native society; learning that violence is acceptable; becoming racist ;difficulty in making decisions; recurring nightmares; addictions to alcohol, drugs, food, and gambling; apathy; anger towards churches and the dominant society; and passing on all negative traits to their children.

Tragically, the residential school experience continues to affect the families of residential school survivors and subsequent generations of Aboriginal people. The cycle of pain and its impact is still, quite understandably, evident. According to Middleton-Moz (1995, as cited in Haig-Brown), Cultural Self-Hatred is a mindset wherein people grow up hearing and believing the negative stereotypes about their personal and cultural backgrounds. It includes a dimension of self-helplessness whereby an individual or group believes that no matter what they do, they cannot make a difference in their own lives and those around them. The struggle to ease the deeply entrenched feelings of self-loathing and cultural inferiority that have been impressed upon generations of Canada's Native peoples is a daunting task. The healing process is in its infancy.

2.1.5 Healing and Hope

Healing must begin with the individual and include all members of the community. In "Breaking the Silence," (1994) The Assembly of First Nations provided a comprehensive list of recommendations that requires the participation of generations of family members. The summarized recommendations include: a commitment to the principles of respect, responsibility, and cooperation between all those involved in the healing process; effective involvement of all community members with a special emphasis on respect for the needs of the individual and family within the larger community; the effort must be community-driven to ensure ownership and responsibility; the need for a healing model that is unique and mindful to the First Nations perspective. This model focuses on the interconnectedness of family and community. According to the Assembly of First Nations (1994), healing must address the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual aspects of the individual, family and community. Moreover, there is a need to understand ones history from a First Nations perspective by turning to elders and drawing on traditional knowledge and practices of healing and living that have been in practice for generations; opportunities to both revive and maintain First Nations languages to help build the collective spirit of the community;

an ongoing effort towards the treatment of addictions that have plagued the Native community (Assembly of First Nations, 1994). Particular focus will be directed toward youth and young adults. Additional suggestions for healing include the development of policing and judicial systems culturally appropriate to First Nations peoples (Assembly of First Nations, 1994). An urgent need for the creation of family counseling programs that focus on ongoing treatment for both victims and offenders is crucial. It is also pertinent that Canada's Native peoples have opportunities to learn a wide variety of skills that are necessary for improved familial communication, parenting skills, and job skills (Assembly of First Nations, 1994). The Assembly of First Nations (1994) also noted that a full acknowledgement, both individually and communally, must take place in the recognition of multi-generational losses Canada's Native people have experienced, adding that addressing the issues of grief and loss is an integral part in the healing process. Addressing family violence and grief presupposes the development of individual and communal healing. A concerted effort by Native leaders has opened the door for the healing of generations of people affected by the systemic mistreatment of its peoples. Given time, faith, and understanding, centuries of open wounds will begin to heal. There is hope that Canada's Aboriginal peoples will flourish again.

Historically, Aboriginal education was seen as a means in which to create "Canadian individuals" out of Aboriginal children (Battiste, 1986). Canada's Natives, despite all efforts, have not gone away. The legacy of abuse and mistreatment that they were subjected to through state-sanctioned residential schools has been well documented. The effects of such cruelty are equally apparent. The cycle of violence, poverty, addictions, and self-hatred continue to surface. But there is hope. Hope in the form of a community of people coming together to grieve and grow. Canada's Native peoples are unified in their adversity and strengthened by their collective will to recapture their culture and traditional ways of life. This chapter in Canadian history must be an integral part of any meaningful History and Social Studies curriculum for children to get a full and complete understanding of our nations past. However, as will be shown, it is apparent that the most recent curriculum guidelines in Ontario omit any mention of the harsh realities of the Residential School experience for a generation of native children.

3.0 An Examination of the Ontario Curriculum

The curriculum we place in the hands of both teachers and children alike serves many purposes and functions on many distinct levels. The curriculum may inspire, anger, enlighten, please, or, more importantly, may be saturated with bold-faced lies and historical inconsistencies (Binda & Calliou, 2001). In this sense, the curriculum we subject children to reaffirms the colonial mind-set and continues to permeate the psyches of the children we are both teaching and hoping to reach. The transmissions of these ideals are not necessarily factual or our own (Binda & Calliou, 2001). Canadian educators and curriculum consultants and writers have falsely recorded accounts of our nations past. Canada's history is plagued with inconsistencies and is a mirror reflection of nineteenth century European society. Canada's native peoples are merely passengers and bystanders in the ebb and flow of European and "Canadian" history (Battiste, 1986). Attempting to correct this imbalance may lie in the hands of the individual teacher. An examination of the current Ontario Social Studies and History curriculum is necessary in order to critically reflect upon what is prescribed and what may lie outside its boundaries.

