

Raymond Mason, *Spirit of the Grassroots People: Seeking Justice for Indigenous Survivors of Canada's Colonial Education System*. Edited by Jackson Pind & Theodore M. Christou. Montreal, Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2020. 191 pages. ISBN 9780228003519. \$24.95 hardcover.

The last words of the last sentence on the back cover of Raymond Mason's *Spirit of the Grassroots People: Seeking Justice for Indigenous Survivors of Canada's Colonial Education System* is where I begin. Together, Mason and his editors request that we read a "story of a human experience of pain and injustice." The book offers "a fuller explanation of what it took to win the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement" (p. 5). We empathize with the struggles of individuals at the grassroots who want the Canadian government and the churches to accept their responsibility for wrongdoing in teaching, learning, and proselytizing.

Mason depicts the history of residential schools through three parts of his life. He starts with a narration of his life as a youngster incarcerated in two different institutions (chapter three). He recounts his life as an "alumni" who struggles to live in a hostile world (chapters four and five). The focus of the book is on his role as cofounder of Spirit Wind. Spirit Wind is the survivors' society that designed the blueprint for the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement (IRSSA) of 2005 (chapters two and six). Through Spirit Wind, Mason sought justice for survivors of Indian day schools (chapter seven) and conceptualized the framework of schooling for Indigenous peoples as cultural genocide. It is in this third part of his life that Mason fills in a historical gap, informing us of what happened between public disclosure of abuse and loss and the settlement. The disclosures began as soon as the Canadian government and the Christian churches terminated their agreement on Indian residential schooling in 1969. Survivors continued sharing after the 1998 and 2008 apologies from the Canadian government.

Mason goes further than just teaching us about the lives of survivors in the 1990s and early 2000s. He shows us that agreement and contrition on the part of the Canadian government came only when it and its former church partners had exhausted all their legal machinations to stomp the spirits of survivors who were sharing *the truth*. These attempts on the part of the state and the churches occurred throughout the 1990s and the early 2000s.

We learn not only new facts for historians to consider but also themes that need probing in future historical studies. These brief mentions deserve repeating, and I hope that scholars reading this review will consider them worthy of investigation as their own topics. On page 11, we read about the early discussions that Mason and his friends had that led to the formation of Spirit Wind. We find out that one of the cofounders—Clifford Kematch—is missing. I pause on this detail be-

cause we know that there are missing and murdered Indigenous men and boys, and their lives and contributions are vital to reconciliation, but they are missing. In addition to justice, we need to learn how their experiences dovetail with the women, girls, and two-spirits who are missing and victims of violence. On page 19, Mason mentions that staff at schools used older students to help them capture runaways. This fact is a new one for me, and I believe it is worthy of study. We know already that students' participation in arts and sporting activities were escapes from difficulties for students in day and residential schools (Anuik, 2018). However, we also need to learn how these activities helped students adapt and survive and, in some schools, to thrive and to achieve. Later in the book, Mason mentions that he and his colleagues fear intimidation from the Canadian government. They take pride in protecting Spirit Wind from financial dependency on the Canadian government, thus limiting the ability of the government to provoke fear, distress, and helplessness. Anecdotes abound of governmental hostility expressed through funding cuts and wiretapping. There is a need for further study of such tactics and their impacts on Indigenous activists, organizers, and educators.

