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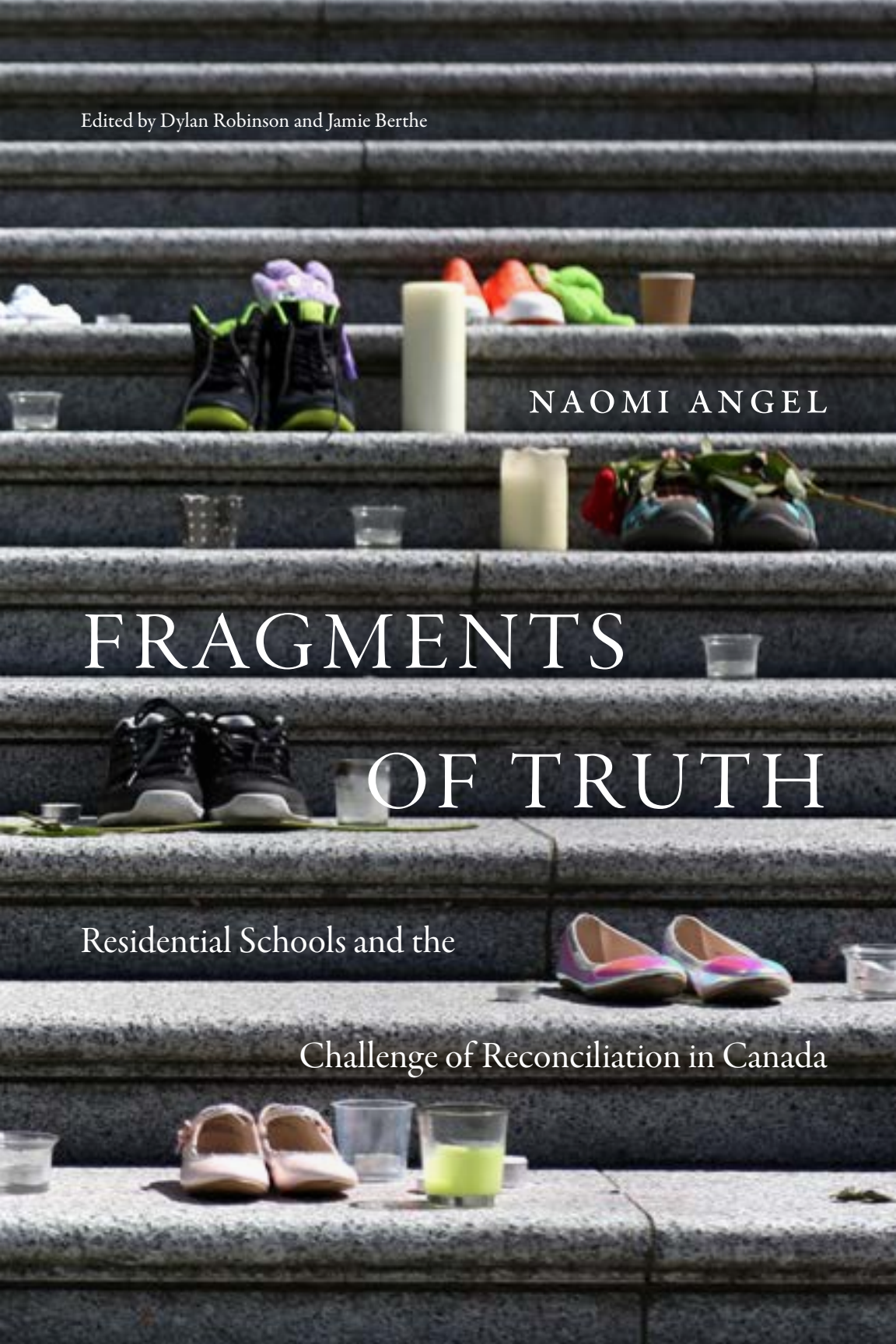

NAOMI ANGEL

FRAGMENTS OF TRUTH

Residential Schools and the Challenge of Reconciliation in Canada

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Cover art: 215 pairs of children's shoes set up in Vancouver as tribute after residential school discovery. Photograph by Anadolu Agency / Getty Images.

This book is for Nate, because everything is.

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Preface
Tracing Memory in Naomi Angel's Archive

JAMIE BERTHE AND EUGENIA KISIN

I am left with the feeling that reconciliation is an act of creation. It is about new conversations and discussions, about creating new archives, producing artwork, dialogue and new relationships.
—NAOMI ANGEL, tracingmemory.com, October 3, 2012

Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) on Indian residential schools (IRS), the inquiry that this book chronicles, released its final report in 2015. A massive archive of trauma, affect, and resilience, it testifies to Indigenous peoples' experiences of the brutally violent residential school system in Canada. The release of the TRC's *Final Report* was accompanied by ninety-four "calls to action": recommendations for transforming—indeed, reconciling—settler and Indigenous publics across the nation now known as Canada, primarily via changes in institutions of law, medicine, and higher education. That spring, performative and collective readings of the calls proliferated widely across art institutions in Canada, helping to amplify the recommendations. They have been echoing ever since, intertwined with strong Indigenous critiques of the TRC and its outcomes, as the settler state of Canada continues to reckon with what it means to acknowledge genocide and Indigenous survivance simultaneously.[1]

Naomi Angel, the author of this book, died in February 2014, before the commission had completed its work. She did not live to hear the calls to action or to witness the recent iterations of decolonization and indigenization of the academy—profound, incomplete, and full of friction—as generations of Indigenous activism were magnified by the cultural and moral weight of the TRC's findings. Less than five years later, in 2019, the

National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) produced its own final report and calls for justice.[2] Starting in spring 2021, the unearthing of unmarked graves on the grounds of several former residential schools—increasingly recognized as crime scenes and sites of mourning—continued to bring the TRC's findings into focus for the larger public. None of this is to say that Indigenous movements and communities required validation through the curious nonjudicial inquiry that was the TRC; rather, we wish only to gesture toward the profound and cumulative effect of the years since Angel's passing for shifting the conversation in the public sphere toward Indigenous justice.

Angel left us as a young mother and brilliant early-career academic, her research and ideas yet unfolding, her work still unfinished. The manuscript she left behind remains vital and relevant nonetheless. As friends and colleagues who have been affected by her intellectual legacy, our intention in this preface is as much a task of translation as one of framing. We want to explain the significance of *Fragments of Truth* as we understand it, to underscore the manuscript's most salient contributions as seen from our vantage point writing in 2021, seven years beyond the end of her life and six years out from the conclusion of the TRC. In working with the text, it quickly became apparent that we would not simply be able to "update" her research or bring it into full conversation with the still-unfolding events of the traumatic present, given that we cannot possibly know how Angel's singular mind would interpret everything that has happened in the TRC's wake. Instead, we want to suggest that engaging with Angel's interpretation of events, made at a particular moment of the TRC, can augment our collective understanding of present conditions, specifically with respect to conversations about how to shoulder the "burden of reconciliation" and decolonization's complex and layered subjectivities.[3]

This project feels particularly fraught in the present moment. In 2020 the Canadian federal government's denial of established Aboriginal land titles and the Wet'suwet'en hereditary chief's objections to a proposed gas pipeline route in British Columbia generated a full-blown political crisis. For much of early 2020, rail transit and trade across the country were shut down by protests in solidarity with Wet'suwet'en, bringing together Indigenous and environmental activists against the state police's violent attempts to push the pipeline through by attacking and dismantling the land defenders' encampment. Work continued on the pipeline throughout the COVID-19 pandemic; indeed, protesters reported continued pipeline work by Coastal GasLink employees even amid the province's declared state

FIGURE P.1 Two hundred fifteen children's pairs of shoes placed on the steps of the Vancouver Art Gallery as a memorial to the 215 children whose remains were discovered at the Kamloops Indian Residential School in British Columbia, May 28, 2021. The Canadian Press/Darryl Dyck.

of emergency and on-hold negotiations. Given this ongoing struggle, it is important to attend to the wrenching declaration of Wet'suwet'en land defenders who—after witnessing the government's failure to honor its agreement of free, prior, and informed Indigenous consent for resource-extraction projects (signed on to in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples)—declared reconciliation dead (and revolution alive).

Then, in May 2021, on the heels of this crisis, the remains of 215 Indigenous children were uncovered on the grounds of the former Kamloops Indian Residential School in British Columbia (see figure P.1). Members of the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc First Nation had known about the burials and missing children for many years but were able to confirm the locations of the bodies only after bringing in specialists who were able to locate the remains with ground-penetrating radar. In late June the Cowessess First Nation undertook its own search and confirmed 751 unmarked graves at the site of the Marieval Indian Residential School in Saskatchewan. Several days later, in Cranbrook, British Columbia, another 182 graves were confirmed at St. Eugene's Mission School. These grim findings—which are likely to be the first of many as communities continue to search other school grounds—led

to an outpouring of public grief and political mobilization on both sides of the US-Canada border. In the United States, Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland (Pueblo/Laguna)—the first Indigenous woman to serve in this position—has, in explicit response to these events, commissioned a federal investigation to examine the sites of former residential schools on US territory. In an op-ed published by the *Washington Post* on June 11, 2021, Haaland expressed the need to bring this trauma to light in radically personal terms, for both of her grandparents were survivors of boarding schools: "Many of the boarding schools were maintained by the Interior Department, which I now lead."[4] Haaland's words point to the ways that these histories are alive and resonant through time and across borders. The proposed federal investigation, and even Haaland's complicated relationship to state power, echo some of the tensions that animated the TRC, pointing to both the political anger and the sense of hope that national, state-sponsored attention can bring to the process of collective reckoning.

