

DENYING INDIGENOUS EDUCATION IN BRITISH COLUMBIA:

*Examples from Wei Wai Kum (Campbell River)
and We Wei Kai (Cape Mudge)*

KATE DUBENSKY AND HELEN RAPTIS*

THERE IS A PREVAILING narrative in Canada about the role of education in Canadian Indian policy.¹ In this telling, education was at the centre of attempts to assimilate Indigenous children, allegedly “alleviating” them from the conditions of their culture and bringing them into the national body politic and full citizenship.² However, historical accounts reveal that this narrative is insufficient to describe federal management of Indigenous education.³ Educational realities for Indigenous children were marred by federal policies and local practices designed to limit students’ educational opportunities and to ensure that Indigenous people remained “citizens minus.”⁴

This article demonstrates that, rather than assimilating the Wei Wai Kum and We Wei Kai nations – located, respectively, in Campbell River and on Quadra Island, British Columbia – through forced schooling, the federal government denied their repeated requests for formal education. These denials began at Cape Mudge in 1872 and recurred consistently

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¹ Throughout this article, “Indian,” “Native,” and “Aboriginal” are used to reflect the terminology of the eras under examination and the secondary research literature from which the research draws.

² See, for example, Marie Battiste, “Micmac Literacy and Cognitive Assimilation,” in *Indian Education in Canada*, Vol. 1: *The Legacy*, ed. Jean Barman, Yvonne Hébert, and Don McCaskill, 23-44 (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1986); J.R. Miller, *Shingwauk’s Vision: A History of Native Residential Schools* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 102-3; and Brian Titley, *A Narrow Vision: Duncan Campbell Scott and the Administration of Indian Affairs in Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1986).

³ While on-reserve day schools in Cape Mudge and Campbell River are the primary focus of this article, Indian education in Canada refers to industrial, residential, and day schools.

⁴ H.B. Hawthorn, ed., *A Survey of the Contemporary Indians of Canada: Economic, Political, Educational Needs and Policies, Part I* (Ottawa: Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 1966), 6.

throughout the next seventy years, until 1955, when local public and Indigenous schools were integrated after the federal government amended the Indian Act to enable the schooling of Indigenous children alongside non-Indigenous students.⁵ The experiences of the Wei Wai Kum and We Wei Kai nations provide a particularly good example of what was a ubiquitously negligent federal Indigenous education program. As this article describes, the experiences of the Wei Wai Kum and We Wei Kai nations reveal the vast disparities between official colonial stances towards Indigenous education and the realities of Indigenous communities. Despite repeated requests for schooling from the Indigenous peoples located in Campbell River and Cape Mudge, and despite their cooperation with local Methodist missionaries, the federal government repeatedly ignored, stalled, underfunded, and failed to provide the educational opportunities that had been promised.

INDIAN EDUCATION POLICY

Canada's Indian education policy has been an integral component of its broader Indian policy, the basic doctrines of which were developed in the nineteenth century leading up to Confederation. Initially, European colonizers depended on Indigenous peoples for access to natural resources to support international trade, particularly in animal furs. Aboriginal populations were also instrumental in defending colonial interests against American incursions.⁶ Originating as a branch of the British military in the late 1700s, the Indian Department was first tasked with forging alliances with Indigenous populations against the French. In exchange for loyalty to British interests, the Indian Department offered gifts and the alleged protection of Indigenous lands from settler encroachment.⁷ In the territories that now comprise Canada, there was no consistent set of guidelines from the colonial offices in London. As a result, Indian policy varied widely across regions, with more administration in Upper and Lower Canada, and less in the Maritimes and British Columbia, reflecting the disorganization and relative unimportance of the de-

⁵ In 1951, the Canadian government amended the Indian Act, which permitted previously segregated on-reserve Indigenous children to be educated in provincial schools. See Helen Raptis, "Implementing Integrated Education Policy for On-Reserve Aboriginal Children in British Columbia," *Historical Studies in Education* 20 (2008): 118–46.

⁶ Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada, *Canada's Residential Schools: The History, Part 1, Origins to 1939* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015), 49.