To enhance the story that Mason shares about governmental strategy in the years after the end of the residential school system in 1969, I suggest that readers also look at Miller (2017). He details the Canadian government side of the reconciliation story and shows that apologies and the attempts at reconciliation that follow often have partisan, political motivations behind them. For Miller, governments act when they are either in trouble or want to make gains. In the case of the IRSSA, the Canadian government needed rescue and help. It was a minority Liberal Parliament that faced an imminent election. The Liberals' bid to stay in power in 2005 motivated their desire for conclusion of the agreement shortly before falling on a confidence vote from the opposition parties. The minority Parliament that followed, led by Prime Minister Stephen Harper, apologized for deaths, abuses, and losses of cultural, spiritual, and language knowledge in residential schools in June 2008, as it faced an election. In this instance, Harper relied on support from the leader of the third-party New Democrats, the late Jack Layton. To return the Liberals to power, Justin Trudeau courted Indigenous voters while the Liberals sat in Parliament as third party, from 2011-2015. Under the first Trudeau term in office, from 2015-2019, there was a settlement concluded with day school survivors. I appreciated Miller's attention to these political and partisan matters that can have an impact on how the Canadian government interacts with Indigenous governments. His book is a nice companion to *Spirit of the Grassroots People*.

Pind and Christou contextualize in historiography Mason's story in their afterword. Their approach enables readers to skip over their conventional academic text and to see the academic picture in a compact

space. Pind and Christou demonstrate skillful synthesis of the historical scholarly work – they remind us that the mindsets that formed Canada and led to residential schooling continue to stain legislation and policy. Canada is a colonial state.

In contrast to the comprehensive nature of the rest of the book, the afterword is incomplete. Pind and Christou need to consider how the availability of sources affects the writing of Canadian history, including educational history. Miller (2004) identifies three types of sources that historians can use to write the history of residential schools (and other areas of the history of Indigenous peoples' education). There is the governmental voice, which one can read in the federal and provincial and territorial archives; the religious voice, which one can hear through not only the public but also the sacred archives; and the Indigenous voice. This last voice is the most difficult for researchers to find. In addition to suspicion of non-Indigenous researchers and the scholarly communities and institutions that they represent, there is also the challenge of locating the sources. Indigenous communities do not store content in the same way as governments and churches keep records.

Similarly, Pind and Christou need to consider how one uses sources dubbed "Indigenous." Battiste and Henderson (2000, 2009) remind us not to just add Indigenous content to existing narratives but to rethink the narratives and how we style them. For example, instead of seeking the grand or standard historical narrative, one may consider the use of humour, as Battiste and Henderson point out, and emotions to tell the story. It would be ideal for Pind and Christou to deliberate on how a story like Mason's can help us envision histories that better include Indigenous survivors.

In closing, I beseech everyone to consider the following when they approach and interact with survivors. In note 23 on pages 155-156, Pind and Christou refer to "Mason's truth." I suggest instead we consider that the stories which we hear are *the truth* that all of us who are not survivors and those of us who seek to be allies need to hear.

### References

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Samir Shaheen-Hussain, *Fighting for a Hand to Hold: Confronting Medical Colonialism against Indigenous Children in Canada*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2020. 360 pages. ISBN 978-0-2280-0360-1. \$29.95 hardcover.

*Fighting for a Hand to Hold: Confronting Medical Colonialism against Indigenous Children in Canada* by Samir Shaheen-Hussain, a pediatric emergency physician at the Montreal Children's Hospital, is a part of McGill-Queen's Indigenous and Northern Studies series. This book explores how the Canadian medical system, in unison with the Canadian government, played an active role in the attempted genocide of First Nations and Inuit children.

Chapter one begins by explaining how the medical system, with the support of the Quebec government, separated sick and injured Indigenous children from their parents when they were medically transported from northern communities to southern hospitals. This practice caused additional trauma to the parent and child and it made it more difficult for healthcare professionals to treat the children. In response, physicians created the #aHandtoHold campaign, which Shaheen-Hussain uses as a case study throughout the book. This campaign promoted ending the practice of refusing parents the right to accompany their children on medevac flights. His discussion of the campaign illustrates the difficulties one can encounter when trying to address the injustices Indigenous peoples experience.

A variety of topics are covered to show how the medical field contributed to the abuse and attempted genocide against Indigenous peoples. Topics include the ongoing systemic racism within the healthcare system and the institutions responsible for training physicians; the close relationship between Residential Schools and Indian hospitals and tuberculosis sanatoriums; the use of Indigenous peoples as subjects for