In dialogue with this present, Angel's manuscript suggests that if there is anything to be salvaged from Canada's project of reconciliation, returning to the TRC's earlier moments offers one potential way to recover some of those fragments—particularly through images, testimonies, and gatherings—and to understand their revolutionary portent. Angel set out to examine how various, often conflicting, notions of "truth" were deployed and mobilized by the IRS TRC, focusing in particular on the role played by visual media in the reconciliation process. Compelled by the affective pull, ideological instability, and provocation of a wide variety of visual phenomena—including archival images, Indigenous artwork and films, the national gatherings, and the physical structures of former residential schools themselves—Angel sought to consider the historical pathways that have been traversed by disparate visual artifacts and technologies, as well as their potential trajectories into unknown futures. Most importantly, she noted how visual culture troubles and complicates the authority of state discourses, suggesting a different set of criteria for evaluating reconciliation's efficacies. This is especially visible in her analysis of the national gatherings as sites for Indigenous communities to reconcile within themselves and to rediscover the shared connections that have animated many forms of pan-Indigenous activism in both the past and the current moment.

Over the course of her research at the TRC national gatherings, libraries, and archives, Angel kept a blog, *Tracing Memory*, as a public repository of her witnessing of the TRC's unfolding and concurrent Indigenous cultural activism. She used the blog as a place to work through thoughts and

impressions that didn't quite fit into her dissertation chapters, to write more publicly and immediately about the landscape of the TRC, and, at times, to reflect on what coming to terms with historical responsibility meant to her. As a Jewish-Japanese-Canadian woman, Angel approached her work consciously, closely attuned to how the weight of these multiple identities shaped her understanding of historical trauma.[5] She was also deeply uncomfortable when well-meaning archivists and librarians read her mixed-race appearance as Indigenous, prompting a thoughtfulness about what it means to be a subject of desire to do right and about the complicated demands of allyship.[6] Writing of a reconciliation event in Sault Ste. Marie, Angel's revelations come after "most of the academics packed up to leave," while artists stayed on to "work through many of the points of conversation (and contention) that were raised throughout the few days of the event." Angel writes about being drawn to this idea, of "collaborative creation" as both a method and an outcome of the TRC, one that is not necessarily the purview of the academy. It is significant that we do not know from her story whether Angel left or stayed; either way, she makes space for collaborative creations to be the outcome that matters.[7]

In her public and scholarly writing, Angel followed both an intentional and inadvertent ethics of being a vulnerable observer.[8] She was pregnant for much of her research and later sick from the genetic breast cancer that declared the Ashkenazi heritage living through her body.[9] Following her diagnosis, she started a new blog, *Everybody Hearts*, documenting her treatment and providing updates to her many friends and colleagues. "I used to write a lot: short stories, a personal journal, academic papers, and I enjoyed it. But I was always somewhat nervous about sharing my writing," Angel explains. "When I was diagnosed with breast cancer in December, this fear began to fade away. (It was, unfortunately, replaced with plenty of other fears.) I had always wanted my writing to be as *polished* as possible before sharing, now I just want it to be as *honest* as possible."[10]

This simple statement might be read not only as a paring-down response to illness but also as a trace of the practice of writing about truth in conversation with Indigenous interlocutors that clarifies her idea of creative collaboration. Indeed, an important aspect of calls to make space for Indigenous critical thought in the academy and to "decolonize mastery" has to do with honoring affect that isn't particularly polished and with valuing honesty over other conventions of academic style.[11] Dylan Robinson, Stó:lō ethnomusicologist, one of Angel's research collaborators and coeditor of this manuscript, has written eloquently of the dangers of transforming Indigenous

anger into an aesthetic resource for performance studies.[12] For Robinson this aestheticization risks both an extractive relation to research—mining experience to perform an academic function—and missing the everyday texture of social movements as they are lived. It is this kind of honesty, we argue, that Angel was after in her practice as a writer and researcher, evincing a sensitivity to the material that is deeply felt.

After an introduction that orients readers to the book's primary themes and questions, chapter 1 of *Fragments of Truth* looks at how Canada has been framed as a "nation of tolerance" and at how this narrative can be seen to intersect with the history of both the Indian residential school system and the IRS TRC. Illustrating how the IRS system was initially framed as part of the state's project of "benevolent assimilation," Angel explores how photographs, illustrations, and films worked to normalize, justify, and perpetuate both the existence of and the horrors wrought by the schools. Having made the relationship between colonial regimes of representation and genocidal practice explicit, Angel argues that any call for reconciliation must also be understood as a call for a profound shift in relations of looking.

In chapter 2 archival photographs produced by and in the IRS system serve as the point of departure for reflecting on how visual representations were used by the Canadian state to further the imperatives of empire. However, the inherent instability of meaning that infuses every image archive unsettles this top-down story, and Angel also insists on the evocative power and complicated entanglements of these photographs to highlight the various ways that Indigenous communities have returned to and reclaimed these archives as their own: "While image archives should be recognized as having been produced through certain contexts and within specific constraints, they are also productive, cultural spaces in and of themselves, where narratives form, coalesce *and* change."[13] Although the IRS images were born from a logic of control, containment, and colonial violence, Angel gestures toward the ways that former IRS students, Indigenous artists, activists, and community members have subverted this logic by reclaiming and resignifying the imperial image archive.

The interrelated acts of witnessing and offering testimony, and the role played by both at the national gatherings for the IRS TRC, constitute the focus of chapter 3. As the most public aspect of the commission's work, the national gatherings, Angel tells us, "were in many ways grandly staged performances where 'embodied culture' played an important role in producing meaning and negotiating memories of the IRS system."[14] Angel focuses on what she calls the political affective space engendered by these events,

arguing that "by sharing their IRS experiences at these National Gatherings, survivors often manage[d] to create a space where the public display of affect [became] a powerful mode of political intervention."[15] Weaving together her field notes from the Winnipeg and Inuvik IRS TRC events with survivor testimonies, the work of Indigenous scholars, performances by Indigenous artists, media narratives, and historical texts, this chapter opens up a conversation around the complicated dynamics of embodied reconciliation work, which, as Angel shows, can be both a contested and contestatory practice.

Chapter 4 moves away from the official work of the IRS TRC and examines the physical sites of several former residential schools as a provocation and invitation to consider how local communities have engaged in their own processes of reconciliation. Here Angel considers these sites as archives in their own right, spaces that evidence their own specific kinds of logic, histories, and memories, spaces where reconciliation is being negotiated in myriad ways. As remnants (and sometimes ruins) of the IRS system, the sites push Angel to ask whether or not it is possible to hear the "stories told by these structures" in order to construct a narrative of relationships between memory and place.[16] Putting the material structures in conversation with various other voices—including literature written by Indigenous authors, testimony of survivors, cinematic representations of the schools, her own field notes, media narratives, and interviews with individuals who lived and worked in proximity to the sites—Angel wrestles with the complexity of what it means to unearth silences embedded within the physical structures of the schools themselves; to do so, she appeals, in part, to notions of spectrality and haunting. Acknowledging both the potential within and limitations of such an approach, Angel encourages readers to consider what it might mean think about reconciliation as "a ghostly encounter." Although it is a theme that spans the entirety of the manuscript, in this chapter Angel is acutely concerned with the ethical quandaries and the sometimes uncanny experience of bringing into presence those who are no longer alive to tell their stories. It is worth noting that in editing the book on her behalf, and in writing this preface, the resonance of these ideas has a very peculiar kind of potency.

In concluding *Fragments of Truth*, Angel tells us that her writing and research are not meant to be understood as definitive declarations but rather are meant to gesture toward both a past that needs more attention and a present that continues to unfold. For Angel the most critical question left unanswered by her research is to know whether or not the labors of

reconciliation will lead to meaningful action concerning redress and restitution for Indigenous communities. It is unfortunate but not surprising that years after the publication of the commission's *Final Report*, this question remains as urgent as ever.

In spite of its ongoing relevance, there are several silences in *Fragments of Truth* that require a response from the present moment in order to let readers in on how the TRC's legacy has continued to evolve in the public sphere. Most pressing, we believe, are the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls inquiry and the Idle No More social movement. In September 2016 the newly elected Liberal prime minister Justin Trudeau launched a national inquiry into the disproportionate number of Indigenous women and girls—sisters, mothers, granddaughters, aunts, partners, wives—who had disappeared without explanation or been killed. The inquiry was not Trudeau's compassionate invention; rather, it responded to years of pressure from community organizations, activists, and scholars to investigate the structural settler violence perpetrated against these "stolen sisters," the earlier moniker for MMIWG that emphasized injustice and kinship. Cultural production was also an extremely important space for organizing political response.[17] In one of her final research blog posts, Angel drew her readers' attention to an ImagineNATIVE film festival project that displayed short films about the Stolen Sisters Initiative on Toronto subway platform screens. Her interest suggests that she was already drawing connections between the TRC and what would unfold with the MMIWG inquiry, even if these ideas did not make their way into the pages of this manuscript. The pan-Indigenous Idle No More social movement started in 2012 to protect land, water, and sovereignty. It grew out of opposition to a proposed piece of Conservative budget legislation that threatened environmental protections. Although Angel documents the initial part of the movement in this text, she did not anticipate how rapidly it would grow over social media as the #IdleNoMore hashtag inspired new generations of activists across Turtle Island in the years that followed. Despite these gaps, we are nevertheless struck by Angel's prescience about the mediated quality of activism, something that her close attention to visual culture allowed her to see and that keeps her work relevant in the contemporary moment, particularly with respect to her analysis of the schools themselves as archives. These kinds of insights continue to tie her work quite explicitly to cultural memory in present-day media worlds.