⁷ Titley, *Narrow Vision*, 1; Brian Titley, *The Indian Commissioners: Agents of the State and Indian Policy in Canada's Prairie West, 1873–1932* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2009), 3.

partment within the larger colonial apparatus.⁸ By the early 1800s, the importance of Indigenous military alliances had waned, and the Indian Department was transferred to civilian control. As the economy shifted, the Indian Department took responsibility for managing the impacts of settlement expansion on Indigenous communities in Upper and Lower Canada.⁹ By the late 1800s, as more settlers took up residence, Indigenous communities were increasingly displaced and suffered the effects of disease, alcohol and the decline of the traditional activities, such as fishing and hunting, through which they had sustained themselves.¹⁰ In the words of J.R. Miller, “the Indian was now a liability to people who wished to reduce the forests to tidy farms, tame the rivers by means of canals to haul their goods, and develop manufacturing.”¹¹

At the time of Confederation in 1867, the Canadian government became increasingly concerned about the place of Indigenous peoples in the evolving nation and implemented increasingly restrictive measures by which to limit their presence.¹² Initially justified as a mechanism for protecting Indigenous peoples from settler mistreatment, the Indian Act (first signed in 1876) became increasingly restrictive with subsequent revisions. For example, amendments in 1880 enabled the federal government to replace traditional Indian governance structures with elected councils that had limited powers and that were subject to government dismissal. In 1884, the sale and gifting of munitions to Indians were banned in Manitoba and the Northwest Territories. West Coast ceremonies such as the potlatch, and Plains ceremonies such as the Sun Dance, were outlawed in 1885.¹³ By 1898, federal ministers of Indian affairs no longer needed band members’ consent to spend band funds or to lease Indian lands.¹⁴ Worsening the situation in British Columbia, provincial authorities refused to adhere to federal guidelines for reserve land allocation. Whereas governments east of the Rocky Mountains nego-

⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁰ Olive Patricia Dickason and William Newbigging, *A Concise History of Canada's First Nations* (Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press, 2010), 56.

¹¹ Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision*, 62. See also Patricia E. Roy, “McBride of McKenna-McBride: Premier Richard McBride and the Indian Question in British Columbia,” *BC Studies* 172 (2011/12): 35–36.

¹² Cole Harris, *Making Native Space: Colonialism, Resistance, and Reserves in British Columbia* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2002), xxiii.

¹³ TRC, *Canada's Residential Schools*, 109–10.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 110.

tiated reserve allotments of one hundred acres or more per Aboriginal family, British Columbia set the upper limit at merely ten acres.¹⁵

In addition to using legislation, the Canadian government aimed to assimilate Indigenous peoples into the national body through an education system that promoted English language instruction,¹⁶ Christian morality, permanent settlement, and agricultural work.¹⁷ Post-Confederation Canadian Indian policy was guided by the assumption that Indigenous populations would be absorbed into the dominant culture, and education was central to this aim.¹⁸ From “its earliest origins, aboriginal education in Canada has been predicated on the belief that its purpose was to eradicate and replace the languages and cultures of Canada’s aboriginal peoples.”¹⁹

From Confederation to the early 1950s, Indigenous children were to be educated separately from their non-Indigenous counterparts. Under the terms of the British North America Act, 1867, the federal government was to oversee Indigenous education, whereas control of non-Indigenous education became the purview of the provinces. With church-run schooling already offered by Roman Catholic, Methodist, Anglican, and Presbyterian missionaries, the federal government opted to keep the costs of Indian education low by building on this existing infrastructure.²⁰ Already well established in Indigenous communities across Canada, religious groups accepted federal funding for capital costs to build on-reserve day schools and maintained responsibility for their administration and staffing.²¹

In the early 1870s, Indian affairs officials were hopeful about the educational potential for on-reserve day schools and saw their added potential to influence the whole community in which they were located.²² Much like rural schools in provincial systems, on-reserve day schools usually consisted of one or two sparsely furnished rooms with a wood-burning

¹⁵ Kenneth Brealey, “Travels from Point Ellice: Peter O’Reilly and the Indian Reserve System in British Columbia,” *BC Studies* 115/16 (1997/98): 181–236.

¹⁶ Keith D. Smith, *Liberalism, Surveillance, and Resistance: Indigenous Communities in Western Canada, 1877–1927* (Edmonton: Athabasca University Press, 2009), 49.