The Ontario Curriculum (1998) clearly states that it is important to emphasize the relationship of history to the world outside of the classroom so that students understand that the areas of study being examined are not simply just school subjects, but fields of study that affect their immediate lives, the community in which they live in and the world around them. History, in this regard, helps students make meaningful connections between what they are learning in the classroom and present-day world events. When studying history, students are expected to demonstrate an understanding of the rights, privileges and responsibilities of citizens as well as a willingness to show respect, tolerance and an appreciation towards individuals, groups and cultures in the global community. Learning activities should be inclusive in nature and should reflect diverse points of view and experiences that help students to become more sensitive to the experiences and perceptions of others.

Through studying history, students also learn that protecting human rights and taking a stand against racism and other expressions of intolerance and discrimination are essential components of responsible citizenship. History readings and assignments should meet the following objectives as outlined in the history curriculum: help students function as informed citizens in a culturally diverse society; enable students to effectively evaluate different points of view and to examine information critically and to solve applicable problems; explore various forms of historical evidence; enable students to learn how lessons from the past can be used to make wise decisions in the present and the for the future; for students to achieve a balanced perspective; help prepare students to be contributing and responsible citizens in a democratic society.

Therefore, it is clear that the Ontario Curriculum stresses the need for students to openly and actively learn to problem solve, respect the rights and privileges of other cultures, and to apply historical lessons learned to their daily activities. However, the governmentally outlined units of study present a hypocritical view upon which children are expected to carry out these mandated academic objectives. Failing to provide accurate details of Canada's history, and specifically its treatment of Native Canadians, contradicts the directives of the Ontario History and Social Studies Curriculum.

3.1 When to teach difficult subject matter

Developmentally and emotionally, the optimal time to broach difficult subject matter during the academic career may be during adolescence. Adolescence covers the span of years between childhood and adulthood. In Western society, adolescence normally begins at approximately 12 or 13 and ends at either the late teens or early twenties (Papalia & Olds, 1981). According to Piaget (1952), the formal operations stage of intellectual development occurs around 12 years of age (as cited in Santrock & Mitterer, 2004). When this stage is attained, adolescents are now able to think of what might be true and are capable of imagining an infinite variety of possibilities (Kohlberg, 1986)**.** In this sense, adolescents are able to think hypothetically; thus, their thinking goes beyond the concrete and now enters the world of abstract reasoning (Kohlberg, 1986)**.** Adolescents can integrate what they have learned in the past with their problems of the present and their planning of the future. If an adolescents' culture and education have not encouraged them to engage in abstract reasoning, they may never attain this crucial stage in their intellectual development even though they have the necessary neurological development (Papalia & Olds, 1981). Thus, it is vital that adolescents be provided the opportunity to engage in higher-level reasoning and thus imperative that they be exposed to this through academia. .

Therefore, as long as the learner is an adolescent and has achieved one of the higher levels of moral reasoning, exposing them to difficult subject matter may not only enhance their knowledge base, but may also encourage them to think critically and morally. Although it seems reasonable that difficult subject matter would be part of the academic curriculum, this is not always the case.

3.1.1 Why is teaching difficult subject matter avoided

Several explanations have been presented in an attempt to explain why educators are reluctant to address teaching issue related, difficult to teach subject matter. The barriers have included a strong sense of conservatism among practitioners of social studies curriculum. The result has been a curriculum that highlights the positive, stable features of society and distances itself from areas that are possibly inflammatory and controversial (Evans, 1989); a long-standing tradition of discipline versus issue-based social studies design and implementation (Evans, 1989); social studies curriculum that is far too heavy in content that stresses quick, fragmented glances of material at the expense of in-depth issue related analysis (Newman, 1988); social studies classrooms and curriculum that are geared toward a more traditional lecture style teaching approach that emphasizes the transmission of instructor knowledge versus students constructing their own knowledge and forging their own connections to issues and events in history (Onosoko, 1991); teachers that possess authoritarian and controlling personalities who are unwilling to engage in a "give and take" mentality when exploring problematic subject matter (Gross, 1989); teacher education programs that fail to both teach and encourage teachers to engage in issue-based approaches to learning and interacting with students (Shaver, 1989); teachers' lack of exposure to inquiry-based courses in their own education and training (Boyer, 1987); textbooks that are primarily fact-oriented and the relative unavailability of age-appropriate supplemental resources that delve in to difficult subject matter (Shaver, Davis, & Helburn, 1979).

Generally, educators avoid teaching problematic subject matter due to their lack of knowledge and exposure to relevant materials, their reluctance to move beyond what is prescribed in the curriculum guidelines provided to them, and a lack of age appropriate resources to assist in teaching potentially contentious issues. Thus, more education and resources should be provided and teachers must realize the disservice that they are subjecting children to by not sharing accurate accounts of Canadian history.