In editing the book for publication, Dylan Robinson and Jamie Berthe aimed to preserve Angel's voice and the integrity of her ideas while updating the text wherever possible, particularly in ways that they believed would

align with Angel's approach and perspective. In some instances this simply meant revising language to reflect the outcome of the IRS TRC, but in other instances it meant incorporating references that were obviously pertinent but that had been published after Angel's passing. For Robinson, contributing to this book was an opportunity to continue the dialogue that he and Angel had initiated at the TRC events they attended together, formative conversations that also included Elizabeth Kalbfleisch, Peter Morin, and Pauline Wakeham. By returning to Angel's work, Robinson found a way to extend this dialogue, in particular by integrating some of the unpublished writing that he and Angel had exchanged about the national gatherings. In streamlining Angel's original manuscript for publication, Berthe also approached her contribution as a dialogic process. Berthe and Angel started doctoral studies together in 2007 and were both working at the intersection of visual culture and colonial histories; they also lived through the experience of being pregnant, and then new mothers navigating academia, in tandem. The two had spent countless hours discussing their ideas, research, and lives; therefore, editing the manuscript gave Berthe the chance to pursue a new form of creative collaboration and intellectual growth with Angel. Both Robinson and Berthe recognize that if Angel had lived to see the conclusion of the IRS TRC and the subsequent evolutions of the reconciliation process in Canada, this book would be a very different piece of writing; still, they are equally confident that *Fragments of Truth* remains entirely Angel's book and that it represents a significant contribution.

The book both theorizes and is an example of the fragmented truths produced by the reconciliation process. But in its refusal to draw hard conclusions and resolve its own tensions, the text offers readers different kinds of insight. Angel was acutely reflexive about her subject position and how it compelled her to share the weight of what many Indigenous intellectuals in Canada have started referring to as the "burden of reconciliation," which entails serving as a subject called to heal the wounds of the settler state while resisting the tokenism of superficial indigenization strategies that amount to liberal inclusion rather than political transformation.[18] We can see in Angel's work a compassionate refusal to always need to know more; she frequently makes such refusals, along with her struggle to engage with them on their own terms, explicit in her writing. Speaking to the experience of being told not to photograph a particular moment she was witnessing at a gathering, Angel tells readers: "It was also a reminder that there were barriers to what I was allowed to access, that I could not understand everything happening here."[19]

In the passage that opens this preface, Angel suggests that "reconciliation is an act of creation," that the process is "about new conversations and discussions, about creating new archives, producing artwork, dialogue and new relationships." These ideas undergird and illuminate the insights of *Fragments of Truth*, and as her creative collaborators we would suggest that it is not in spite of, but rather by virtue of, the book's situated scope that her work makes an important and inimitable contribution to the literature on reconciliation—"fragments of truth" brought together in small gestures, edges, and silences that cannot be reconciled.

Acknowledgments

MARITA STURKEN AND FAYE GINSBURG

This book, *Fragments of Truth*, has had a particularly long and complex journey to its publication. It has involved extraordinary efforts from a group of people who labored with love and determination. We are deeply grateful to see it now fully realized.

This book's author, Naomi Angel, was a promising young scholar and much-beloved person whose life was cut short by breast cancer in 2014 at the age of thirty-seven. Naomi had been very brave as a researcher, and her bravery was in full force in her confrontation with the challenges of her illness. When she defended this work as a dissertation in August 2013, in the Department of Media, Culture, and Communication at New York University, everyone celebrated her multiple triumphs. She had survived cancer, and she had, while undergoing treatments, written a powerful, insightful, and pathbreaking manuscript, one that would go on to win a dissertation award. She was grateful to be an Andrew W. Mellon Foundation postdoctoral fellow in the humanities at the Jackman Humanities Institute at the University of Toronto. When, soon thereafter, it became clear that her cancer had returned, it was a terrible blow. At that point, her dissertation committee and her friends became determined to see her work eventually published. As faculty who worked closely with Naomi, the two of us, Marita Sturken and Faye Ginsburg, facilitated and oversaw this process together in the years that followed.

We would like to thank Dylan Robinson, Stó:lō scholar and Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Arts at Queens University in Canada, who graciously served as an outside reader on this dissertation and then undertook the complex and arduous task of editing, updating, and expanding the work of the original manuscript, bringing in Naomi's words from other

contexts and revising the manuscript with great sensitivity and wisdom. Naomi's close friend Jamie Berthe, also a scholar of visual culture and imperial histories, worked tirelessly to streamline, edit, and finalize the manuscript with great intelligence, determination, and perseverance. For Jamie in particular, this was a labor of love, doing much of the work that Naomi herself would have done to bring her scholarship into book form. Jamie and Eugenia Kisin, another close friend of Naomi as well as a colleague at NYU's Gallatin School who works with Indigenous artists and activists in Canada, wrote the preface, skillfully situating Naomi's work in relation to how the context in Canada has changed since the finalization of the TRC. Doctoral student Matthew Webb did a careful and thorough job bringing together the images for the book with tremendous skill and resourcefulness. Naomi's close friend and colleague Kari Hensley was an important part of the initial process of bringing the book together. The input from several reviewers for the press was enormously important to bringing this project to its full potential.

We would like to thank the Department of Media, Culture, and Communication (MCC) at New York University and its chair, Rodney Benson, for funding to support the book's revisions. Thanks to the NYU Center for the Humanities, which provided us with a grant to fund image permissions and research, and to Tracy Figueroa, Danielle Resto, and the staff at MCC for facilitating these funds. We are grateful to Ken Wissoker at Duke University Press, whose support for this project and deep engagement with the challenges it posed were crucial as well as generous. At Duke University Press, Joshua Gutterman Tranen has been a vital resource, Susan Albury shepherded the book through production, and Donald Pharr provided excellent editing.

Naomi's husband, Mitchell Praw, has been a stalwart and patient advocate of this project. Naomi dedicated her dissertation to "survivors of the Indian Residential School system, and for survivors of many kinds." It is tragic, of course, that she did not survive, but we hope that this book will be one of her legacies. She also dedicated the work to her son, Nate, who was two at the time of her death and who she considered to be her most important legacy. It is thus to Nate that the book is dedicated. What follows are the original acknowledgments for this work in Naomi's own words.

This dissertation would not have been possible without the help, encouragement, and support of many people. I am grateful to the people who publicly shared their experiences of the Indian residential school system. Their

strength and courage in speaking about often difficult times were both humbling and inspirational. I would also like to thank those people who took the time to elaborate on these experiences and answer my questions. In particular, I am grateful to Eric Large and the staff at the Blue Quills First Nations College, Harvey Youngchief, Charles Wood, Barb Esau, Robert Peters, Ruth Roulette, Petah Inukpuk, and Jules Koostachin. I am indebted to them for their generosity. Archivists at the National Archives, Anglican Church Archives, Presbyterian Archives, United Church Archives, North Vancouver Archives, and the Saskatchewan Archives Board provided much-needed information and clarification on key documents. Representatives from the Squamish Nation and Coqualeetza Archives were also generous with their time and knowledge.

My committee's insights greatly strengthened this project. Marita Sturken, my chairperson, provided a steady source of support. Her skill in pulling out salient issues for further analysis has been invaluable in shaping my scholarship. Throughout the PhD program, she encouraged me to ask difficult questions and to draw out difficult answers. Arvind Rajagopal also contributed important feedback, suggesting critical paths to pursue, and his scholarship on postcolonial visual culture inspired me to look at my research through a different lens. Faye Ginsburg suggested critical readings and helped me to understand the international contexts of this research. This project was greatly enriched by her scholarship and her approach to research. I have been inspired by my committee's enthusiasm for the project and their commitment to their students. For their early feedback, I am indebted to Nicholas Mirzoeff and Gabriella Coleman. Dylan Robinson and Diana Taylor, as external readers, also contributed valuable insights to this research. They also helped me imagine the ways in which this research may develop in future iterations, and for that I am grateful. Mary Taylor has also helped to make my experience at NYU a positive one. Her skill in navigating administrative issues, and her ability to facilitate scholarship from afar, were a great help.

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face of a challenging situation. To my other colleagues at New York University (particularly Zenia Kish and Eugenia Kisin), I am grateful for your insight, feedback, encouragement, and laughter. Kaitlin McNally-Murphy, Lee Douglas, Danielle Roper, and Nathalie Bragadir formed a self-selected cohort that was the source of many productive conversations and adventures. I am thankful to call these people my colleagues and friends. I look forward to future collaborations.

The members of the Aesthetics of Reconciliation in Canada Research Group contributed to my understanding of the complex dynamics of artistic representation of the IRS system, especially as represented at the TRC's national gatherings. I am thankful to Dylan Robinson and Keavy Martin for inviting me to be a part of this research group. I would also like to thank Pauline Wakeham and Robyn Green, researchers who shared their approaches to the reconciliation project in Canada in ways that deeply influenced my own approach in navigating and negotiating the TRC's national gatherings.

I would also like to thank the doctors and staff at Princess Margaret Cancer Center, particularly Dr. Christine Elser, Dr. David McCready, and Dr. FeiFei Liu. I would like to extend a very special thank-you to my nurse, Shelley Westergard, whose capacity for empathy and strength in supporting others continues to inspire me.

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And last but not least, I would like to thank Nate, who came into this world as I worked on this dissertation. This dissertation is for Nate, because everything is.

