Opening the Cache of Canadian Secrets: The Residential School Experience in Books for Children

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Abstract

The term 'Post-colonialism' assumes that we have finished with colonialism, and tends to place it in the distant past along with the conflicted British and French settlers from centuries ago. In fact, colonialism maintains a robust and healthy life in the minds and culture of Canada. The residential school system remained in place until the 1980's, and its icy grip continues to choke at the hearts of many aboriginal communities. This part of our history is largely ignored in education programs and books for children. Our interpretations of history continue to shape our existence and our future; therefore, it is essential that we humbly accept and explore the brutalities of Canadian history, humanity, and the repercussions they have today. Children's literature, particularly, has a responsibility to present historically accurate, culturally authentic and socially just works. Children inherit this country and the world; therefore, they must know the ideologies and actions of the past that guide them into the future.

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Residential schooling for Native Canadian children throughout the 19th and 20th century was forced schooling upon thousands of children. These schools were often far away from the children’s homeland and were controlled, taught, and supervised by different Church systems including the Anglican Church, Roman Catholic Church, the Baptist Church and others. There were schools in every province and territory in Canada except Newfoundland & Labrador. The earliest known date opening of a Residential school was in 1840, located in Manitowaning, Ontario. The school was the Wikemikong Indian Residential School, it closed in 1879. The last Residential school to close was La Tuque Indian Residential School, located in La Tuque, Quebec. "Opening the Cache of Canadian Secrets: The Residential School Experience in Books for Children" by Brianne Grant. "Proceed with Caution: Using Native American Folktales in the Classroom," by Debbie Reese. "Seepeetza Revisited: An Introduction to Six Voices," by Shirley Sterling. "Teaching Young Children about Native Americans," by Debbie Reese. "The Pocahontas Paradox: A Cautionary Tale for Educators," by Cornel Pewewardy. "The Voices of Power and the Power of Voices: Teaching with Native American Literature", by Marlinda White-Kaula

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