3.1.2 How to Approach Teaching Difficult Subject Matter to Children

Although a number of reasons for not teaching difficult subject matter as part of the curriculum have been outlined, it is important to note that strategies to implement difficult subject matter like Residential Schools in Canada have also been proposed. It is crucial to establish guidelines for both teacher and students when addressing complex, issue-related subject matter.

Onosko (1996) has established 12 instructional strategies for teachers on how to structure a classroom that promotes meaningful dialogue and critical reflection of the issues being discussed. According to Onosko (1996) it is vital that educators: establish a policy, from the onset, that prohibits disparaging and mean-spirited comments; make it clear to students that you are interested in their ideas and that you are confident in their ability to think critically; give students the opportunity to work in small groups or with a partner prior to whole class discussions; openly encourage students to ask questions, not just offer answers; promote the idea that changing one's position on a subject is a sign of reflection, and an indicator of thoughtfulness, not one of weakness; frequently remind students that their ideas are being challenged, not them as individuals; depersonalize challenges to students' thinking by framing teacher reactions to comments or ideas in a third person voice; using humour; varying the use of dialogue and debate style discussions; have students assume a position counter to their own; regularly remind students how individual lessons and activities are linked to the central issue being discussed and examined; and creating, with student input, culminating activities that allow students to share their perspectives. These strategies, when in place, should provide the teacher and his/her students with an effective, structured environment in which to explore difficult to teach, issue related subject matter. When detailing horrific accounts of past abuses, honesty is of the utmost importance when educating the next generation.

3.1.3 Developing a unit of study: The Ontario Curriculum, History, Grade 7

The Ontario Curriculum (1998) states that it is important to emphasize the relationship of history to the world outside of the classroom so that students understand that the areas of study being examined are not simply just school subjects, but fields of study that affect their immediate lives, the community in which they live in and the world. History, in this regard, helps students make meaningful connections between what they are learning in the classroom and present-day world events. When studying history, students are expected to demonstrate an understanding of the rights, privileges and responsibilities of citizens as well as a willingness to show respect, tolerance and an appreciation towards individuals, groups and cultures in the global community. Learning activities should be inclusive in nature and should reflect diverse points of view and experiences that help students to become more sensitive to the experiences and perceptions of others. Through studying history, students also learn that protecting human rights and taking a stand against racism and other expressions of hatred and discrimination are essential components of responsible citizenship. Any assignments given students should attempt to meet the following objectives as outlined in the history curriculum: to help students function as informed citizens in a culturally diverse society; to enable students to effectively evaluate different points of view and to examine information critically and to solve applicable problems; to explore various forms of historical evidence; to enable students to learn how lessons from the past can be used to make wise decisions for the present and the for the future; for students to achieve a balanced perspective; and to help prepare students to be contributing and responsible citizens in a democratic society.

The above outlined bullets from the Ontario History Curriculum could be used as a guide for a unit's overall learning objectives. Individual lessons could be shaped around specific expectations from the different areas of the curriculum being examined.

4.0 Summary

Native Residential schools were a part of Canada's history; however, the harsh realities of these schools are not being accurately taught to Ontario's student population. Adolescents are both socially and developmentally prepared to critically examine and reflect upon the many injustices that have plagued our country. Not exposing school-aged children to Residential Schools and the impact they have had on Canada's Aboriginal peoples denies students the right to learn and seriously reflect upon our past mistakes. What is more problematic is the fact that such troubling chapters of our history are excluded from the curriculum we expose our children to. However dangerous it may be, teachers must be aware of the omissions in our History and Social Studies curriculum and must be prepared to combat the historical fallacies. Not doing so perpetuates the"mythogenesis of Canada," (Battiste. 1986).

5.0 Conclusion

Indigenous knowledge and experiences have been silenced in Ontario's History and Social Studies curriculum. By not exposing current students to the past experiences of Native children forced to endure the horrors of Residential Schools, the Ontario government and teachers are perpetuating the minimization of the Native experience in Canada. There are many reasons that teachers choose not to provide accurate and detailed information about the negative impact of colonialism; however, a number of researchers have discussed the need and manner in which difficult subject matter can be responsibly taught.

Thus, it is incumbent upon current and future educators to challenge the Ontario Curriculum and the current status quo in order to provide accurate historical knowledge to children. Real consideration must be given to those voices that have been omitted from the curriculum we expose our children to. The time is ripe for students to begin to fully understand how this country came in to being and at what cost. Denying students this right is both ethically and morally reprehensible. A country can only learn from its past if its history is presented in an objective manner. in which all perspectives are present. Not doing so recycles myths and buries the truth. A complete overhaul of our Ontario's History and Social Studies curriculum is required.

Teaching might even be the greatest of the arts since the medium is the
human mind and spirit. My three greatest teachers did not tell- they catalyzed
a burning desire to know. Under their influence, the horizons sprung wide
and fear went away and the unknown became knowable. But most important of all,
the truth, that dangerous stuff became beautiful and very precious

~ J. Steinbeck

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