INTRODUCTION

Reconciliation and Remembrance

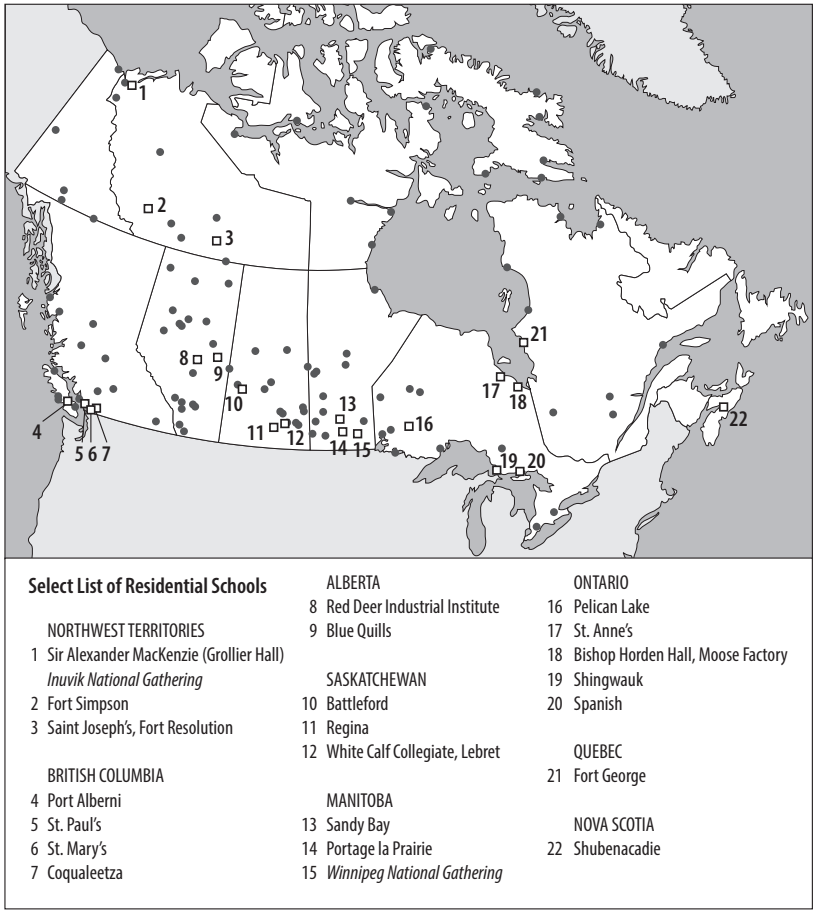
I can hear Eric Large flipping through the dictionary over the phone. "Nope, no word for *reconciliation* in here," he says. "No Cree word that means that." We had been talking on the phone for about twenty minutes at this point, discussing the Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission: "The TRC is looking for truth and looking for reconciliation. What does that mean anyway? Whose truth? And *to reconcile* would mean to return to some common, peaceful state in the past. When was that?" Large is a former student of the Blue Quills Indian Residential School who now works as a resolution health support worker in his community. As such, he provides information and counsel to other survivors of the Indian residential school (IRS) system. We met at a conference in Montreal titled "Breaking the Silence: International Conference on the Indian Residential School Commission of Canada" in the fall of 2008.[1]

The Canadian TRC, also known as the Indian Residential Schools Truth and Reconciliation Commission (IRS TRC), was established in June 2008 and focused on the mistreatment and abuse of children in the IRS system. Run by the government of Canada and the Presbyterian, Anglican, United, and Catholic churches, the system was in place for more than a century (1876–1996). It separated Indigenous children from their families and placed them in 139 recognized Indian residential schools across the country.[2] Children at the schools were forbidden from speaking their traditional languages and practicing their cultural and spiritual beliefs. When parents objected to having their children taken, their children were often forcibly removed. Many former students have spoken out about the physical, emotional, and sexual abuse that took place at the schools, both prior to and

following the IRS TRC. The IRS system is now recognized as one of the major factors in the attempted destruction of Indigenous cultures, languages, and communities in Canada. The last school closed in 1996. Many of the schools have cemeteries where the marked and unmarked graves of the children who died there remain as traces of this troubled history (see figures I.1 and I.2).

The Montreal conference was a revealing glimpse into the dynamics at work in the process of reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Canada. Over the course of the two-day conference, roughly sixty people participated in conversations about the IRS system and its legacies. From the start of the first day it was clear that this conference would be unusual in both the mixture of academics and nonacademics in attendance and in the forms and discourses of knowledge shared. The day began with a welcome prayer offered by Delbert Sampson from the Shuswap Nation, Salmon Arm, British Columbia. Throughout the day, participants spoke different Indigenous languages (Cree, Anishinaabe, and Inuktitut), often left untranslated. (Simultaneous translation was offered for French and English only, Canada's two officially recognized languages.) Although the panelists generally followed a recognizable academic format (PowerPoint presentations, the use of specific terminology, the asking of rhetorical questions, etc.), audience members also disrupted conference expectations by claiming the space as one for the telling of stories and sharing of experiences.

At noon on the first day of the conference, an organizer announced that it was time to convene for lunch. Donna Paskemin, a member of the audience who was standing at the microphone at the time, refused to table her comments. "Can I ask the panel a question?" she repeated several times. Like many participants from the audience, she began by speaking a few words in her Indigenous language (Cree), and then she went on to share her story and her concerns about the loss of languages in Indigenous communities. Toward the end of her question, she was reminded again that the conference was running late and told to wrap things up. For many people there, this created a moment of significant tension and was representative of one of the potential problems with the reconciliation process. Ms. Paskemin wanted to speak about her experience at that moment, in that space, and in her own way. The conference organizers wanted to keep things running on schedule. There was an obvious discomfort created among audience members by this confrontation. As we left the hall for lunch, I overheard the conference organizer being reprimanded by audience members for cutting off a participant, particularly one whose family had attended an Indian residential school.



Select List of Residential Schools

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
1 Sir Alexander MacKenzie (Grollier Hall)
Inuvik National Gathering
2 Fort Simpson
3 Saint Joseph's, Fort Resolution

BRITISH COLUMBIA
4 Port Alberni
5 St. Paul's
6 St. Mary's
7 Coqualeetza

ALBERTA
8 Red Deer Industrial Institute
9 Blue Quills

SASKATCHEWAN
10 Battleford
11 Regina
12 White Calf Collegiate, Lebret

MANITOBA
13 Sandy Bay
14 Portage la Prairie
15 *Winnipeg National Gathering*

ONTARIO
16 Pelican Lake
17 St. Anne's
18 Bishop Horden Hall, Moose Factory
19 Shingwauk
20 Spanish

QUEBEC
21 Fort George

NOVA SCOTIA
22 Shubenacadie

FIGURE 1.1 Select List of Residential Schools of Canada, 1831–1996. Dots represent all the schools; named schools are discussed in the text. Source: Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

The dynamics at the conference signal some of the challenges of reconciliation in Canada. Although everyone at the conference agreed on the importance of a greater understanding and awareness of the oppression faced by Indigenous peoples, the way in which that knowledge has been elicited and shaped remains controversial.[3] Critics have questioned how reconciliation in the shape of a truth commission could provide more than a temporary forum for much larger issues facing Indigenous communities. Following the conclusion of the TRC in 2015, concerns have continued to

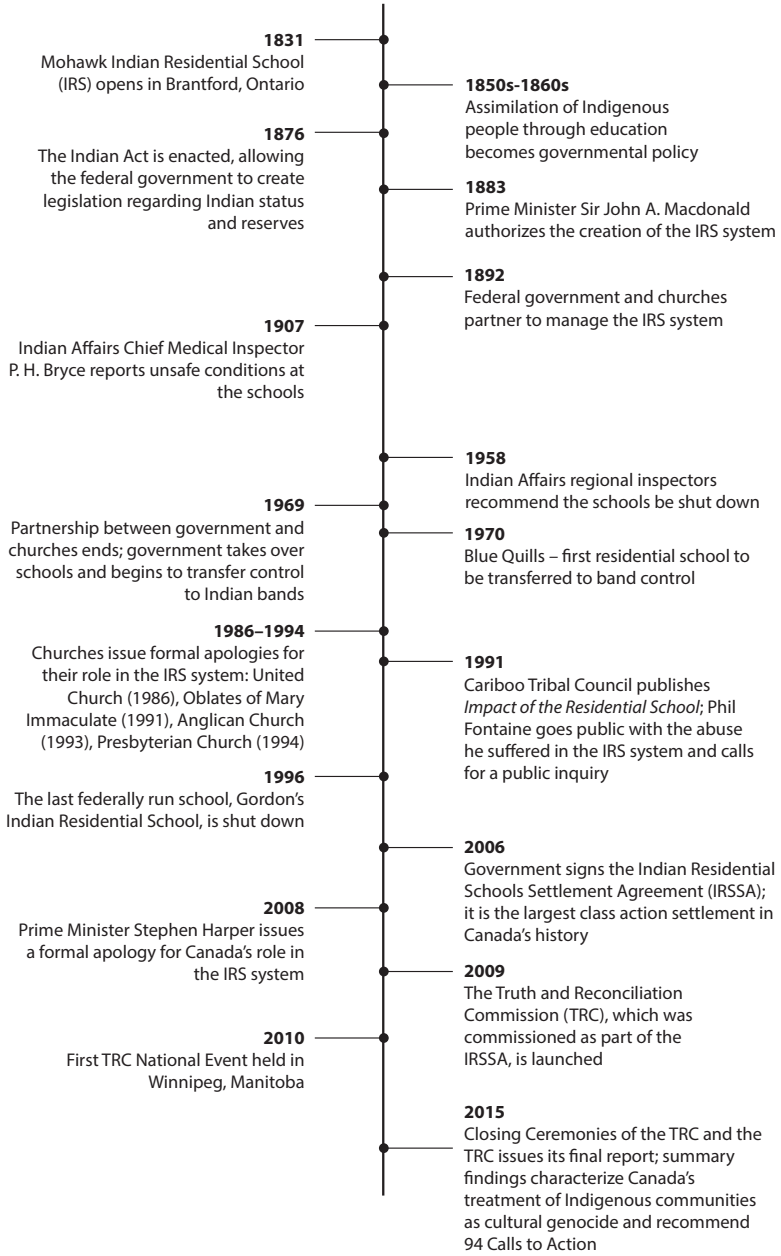


FIGURE 1.2 A Condensed Time Line of Indian Residential Schools and the IRS Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Sources: https://nctr.ca/exhibits/residential-school-timeline; http://education.historicacanada.ca/files/619/Residential_Schools_History_and_Heritage_Education_Guide_FINAL.pdf; and www.ahf.ca/downloads/condensed-timline.pdf.

arise about the fact that pressing health, welfare, education, and land issues have been obscured and overshadowed by the focus on the more abstract issue of reconciliation. Many Indigenous communities face higher rates of unemployment, drug and alcohol abuse, incarceration, and youth suicide. Members of these same communities were and continue to be called upon to participate in a reconciliation process that seems to have done little to address or alleviate these challenges.