¹⁷ TRC, *Canada’s Residential Schools*, 20.

¹⁸ Titley, *Narrow Vision*, 4.

¹⁹ Jerry Paquette, *Aboriginal Self-Government and Education in Canada* (Kingston: Institute of Intergovernmental Relations, 1986), 33.

²⁰ Helen Raptis with members of the Tsimshian Nation, *What We Learned: Two Generations Reflect on Tsimshian Education and the Day Schools* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2016), 28; Titley, *Narrow Vision*, 22.

²¹ Titley, *Narrow Vision*, 15.

²² Helen Raptis, “Exploring the Factors Prompting British Columbia’s First Integration Initiative: The Case of Port Essington Indian Day School,” *History of Education Quarterly* 51, 4 (2011): 524.

stove to heat the room and provide students with a means for warming lunches. As with rural public schools, Indian day schools faced many challenges, including poor attendance and an inability to attract certified teachers.²³ By the early twentieth century, Indigenous adults – like other rural inhabitants – were increasingly sustaining themselves through a mixture of “wage work, small-scale commodity production (such as farming or fishing), subsistence fishing, hunting, and gathering.”²⁴ These industries required parents to travel, leading to poor school attendance among their children, who tended to travel with them. Rather than accommodate the seasonal work cycle, government and school officials attributed poor attendance to parental “indifference” and “apathy” towards school, prompting the long-held but erroneous belief that Indigenous peoples did not value education.²⁵

Nevertheless, historians have long illustrated that, rather than eschew Western-style educational opportunities, many Indigenous peoples sought these out and embraced them. Maureen Atkinson shows that, even prior to Confederation, the Tsimshian of northwest British Columbia “desired (and even demanded) missionary educators” who could help communities to become literate and, thus, more independent in a changing world.²⁶ James Miller notes that “it was the Natives [not government officials] who proposed the inclusion of guarantees of schooling in the treaties.”²⁷ And John Milloy indicates that, in Upper Canada, as early as the 1840s, “band after band responded positively” to the introduction of Western-style schooling, contributing “one quarter

²³ Ibid. This was exacerbated during the 1940s when Indian day school teachers and students found employment in war-related industries. See Library and Archives Canada (LAC), Government of Canada, *Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs, 1943*, 149 and 151.

²⁴ John Lutz, *Makúk: A New History of Aboriginal-White Relations* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008), 23–24.

²⁵ W.D. Hamilton, *Federal Indian Day Schools of the Maritimes* (Fredericton: Micmac-Maliseet Institute, University of New Brunswick, 1986), 14.

²⁶ Maureen L. Atkinson, “The ‘Accomplished’ Odille Quintal Morison: Tsimshian Cultural Intermediary of Metlakatla, British Columbia,” in *Recollecting: Lives of Aboriginal Women of the Canadian Northwest and Borderlands*, ed. Sarah Carter and Patricia McCormack (Edmonton: Athabasca University Press, 2011), 141. In some cases, Indigenous people found themselves teaching within the very system that sought to assimilate them. For evidence of how such teachers subverted the assimilative colonial agenda, see Martha E. Walls, “‘The Teacher That Cannot Understand Their Language Should Not Be Allowed’: Colonialism, Resistance, and Female Mi’kmaq Teachers in New Brunswick Day Schools, 1900–1923,” *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 22, 1 (2011): 35–67; and Alison Norman, “‘Teachers Amongst Their Own People’: Kanyen’kehá:ka (Mohawk) Women Teachers in Nineteenth-Century Tyendinaga and Grand River, Ontario,” *Historical Studies in Education* 29, 1 (2017): 32–56.

²⁷ Miller, *Shingwauk’s Vision*, 98.

of their annual treaty payments for an education fund.”²⁸ In the words of Thomas Peace, the “creation of schools within Indigenous communities was brought about not so much by a desire to replicate colonial society as much as it was a response to it.”²⁹

Seldom did federal officials react favourably to parental requests for schools. A case in point is the community at Sechelt, British Columbia, as discussed by John Milloy. Between 1901 and 1903, the Sechelt Band submitted three petitions to the Department of Indian Affairs (DIA) for the construction of a boarding school close to the village.³⁰ After being rebuffed by government officials, community members proceeded with building the school, forcing the government to reimburse them for construction and to authorize a sum of one thousand dollars from the band’s budget for equipment costs.³¹ The degree to which Indigenous communities elsewhere took educational matters into their own hands in this way is unclear.