Through an analysis of archival photographs from the IRS system, testimony taken at TRC gatherings, and popular representations of the IRS legacy in media and literature, *Fragments of Truth* confronts the complicated terrain of reconciliation in Canada. In particular, the book examines how concepts of nationhood and ideas of indigeneity were deployed through the IRS TRC, how visibility and invisibility were negotiated by different groups and actors, and how the dialectical relationship between remembering and forgetting came into play through the reconciliation process. Much of the scholarly research on truth commissions has focused on the genre of testimony as a way to heal and to come to terms with the past.[4] But these commissions circulate "truth" in other forms as well. In the Canadian context, media representations, images (old and new), and the revisioning and rebuilding of former schools have also played key roles in the processes of national reconciliation. Taking this diversity of forms and practices into account, *Fragments of Truth* looks at the normative, disciplinary orders of remembrance as dictated through the IRS TRC and at how individuals and communities resisted, rejected, and reframed those imperatives, often through visual tactics. Bringing together a wide range of theory from Indigenous and settler colonial studies, as well as from visual and memory studies, *Fragments of Truth* examines the visuality of "truth" and "reconciliation" in the Canadian IRS TRC context.[5] To do so, it engages a diverse array of visual forms and media: the visuality of tolerance that gave rise to and worked in conjunction with the assimilationist policies undergirding the residential school system; various visual traces of the residential school system, including photographs, film, visual art, and even the infrastructure of schools themselves; and the relationships that have been forged between these visual traces and IRS survivors, Indigenous communities, and members of the non-Indigenous public (such as myself) who participated in TRC national events. The book explores how the residential school system and the ongoing processes of reconciliation can be understood from an embodied and sensory orientation, focusing on visuality's affective impact on members of both Indigenous communities and the non-Indigenous public.

Contested Terms of Identification

Before delving into the residential schools' history and the visuality of reconciliation, it will be useful to provide some background regarding the identificatory terms of indigeneity and settler colonialism that this book engages. Identity categories are far from straightforward, and using the terms *Indigenous* and *non-Indigenous* or *Aboriginal* and *non-Aboriginal* to discuss the ways in which one approaches research can be problematic. At worst, the usage of these overarching terms gives a false sense of cohesive worldviews or epistemologies, masking the exponentially layered, intersectional realities and differences that exist between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities across the lands now known as "Canada." One thing that the TRC made clear was that residential school histories and survivor experiences are as diverse as the more than six hundred distinct First Nations whose lands and waters are occupied by Canada.[6] Consequently, I use such identity markers with the understanding that, while necessary, they are imperfect descriptions. For Indigenous peoples, such terms also have different affective impacts and signal affiliation, belonging, and disidentification.

In Canada, where the term *Aboriginal* has frequently been used to identify First Nations, Métis people, and Inuit, a significant refusal of this government-defined term has been taking place across the country. Indeed, for many Indigenous people across the lands now known as Canada, as a term applied by the Canadian government the label *Aboriginal* carries with it a long history of government imposition. As Taiaiake Alfred and Jeff Corntassel note, the term upholds a "political-legal relationship to the state rather than … any cultural or social ties to … Indigenous community or culture or homeland."[7] Although the 2006 census calculated that 1.4 million people identify as "Aboriginal," Indigenous peoples across the country are also shifting the politics of identification by returning to nation- and community-specific terms in their languages.[8]

Although the term *First Nations* has no legal definition, it is widely used in Canada to denote Indigenous peoples and to distinguish them from Inuit and Métis people. It is alleged that Solomon Sanderson of the Chakastaypasin Cree First Nation proposed the term as an alternative to the word *Indian* in 1981 while serving as elected chief of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations.[9] Identifying as "First Nations" also prompts a reevaluation of the foundations of the Canadian nation, often imagined as French and British, and brings issues of Indigenous sovereignty to the fore. Yet this term has also elided the specific histories of Inuit and Métis

people when it is misapplied as a larger framework to speak of all Indigenous peoples across Canada. Although Inuit have traditionally occupied northern regions of Canada, particularly in the arctic and subarctic regions, there are growing urban Inuit populations in cities across the country.

The identifying term *Métis* also has a contentious history. Some who have non-Indigenous and Indigenous mixed ancestry identify as Métis, but there has been significant debate (particularly in the Quebec context) about the ways in which this definition has worked to elide the sovereignty and distinct cultural history of Métis people.[10] In using *Indigenous* as an umbrella term, I do not wish to flatten the differences among Inuit, Métis, and First Nation cultures. Rather, I use the term, as well as the specific names of nations and communities, to follow the choices made by Indigenous peoples themselves in the act of self-determined identification.

I will also be using the contested identity categories *settler* and *settler colonialism* throughout the book. The vast majority of non-Indigenous Canadians do not identify as "settlers," but an increasing usage has resulted from the ongoing activism and decolonizing efforts that have in large part resulted from the work of the TRC. Although usage of the term is more predominant in activist, academic, and other institutional settings, it has begun to gain some purchase within the general Canadian public. *Settler*, in its simplest conception, describes someone who came and never left. As Patrick Wolfe has written, settler societies are those where the colonizers have "come to stay," where "invasion is a structure, not an event."[11] In Canada the colonial project continues to unfold; it "is not a singular historical event but an ongoing legacy—the colonizer has not left."[12]

In this broad definition, *settler* encompasses all non-Indigenous people: those whose families were among the original settlers, those who have more recently immigrated, and even Indigenous peoples who have relocated to lands other than their own. For this reason, scholars have noted the tendency of the term to reify subjectivity within an unmarked, white, heteronormative framework.[13] The singular identification of *settler* thus tends to elide the important work of identifying how specific histories of immigration, coalitional relationships, and cultural values, gender, sexuality, and class intersect with histories of colonization (and residential schools in particular) and their ongoing legacy. Other scholars have critiqued the term's minimal affective impact and the lack of accountability it tends to effectuate. For example, Annie Coombes notes that "the term 'settler' has about it a deceptively benign and domesticated ring which masks the violence of colonial encounters that produced and perpetrated consistently discriminatory

and genocidal regimes against the Indigenous people of these regions." Coombes and others have called for a casting off of this "benign" mask as part of an acknowledgment of the violence upon which these countries were founded and that they continue to inflict on Indigenous communities.[14] Indeed, in the increasing uptake of the term since the conclusion of the TRC, one might also question the extent to which *settler* has become a nonperformative term that, when used as mere acknowledgment, stands in for individual reckoning with one's responsibility in the ongoing work to redress the legacies and ongoing effects of the residential school system for Indigenous people. Despite these valid criticisms, my sense is that the term holds potential value in drawing attention to the "relational terms of our settlement" as an ongoing process enacted by individuals rather than by institutions.[15]

International Context

The Canadian TRC took place in a historical moment that found many nations undertaking similar processes. Indeed, reconciliation has become a dominant mode for engaging with troubled national histories—so much so, in fact, that the United Nations declared an international year of reconciliation in 2009.[16] The negotiation of violent and contested pasts can take many shapes and forms, and discourses of reconciliation, forgiveness, and healing resonate differently, depending on nations' specific histories. In the interest of situating the specificity of the Canadian TRC, it is useful to provide a brief overview of the larger "culture of redress" in an international context.[17]

Perhaps the closest comparison to the context of the residential school system in Canada and the subsequent government apology is seen within the Australian history of the "Stolen Generations." This is the name given to the thousands of Indigenous children in Australia who were taken from their homes and families and placed in boarding schools and Native settlements. As in Canada's residential schools, students were forbidden from speaking their languages and taught to forget their traditions and cultures. The oft-cited goal of these schools was to bring "civilization" to these children.[18] In 1991 the Australian parliament created the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation (CAR). The legislation acknowledged the need to address issues of land, housing, heritage, education, health, infrastructure, and employment in Indigenous communities, but it did not discuss redress for the Stolen Generation.

Major criticisms of the CAR process have included its neglect of the legacy of the Stolen Generation and its deflection of other contemporary Indigenous issues. As one critic, Damien Short, writes,

> Australian reconciliation was born out of a political desire to deflect the growing campaign for a treaty in the 1980s. Indeed, far from providing the basis for nation to nation treaty negotiations with indigenous peoples of equal terms, Prime Minister Paul Keating and the CAR positively promoted an overt nation building agenda which aimed to cosmetically legitimize the settler nation, by the inclusion of previously excluded Aboriginal people, while at the same time indigenizing settler culture and effectively restricting indigenous aspiration to participation "within" the political and cultural confines of the nation state.[19]

In addition to the official reconciliation project, Australia embarked on several public events in regards to its treatment of Indigenous people. These included a "National Sorry Day" to commemorate the official apology of 2008 and the publication of the "Bringing Them Home Report."[20] Although the ritual of an annual day of apology may bring awareness to the legacies of the Stolen Generations, it does not give back land or language taken from Indigenous people in Australia.[21] Likewise, the report and the discourses resulting from it sparked "the history wars," where Australian history became a battleground for revisionist and reactionary versions of the past.[22]

Although there is great diversity among the stated goals and practices of TRCs, there are several commonalities that bind these quasi-juridical bodies together. Historically, and in contrast with the Canadian version, TRCs have become commonplace in transitional or postconflict societies as a means by which to come to terms with violence and oppression that was both inflicted and then denied by the state. The TRC has generally been seen as a way to mobilize public memory in order to begin to deal with these injustices. Priscilla Hayner has identified several key components of truth commissions, including a focus on the past and an emphasis on prolonged or repeated abuses that were sanctioned by the state. Hayner argues that the aims of truth commissions revolve around the discovery, clarification, and acknowledgment of these abuses. The commissions often provide recommendations regarding accountability for the individuals involved, and they help to determine the level of responsibility for governmental and nongovernmental institutions. In short, Hayner contends that the overarching goal of a truth commission is to "reduce conflict over the past."[23]

Most truth commissions have taken place in Africa (including Uganda, Zimbabwe, Chad, Burundi, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and South Africa) and in Central and South America (including Argentina, Chile, El Salvador, Guatemala, Bolivia, Ecuador, and Uruguay). Others include Sri Lanka, Haiti, Nepal, and Germany.[24] Some of these were not considered truth commissions in their own time but have since been incorporated and subsumed into the larger discourse. Some truth commissions focus on establishing long-denied facts. Others highlight the need for further action, which may involve prosecution of persecutors or new legislation to prevent further abuses. Still others are generally recognized as ineffectual or impotent.[25]

Although "truth" and "reconciliation" are often paired, the concepts do not necessarily go hand in hand, nor does one always imply the other. In fact, the commissions of the 1970s and early 1980s generally stressed "truth" without much mention of "reconciliation." For example, the commissions set up in Chile and Argentina focused largely on establishing the facts surrounding the disappearances of loved ones. Because the silence with regard to "the disappeared" was so deafening, simply allowing the details to be discussed in public was considered a significant step forward. Although reconciliation may have been implied, the arduous task of documenting the lost history of state violence was seen as an important starting point. How reconciliation was to take place would in many ways depend on the facts established. In the case of Argentina, the documents created in and by the commission were later used to prosecute the perpetrators involved.[26] In Canada's IRS TRC, which did not involve legal proceedings to prosecute perpetrators, my experience of the proceedings was that the process of establishing truth was less aligned with a singular and exclusive conception of fact and, instead, embraced the multiplicity of experiences as "truth."

Like truth, reconciliation can have a myriad of meanings and imply a range of processes.[27] Which groups are being reconciled? Is a person being reconciled *to* something or reconciled *with* someone? In relation to one of the most well-known and celebrated TRCs, the South African example, Antjie Krog raises the issue of defining reconciliation: "The dictionary definitions of 'reconciliation' have an underlay of restoration, of reestablishing things in their original state. The *Oxford* says: 'to make friendly again after an estrangement; make resigned; harmonize; make compatible, able to coexist. . . .' But in this country, there is nothing to go back to, no previous state or relationship one would wish to restore. In these stark circumstances, 'reconciliation' does not even seem like the right word, but rather 'conciliation.'"[28] As Krog notes, reconciliation implies a state of previous harmony. In most cases,

however, this privileged state of peace is itself a myth. Instead of returning to a state of preconflict, the process of reconciliation actually results in new relationships and new dynamics of power.[29] In the Canadian TRC context, Métis artist and critical arts writer David Garneau has shared his thoughts about the word *reconciliation*:

> [It] imposes the fiction that equanimity was the status quo between Indigenous people and Canada. It is true that for many generations after contact the Indigenous majority had good trading relationships with some Europeans as individuals rather than nations. The serious troubles began when the visitors decided to become settlers, when traders were replaced by ever-increasing waves of colonists, when invading nations decided they would rather own the well rather than just share the water, and they reached a crescendo when these territories became Rupert's Land and then Canada without consultation with the original inhabitants.
>
> The problem with the choice of the word reconciliation over conciliation is that it presses into our minds a false understanding of our past and constricts our collective sense of the future. The word suggests that there was a time of general conciliation between First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people and Canada, and that this peace was tragically disrupted by Indian residential schools and will be painfully restored through the current process of Re-conciliation.[30]

As evidenced by my conversation with Eric Large—whose words open this chapter—similar criticisms and questions were also raised by other Indigenous community members.[31] In attempting to rectify the violence of colonial policies, the IRS TRC confronted the question of whether a process of reconciliation can truly destabilize long-standing, extant structures of power. Particularly in the context of nations that are not going through large-scale political transitions (such as Australia and Canada as opposed to nations such as South Africa), are truth commissions a process of decolonization, or do they simply work to reinscribe existing hierarchies and legitimize the disproportionate power of the state? Although many critical voices, including those of Indigenous and settler scholars alike, have examined the Canadian IRS TRC as an inherently flawed process that frequently revictimized survivors through the renarration and reliving of trauma, others have sought to understand its limitations while also acknowledging the IRS TRC's decolonial potential. Reflecting the complexity of the histories and stories at stake, the IRS TRC enacted a process that was at once highly flawed in its orientation toward confession and the expression of trauma

but also frequently useful for survivors in healing, in the expression of their histories, and in strengthening kinship and community.[32]

Approaching the Research: Reflexivity and Relationship

Positioning oneself in relation to one's research when working with Indigenous individuals and communities is often about trust and accountability. Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith has discussed the conflicted relationship between scholars and Indigenous peoples, highlighting how academic research is itself a site of struggle, enmeshed in the power dynamics that it often purports to challenge: "Research is not an innocent or distant academic exercise; [it is] an activity that has something at stake and that occurs in a set of political and social conditions."[33] In Canada these political and social conditions include the unevenness of power relations, the discounting of Indigenous knowledge, and the systematic oppression of Indigenous populations. It is with an acknowledgment of these conditions—and a desire to engage and disrupt them—that I have developed my approach to this research.

For Indigenous researchers, stating one's nation, community, or treaty affiliation can itself be a political act. For populations that were faced with oppressive and violent forms of forced assimilation (such as the IRS system), asserting that one is Anishinaabe or Cree makes clear the failure of such attempts at assimilation and undermines myths that circulate about Native Canadians and Americans as a "vanishing race." "Location is more than simply saying you are of Cree or Anishinaabe or British ancestry; from Toronto or Alberta or Canada," write Kathy Absolom and Cam Willett. "Location is about relations to land, language, spiritual, cosmological, political, economical, environmental, and social elements in one's life."[34] For these reasons I have included information about Indigenous authors' backgrounds where appropriate.

Although my own identity category (mixed Japanese-Jewish-Canadian) has helped me, at least to a certain extent, understand some feelings of marginalization within the spectrum of Canadian multiculturalism, I recognize that as a non-Indigenous Canadian I face complicated ethical challenges and relations of power involved in being an "outsider" conducting research with Indigenous people. Taking a cue from the many people I have met while undertaking this work, I believe that sharing my personal story can help to elucidate how my own location has shaped my work on and interest in the IRS TRC.

I was born in Japan in the small town of Kochi, but I grew up in Vancouver, daughter of a Japanese mother and Jewish-Canadian father. Although I

was born in Japan, because only one parent was Japanese, I was not granted Japanese citizenship. And because Judaism is passed through the matrilineal line, I was not considered Jewish either. It is from this position, of not quite belonging to these two cultures, that I came to see Canada as my home. Before I embarked on this project, my research revolved around cultural memory and sites of memorialization, and I was particularly interested in how traumatic pasts get represented in museum spaces. Memorials built in response to the atomic bombing in Hiroshima and the various museums dedicated to remembering the Holocaust had been my primary foci. Because of my own hybrid ethnic background, these two histories—of the atomic bombing and its aftermath in Japan and of the Holocaust in Europe—resonated with me personally. It wasn't until Canadian prime minister Stephen Harper's official apology for the IRS system in June 2008 that I began to feel myself being pulled toward trying to understand the reconciliation process in Canada.

Following Harper's apology, I wanted to read everything I could find on the history of the residential schools. Having been brought up in the Canadian educational system, I was surprised not to have heard even a whisper about this past during my own schooling. High school history classes contained little more than short tangents or reductive sections about Indigenous histories and cultures, and even these generally focused on pre–confederation-era practices and interactions. After the apology, I realized that as a Canadian and as a settler I was implicated in the history of the IRS just as much—if not more—than in the histories of Hiroshima and the Holocaust.

Early in my research, I came across Thomas King's "Coyote and the Enemy Aliens," a short story about a coyote that becomes involved in rounding up "enemy aliens." The piece is set during the internment of Japanese Canadians during World War II. As the definition of *enemy alien* changes in the story, King illustrates the fickle nature of dividing people into categories of "us" and "them."[35] While growing up in Vancouver, I had closely watched the process of redress for Japanese Canadians. Although my immediate family was not directly affected by the internment, the reverberations of those histories and events were ever present in the Japanese Canadian community. Having been stripped of property and possessions in 1942 in British Columbia, Japanese Canadians were moved into internment camps in the interior. Once the war ended in 1945, the interned were given the option of moving further east or being repatriated to Japan. The internment deeply damaged once-vibrant communities, and the subsequent relocation and repatriation tore families apart. After years of lobbying by Japanese Canadians

and their supporters, the government of Canada offered a formal apology in 1988 as well as a reparations package to those who had been interned.

As I became increasingly familiar with the Canadian process of reconciliation, I often wondered if it would be possible to relate these two experiences (of Japanese Canadians and Indigenous peoples) to each other without erasing their important differences. King uses the character of the trickster coyote to tie the two historical narratives together, offering his readers the following explanation for his strategy:

> I know the story of the Japanese internment in Canada. I know it as most Canadians know it.
>
> In pieces.
>
> From a distance.
>
> But whenever I hear the story, I think about Indians, for the treatment the Canadian government afforded Japanese people during the Second World War is strikingly similar to the treatment that the Canadian government has always afforded Native people, and whenever I hear either of these stories, a strange thing happens.
>
> I think of the other.
>
> I'm not suggesting that Native people have suffered the way the Japanese suffered or that the Japanese suffered the way Native people have. I'm simply suggesting that hatred and greed produce much the same sort of results, no matter who we practice on.[36]

King's story opens up a way of creating a particular type of Canadian narrative, one that allows for a relationship between intimacy and estrangement, where the two are allowed to coexist.[37] It provides a space for many voices, maintaining ties to an Indigenous mode of storytelling while also working to close a gap between seemingly disparate histories and drawing attention to similarities rather than differences.[38] For King, memories of distinct traumatic pasts need not be framed as competitive. Rather, they can be seen as related sites of negotiation.