By the late 1870s, Indian affairs officials had concluded that day schools were “a very imperfect means of education” due to poor student attendance, the inability of schools to attract certified teachers, and the cost of upkeep.³² Early Canadian Indian education policy was revised following the recommendations of the 1879 Davin Report – commissioned by the federal government – assessing the American system of Indian boarding schools. Founded on the belief that removal from the allegedly negative influences of home and culture was the most effective path towards assimilation, this practice was implemented in Canada, through large, off-reserve industrial boarding schools for older children and smaller boarding schools nearer to reserves for younger children.³³ To save costs, the schools were to be operated by missionaries who had already demonstrated an interest in assimilating Indigenous peoples into Christianity.

²⁸ John Milloy, *A National Crime: The Canadian Government and the Residential School System, 1879-1986* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba, 1999), 17.

²⁹ Thomas Peace, “Borderlands, Primary Sources, and the Longue Durée: Contextualizing Colonial Schooling at Odanak, Lorette, and Kahnawake, 1600-1850,” *Historical Studies in Education* 29, 1 (2017): 10.

³⁰ Milloy, *National Crime*, 59. The petition was witnessed by both the community’s missionary, E. Chirouse, and British Columbia’s superintendent of Indian affairs, Arthur Vowell, illustrating Keith Smith’s point that “undisguised animosity” existed between the various actors allegedly working on behalf of Indigenous communities. See Smith, *Liberalism, Surveillance, and Resistance*, 55.

³¹ Milloy, *National Crime*, 60.

³² Ken Coates, “A Very Imperfect Means of Education: Indian Day Schools in the Yukon Territory, 1890-1955,” in Barman et al., *Indian Education in Canada*, 132-49.

³³ Jean Barman, Yvonne Hébert Y, and Don McCaskill, “The Legacy of the Past: An Overview,” in Barman et al., *Indian Education in Canada*, 6.

Early Indian school policy had prescribed limited educational goals. Focused on enculturation and assimilation, lessons were “limited to basic education combined with half-day practical training in agriculture, the crafts, or household duties in order to prepare pupils for their expected future existence on the lower fringes of the dominant society.”³⁴ However, assimilation was not so easily achieved, and, even with only limited instruction, Indigenous students were leaving school with basic literacy and an understanding of the dominant culture, with some rejoining their communities and others choosing to enter the labour market, where they presented unwelcome competition to the dominant society. For a few decades, federal officials and school administrators struggled with the perception that even underfunded, limited-instruction boarding schools gave Indigenous students an unfair advantage. Then, in 1910, education policy was revised to include an even more limited curriculum and even more basic skills, ensuring that Indigenous education would remain minimal. By 1923, both boarding and industrial schools had been phased out in favour of “residential” schools in which children aged six to sixteen resided long-term away from their home communities and received the most basic levels of instruction. From the 1920s to the 1950s, the federal government favoured residential over day schools, believing that assimilation would be hastened if Indian children were removed from the linguistic and cultural influences of their families.³⁵

The federal government’s reticence to build day schools was based not only on ideology but also on fiscal parsimony. Reforms to the DIA after 1896 had brought sweeping reductions in staff and salaries, while centralizing decision-making power in the hands of senior federal officials such as Duncan Campbell Scott, who was an accountant concerned with cutting costs but inexperienced in Indigenous matters.³⁶ Scott’s thrift reflected the general sentiments of the DIA under the direction of Clifford Sifton, minister of the interior, who was also responsible for Indian affairs.³⁷ In 1909, the DIA created the position of superintendent of education and appointed Scott. When Scott was appointed superintendent general of Indian affairs in 1913, he became the chief engineer of Indian policy until his retirement in 1932.³⁸

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Raptis et al., *What We Learned*, 29.

³⁶ Titley, *Narrow Vision*, 17.