In his work on "multidirectional memory," Michael Rothberg explores the idea of a noncompetitive realm of shared, public memory. Memory, Rothberg argues, is often understood as occupying a "zero-sum space" where the act of remembering one event somehow threatens to displace the memory of another. In contrast, he proposes a shift away from competitive memory to multidirectional memory. In doing so, Rothberg conceptualizes memory "as subject to ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing; as productive and not privative."[39] By understanding public memory

as multidirectional, *Fragments of Truth* seeks to frame the reconciliation process as an ongoing negotiation, one that is situated within the broader context of both national and international discourses of redress. It places my own experiences of the TRC and research on residential schools in relationship with those experiences of survivors and intergenerational survivors. By doing so I hope to remain accountable to an ethics of witnessing without seeking to center my own settler subjectivity within the narratives I tell.

To understand the constellation of conditions that gave rise to the IRS TRC and to explore how reconciliation took (and continues to take) shape, the research for this book required a range of methodological approaches: interviewing survivors and intergenerational survivors; undertaking research in archives across Canada; observing and volunteering at TRC hearings, gatherings, and events; and engaging in close readings of visual and archival artifacts. In Canada the archives of religious institutions have often been ignored by the academy, and this privileging of secular sources has left some of the material held in denominational archives out of IRS narratives.[40] In contrast, my work focuses on both government (the National Archives in Ottawa and the North Vancouver Municipal archives) and church archives (United, Anglican, and Presbyterian archives in Toronto), while also taking into account those archives collected by Native peoples (at Coqueleetza and Portage la Prairie). These archives house a wide array of materials, including old photographs, daily rosters, financial records, postcards written from staff to their families, press coverage of the schools, and personal diaries of former staff. Following Ann Stoler's lead, I sought to read these materials both *along* and *against* the grain of the archive in order to understand the conditions in which the repositories were created and cultivated and also the conditions in which their materials are now read.[41] Archives are not simply produced; they are productive. In line with Stoler's insights, I have tried to remain cognizant of the fact that archives generate both knowledge and anxiety and that they must be read as sites of contestation with the potential for resignification.

Because my research also considers what may be forgotten during the reconciliation process, the book also examines some of the material and infrastructural traces left behind by the residential system. This took the form of traveling to several sites of former residential schools that have been shut down, demolished, and/or abandoned, and to other sites that have been converted into community centers and even new schools. Visiting schools that had been abandoned or were waiting for demolition allowed me to engage with sites of absence, where disuse and disrepair could be read as an

important part of a larger historical context. Walking through the halls of these former schools, speaking with local community members, and seeking out former students who still lived or worked near the schools offered me invaluable insights into how the memory of the IRS system continues to be negotiated through the specificity of place, even if only through the forgotten histories etched into the physical structures of the schools themselves.[42]

In several of her public speaking engagements, IRS TRC commissioner Marie Wilson spoke about the necessity of being personally engaged in the reconciliation process. To illustrate this engagement, she would recount an anecdote that began with a spelling error.[43] In quickly writing or typing the word *reconciliation*, she explained, it is easy to leave out one *i*. Wilson used this observation to remind the audience that the reconciliation process is personal and requires an *i* to be present. Of course, *reconciliation* requires several *i*'s, and it involves multiple levels of engagement: personal, communal, scholarly, and artistic, to name only a few. With this in mind, and particularly in chapter 3, where I write about the use of testimony, I lean heavily on the technique of reflexivity and use the first-person voice frequently. In working with the testimonies given by Indigenous peoples, I did not want to appropriate their voices. By incorporating field notes and first person into my writing, I have sought to make my own voice and perspective more apparent to readers.

In the many months I spent traveling across Canada, I came to expect feelings of unease or confusion when participating in or watching traditional ceremonies. As an outsider to Indigenous cultures, I learned to take the lead from others, sometimes quietly observing, sometimes actively participating (when called upon). I engaged in conversations and asked questions if it seemed appropriate but tried to also see listening and silence as contributions. And at times the research process has been uncomfortable. In negotiating this discomfort, I have often thought of Paulette Regan. In positioning her own research to reconciliation in Canada, Regan has remarked that her "own deepest learning has always come from those times when [she] was in unfamiliar territory—culturally, intellectually and emotionally. . . . As members of the dominant culture, we have to be willing to be uncomfortable, to be disquieted at a deep and disturbing level—and to understand our own history, if we are to transform our colonial relationship with Indigenous peoples."[44] My research has often involved navigating new customs and protocols of which I had limited understanding. Among other things, I learned about the complicated dynamics of what can be seen and what is meant to remain hidden, about when pictures could be taken and when

photography was forbidden. I also learned to take my lead from others, and in the process I came to understand that knowledge is passed on in several ways and forms.

In 2008 I started a research blog (tracingmemory.com) as a way to share and engage with a public outside of academia, to be part of the active and ongoing dialogue about reconciliation. The content I posted included field notes, travel reports, book reviews, and personal reflections. In some cases, unexpected lines of communication were created through this site. Sometimes survivors or their family members would reach out to say that they attended the school I had just written about and that they wanted to know more. Sometimes individuals were interested in the photos I took or the people I met. One man left a comment about his father; another mentioned that their mother was a teacher at one of the schools. These exchanges—discussed further in chapters 3 and 4—would not have occurred if not for the blog. In this way, blogging became at once a tool for extending what I had come to know and a method for learning more about how the histories and legacies of the IRS system continued to reverberate.

Structure of the Book

My work on the IRS TRC led me to engage with discourses of nationhood, visual culture, and memory—exploring their entanglements and drawing attention to their various mechanisms and technologies. I paid close attention to how an imperative to remember was prescribed, represented, and interpreted by the movement for reconciliation. At the same time, I sought to explore how individuals and communities took up, negotiated, and pushed back against that imperative. In this way the goal of the book is twofold: I wanted to understand the context for the IRS TRC, of course, but I also wanted to recognize and create a space for the important ways that reconciliation took (and continues to take) place outside of the TRC. Given that this study was completed before the commission concluded its work in 2015, the results of the TRC and its subsequent final report are not the primary concern of *Fragments of Truth*. Instead, the book examines and illuminates what the commission activated, in ways that draw attention to both its failures and successes.

Chapter 1 focuses on the history of the IRS system and the vexed relationship it has with ideas of Canadian national identity, which has traditionally been framed as "benevolent" and "tolerant." In chapter 2 I explore the relationship between the process of reconciliation and the archive. Here

my exploration draws specific attention to both the demands for recognition and the silences engendered by the Indian residential school photographic archive. The role of affect and the uses of testimony and performance at IRS TRC events in Winnipeg and Inuvik are the central concerns of chapter 3, where I argue that by sharing their IRS experiences at these national gatherings, survivors often managed to create a space where the public display of affect became a powerful mode of political intervention. Finally, chapter 4 focuses on the politics of place with regard to both the IRS system and the process of reconciliation. In particular, I explore the discourses of haunting produced at and through the sites of former schools. Throughout the book, in discussing the IRS system through the lens of visual culture, I argue that any call for reconciliation is also a call for a profound shift in collective ways of seeing.

In my engagement with the work of reconciliation in Canada, I found that even when constraints were placed upon the forms and modes of memory called upon, former students were able to claim the reconciliation process for themselves. In this way the reconciliation process was (and remains) generative of new discourses. It can shift one's understanding of Canadian history and draw attention to the importance of restitution as well as reconciliation. And by unearthing old memories, the reconciliation process also engendered new ones. In arguing that visual culture played (and continues to play) a crucial role in this process, *Fragments of Truth* seeks to draw attention to the importance of Indigenous practices of self-representation and to how colonial images of indigeneity are being renegotiated and reframed by Indigenous artists and communities.

This book is but one engagement with the complex project of reconciliation in Canada. In many ways the IRS TRC expanded and challenged the way that truth commissions were understood. Because it did not mark a moment of radical change in government, it offered a unique opportunity to observe how techniques of transitional justice can be mobilized in settler nations as they work to excavate their colonial pasts and address historical injustices. The TRC itself concluded in 2015, but the work of survivors, intergenerational survivors, institutions, and settler individuals that has followed in its wake continues to expand and transform the TRC's findings, even as it undoubtedly falls short of the calls to action identified in the commission's *Final Report*. Nevertheless, the repercussions and reverberations of the IRS TRC constitute an important legacy, one that will ideally result in the strengthening of Indigenous kinship, community, and culture for generations to come.

Notes

Preface: Tracing Memory in Naomi Angel's Archive

1 Important voices in these conversations include Krista Maxwell in "Settler-Humanitarianism," Audra Simpson in "Whither Settler Colonialism," and Jill Carter's model of "survivance-intervention" in "Discarding Sympathy, Disrupting Catharsis." On resistance to reconciliation in the arts, see also Sophie McCall and Gabrielle L'Hirondelle Hill, eds., *The Land We Are*.

2 National Inquiry, *Reclaiming Power and Place*.

3 The "burden" of reconciliation as collective and shared obligation was first noted by Chief Justice Murray Sinclair, the chair of the commission; see "Reconciliation Is Not an Aboriginal Problem." More recently, the phrase *burden of reconciliation* is being used in Canadian institutions—funding bodies, universities, sites of cultural production—to draw attention to how Indigenous bodies continue to bear the burden of reconciling the nation as Indigenous intellectuals and artists are incorporated into the academy and Indigenous nations are still required to "prove" their connection to the land in court cases.

4 Deb Haaland, "My Grandparents Were Stolen from Their Families as Children. We Must Learn About This History," *Washington Post*, June 11, 2021, www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2021/06/11/deb-haaland-indigenous-boarding-schools.

5 Angel, *Before Truth*, 17.

6 See Angel, "Text or Testimony" and "A Fragmented Reconciliation Process," for instance.

7 Angel, "On Collaboration."

8 Behar, *The Vulnerable Observer*.

9 She writes about how the experience of being pregnant and a new mother affected her research in a post titled "New Beginnings."

10 Angel, "On Writing About Illness."

11 Singh, *Unthinking Mastery*.

12 Robinson, "Enchantment's Irreconcilable Connection," 212.

13 Angel, *Before Truth*, 98–99.

14 Angel, *Before Truth*, 150.

15 Angel, *Before Truth*, 29.

16 Angel, *Before Truth*, 27.

17 Christi Belcourt's *Walking with Our Sisters*, a traveling installation of moccasin vamps sewn, beaded, and embroidered by family and community members to represent stolen sisters, was the most visible of these projects as it traveled across North America. For more, see Recollet, "Glyphing Decolonial Love."

18 Lisa Jackson, personal communication with Eugenia Kisin.

19 Angel, *Before Truth*, 235.

Introduction: Reconciliation and Remembrance

1 Audio recordings of the conference are available at https://papyrus.bib.umontreal.ca/xmlui/handle/1866/2594.

2 The current number of schools recognized is 139. The federal recognition of Indian residential schools is significantly limited by the parameters established in Article 12 of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement (IRSSA). Since the IRSSA's establishment, 9,471 people have asked for 1,531 distinct institutions to be added to the IRSSA. The federal government has added nine. See Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, "Statistics on the Implementation of the Indian Residential School Agreement." More recently, a process of implementing a compensation program for attendees of day schools has been initiated for those who did not board overnight while attending a residential school.

3 In *Truth and Indignation* and "Templates and Exclusions," Ronald Niezen has explored the complexity and potential conflicts of how testimony and statement making have been shaped within the context of the truth and reconciliation events.

4 The work of testimony in relation to other atrocities is also relevant here because it has contributed to wider discourses about the role of active listening, empathy, and relations of power. See Laub and Felman, *Testimony*, and Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz*, for work on Holocaust testimony; and Krog, *Country of My Skull*, and Krog, Ratele, and Mpolweni, *There Was This Goat*, for work on the South African TRC. Cole, *Performing South Africa's Truth Commission*, provides an important critique of Krog's work. See Whitlock's "Active Remembrance" and Emberley's "'Epistemic Heterogeneity'" and *The Testimonial Uncanny* for Canadian context. I explore the dynamics of testimony further in chapter 3.

5 Although it is my hope that *Fragments of Truth* is of use to those working in the fields of visual and memory studies, it is not in the first instance a contribution to those fields in the sense that I seek to avoid resourcing histories of the residential schools, survivors' experiences, and the IRS TRC as knowledge that primarily contributes to advancing those fields. Instead, throughout the text I seek a textual ethics that situates survivors' and intergenerational survivors' words

in relationship with other discourses without making them subject to such discourse. This choice is made in an attempt to put knowledge in relationship, rather than in service to. For further critical discussion of performance studies' colonial tendencies toward "field building" through Indigenous knowledge extraction, see Robinson, "Enchantment's Irreconcilable Connection."

6 Anderson and Robertson, *Seeing Red*, 3.

7 Alfred and Corntassel, "Being Indigenous," 599.

8 This shift includes the return to names that misidentified First Nations, like the Nuu-chah-nulth being misidentified as "Nootka"; the use of the international phonetics alphabet to convey the proper pronunciation of *nations*, for example, with the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam) and Sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish) people; and the use of Halq'emeylem words *xwelmexw* and *xwelitem* to identify Stó:lō people and settlers, respectively. See Statistics Canada, "Census of Population."

9 Sanderson notes that a primary motivation in coming up with the term was "because our people didn't want to talk about sovereignty—they were afraid to even say the word. So I had to find a way of planting the seed that we are nations, and we have sovereignty." Quoted in Susan Methot, "Sol Sanderson."

10 See Anderson, "Métis," and Vowel, "You're Métis? Which of Your Parents Is an Indian?," in *Indigenous Writes*.

11 Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism," 388.

12 Garneau, "Imaginary Spaces of Conciliation," 38.

13 See Morgensen, "The Biopolitics of Settler Colonialism"; Snelgrove, Dhamoon, and Corntassel, "Unsettling Settler Colonialism"; and Day, *Alien Capital*.

14 Coombes, "Introduction: Memory and History in Settler Colonialism," 2.

15 Epp, *We Are All Treaty People*, 4.

16 This "year of reconciliation" model was subsequently implemented by cities (Vancouver, BC, June 2013–June 2014; Nanaimo, BC, June 2013–2014; Toronto, ON, November 2013–November 2014; Calgary, AB, 2014; Edmonton, AB, 2014–2015; Sioux Lookout, ON, 2017; Winnipeg, MB, 2016; Victoria, BC, 2017) and countries (in Africa, July 2015–July 2016, whereas China and Taiwan's year of reconciliation took place one year before the UN year of reconciliation in 2008).

17 For comparative analyses of apologies within Canada, situated within the global "culture of redress," see Henderson and Wakeham, eds., *Reconciling Canada*.

18 Although both "full-" and "half-caste" children were taken from their homes without the consent of their parents, particular attention was paid to the "half-caste" children in the early 1900s. They occupied a liminal space in the racial hierarchy and so posed a particular threat to white Australia. For more, see McGregor, *Imagined Destinies*.

19 Short, *Reconciliation and Colonial Power*, 177.

20 Short, *Reconciliation and Colonial Power*.

21 Auguste, "Rethinking the Nation."

22 Healy, *Forgetting Aborigines*.

23 Hayner, *Unspeakable Truths*, 24.

24 For general information on many of these commissions, see Hayner, *Unspeakable Truths*; Chapman and Ball, "The Truth of Truth Commissions"; and Grandin, "The Instruction of Great Catastrophe." Both Uganda and Chile had two truth commissions.

25 For example, the Zimbabwean commission, established in 1985, was meant to deal with human rights abuses committed under President Robert Mugabe's rule. But because it was established while Mugabe was still in power, any real investigation or disclosure of crimes committed was both dangerous and ineffective for those seeking justice. Its findings were never made public, and Mugabe's opponents continue to request a new and unbiased truth commission. See Hayner, *Unspeakable Truths*, 242–43.

26 Hayner, *Unspeakable Truths*.

27 VanAntwerpen, "Reconciliation Reconceived," 34.

28 Krog, *Country of My Skull*, 143.

29 See also Kymlicka and Bashir, "Introduction: Struggles for Inclusion," 19.

30 Garneau, "Imaginary Spaces of Conciliation and Reconciliation," 30.

31 Roland Chrisjohn, among others, has been a vocal critic of the Canadian TRC, especially since Justice LaForme stepped down as chair. To hear an interview with Dr. Chrisjohn, visit www.rabble.ca. See also Garneau, "Imaginary Spaces of Conciliation and Reconciliation."

32 For a description of how survivors resisted norms for confession and sharing traumatic experience, as well as used the TRC as a forum for expressing political messages and coming together with family, see Robinson, "Reconciliation Relations."

33 Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 5.

34 Absolom and Willett, "Putting Ourselves Forward," 98.

35 King, "Coyote and the Enemy Aliens."

36 King, "Coyote and the Enemy Aliens," 158.

37 Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, xix.

38 See Episkenew, *Taking Back Our Spirits*, and McKegney, *Magic Weapons*, for discussion of Indigenous storytelling. Storytelling will also be discussed further in chapters 3 and 4.

39 Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*, 3.

40 Miller, "Reading Photographs," 461.

41 Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain*.

42 For more on these ideas, see Taylor, "Trauma as Durational Performance"; and Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*.

43 Marie Wilson, lecture at St. Regis, University of Toronto, April 6, 2011.

44 Regan, "A Transformative Framework," 7. Regan further develops this argument in her book *Unsettling the Settler Within*.

Chapter 1: Reconciliation as a Way of Seeing

Epigraph: Quoted in Titley, *A Narrow Vision*, 50.

1 Quoted in Titley, *A Narrow Vision*, 34.

2 John Paul Tasker, "Conservative Senator Defends 'Well-Intentioned' Residential School System," *CBC News*, March 8, 2017, www.cbc.ca/news/politics/residential-school-system-well-intentioned-conservative-senator-1.4015115.

3 Prager and Glover, eds., *Dilemmas of Reconciliation*.

4 Canadian history is often split into five distinct stages. The first comprises a long period where Indigenous peoples lived and interacted with one another on the land now known as Canada. The second historical period begins with the founding of New France in 1607. This period was also marked by conflicts between the British and the French for control in Canada, with the British eventually establishing themselves as the victor. With the Royal Proclamation of 1763, the third stage in Canadian history, commonly known as the colonial period, began. Confederation, which marks the fourth period of Canadian history, signals the epoch of nation building: completion of the national railway occurred during this stage, uniting the country both physically and symbolically. Historians define the fifth stage as the modern period, beginning in the twentieth century. For more on this history, see Mookerjea, Szeman, and Faurschou, "Introduction: Between Empires."

5 Quoted in Dickason and Newbigging, *A Concise History of Canada's First Nations*, 355n1.

6 The practices of orality and the skill of storytelling have been thought inferior to written documentation about the past. This has slowly begun to change. One major turning point was the landmark court case *Delgamuukw v. British Columbia* (1997). The case, after several appeals, established that Indigenous oral histories could be submitted as evidence in land claims cases in Canada. For a brief summary of the Delgamuukw case, see "A Lay Person's Guide to Delgamuukw."

7 Bain Attwood writes of a parallel situation in Australia where Aborigines were not considered to be the proper subjects of history. As an "ancient" people, they belonged to the discipline of anthropology, not history. See Attwood, *Telling the Truth About Aboriginal History*, 16.

8 Mackey, *The House of Difference*, 9.

9 See Hanson, "The Sixties Scoop & Aboriginal Child Welfare"; and Cardinal, *Ohpikiihaakan-Ohpihmeh (Raised Somewhere Else)*.

10 Scholars have both built upon and critiqued Anderson's work as different models of nationhood became apparent. Notably, Partha Chatterjee's work on anticolonial ideas of nationhood has complicated Anderson's work. Focusing on Bengali drama in India, Chatterjee objects to Anderson's treatment of ideas