³⁷ D.J. Hall, *Clifford Sifton*, Vol. 1: *The Young Napoleon, 1861-1900* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1981), 270.

³⁸ Titley, *A Narrow Vision*, 22.

While official federal rhetoric supported residential schools as the path to enculturation and enfranchisement, Canadian Indian policy reflected a different priority. At its very best, Canada's residential school system instituted discriminatory policies directed at limiting the educational outcomes of Indigenous children, including the half-day program that had children in the classroom for only a few hours each day with the rest of the day devoted to manual labour and domestic duties; curricula designed to ensure Indigenous children would move into the lowest rungs of society; church-run schools staffed by untrained missionaries rather than certified teachers; and consistent underfunding compared to that provided to provincial school systems.³⁹ Overall, Indigenous schools constituted a system that institutionalized unequal outcomes for the children who attended. Barman, Hébert, and McCaskill note that, throughout the first half of the twentieth century, Indigenous parents and community leaders "repeatedly brought the discriminatory and inherently contradictory conditions of schooling to the attention of the Department of Indian Affairs," but little was done.⁴⁰ Despite government legislation to phase out the residential schools in 1951, it would take over sixty-five years before the full horrors of the system would be fully revealed through the hearings and reports of Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Many Indigenous children who attended residential schools developed a hatred for themselves and their families after being berated for their alleged cultural inferiority, provided with insufficient nourishment, and subjected to physical as well as sexual abuse. As a result, integration into either mainstream society or their home communities was hampered.⁴¹

As this article explains, in the cases of Campbell River and Cape Mudge, the Canadian government denied community requests for schools despite extolling the virtues of education for assimilation, illustrating Cole Harris's contention that "colonialism spoke with many voices."⁴²

³⁹ Jean Barman, "Schooled for Inequality: The Education of British Columbia Aboriginal Children," in *Children, Teachers, and Schools in the History of British Columbia*, ed. Mona Gleason and Jean Barman, (Edmonton: Brush Education, 2003), 55-56.

⁴⁰ Barman et al., "Legacy of the Past," 8-9.

⁴¹ Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision*, 418-19. See also Agnes Grant, *No End of Grief: Indian Residential Schools in Canada* (Winnipeg: Pemmican, 1996); Theodore Fontaine, *Broken Circle: The Dark Legacy of Indian Residential Schools* (Vancouver: Heritage House, 2010); and Sylvia Olsen, Rita Morris, and Ann Sam, *No Time to Say Good Bye: Children's Stories of Kuper Island* (Winlaw: Sono Nis Press, 2002).

⁴² Harris, *Making Native Space*, xvii.

THE WEI WAI KUM (CAMPBELL RIVER) AND WE WEI KAI (CAPE MUDGE) NATIONS

Located 223 kilometres north of Victoria, British Columbia, on the east coast of Vancouver Island, the city of Campbell River is part of the traditional territory of the Wei Wai Kum Nation. A short distance off the coast of Campbell River is Quadra Island and the home of the We Wei Kai Nation, located at Cape Mudge. The Wei Wai Kum and We Wei Kai nations are members of the Kwak'waka-speaking group that migrated south in the nineteenth century.⁴³ It is thought that a smallpox epidemic ravaged the K'omox Coast Salish populations that originally inhabited that area of the Salish Strait in the decade prior to European contact in 1792, leaving them vulnerable to invasion. The Kwak'waka – or Southern Kwakiutl – people of Quadra Island and Campbell River are now politically separate from their ancestral kin, the Kwakwaka'wakw, located in the Queen Charlotte Strait, and the Kwagu't, near Fort Rupert. The Kwakwaka'wakw, originally comprised of seven or more large kin groups, had been trading furs for metal tools, blankets, guns, and whisky from approximately 1800 CE, and they had a significant military advantage over the K'omox.⁴⁴ We Wei Kai elder, Harry Assu, descendant of Chief Billy Assu (1867–1965), reported that the Cape Mudge area was desired for the rich stocks of salmon that surrounded it, with all five species of that fish being available twelve months of the year.⁴⁵ Colonial settlement of the area began in earnest with the 1858 gold rush, which brought the devastation of disease and alcohol, decimating Indigenous populations and reducing the Kwak'waka “from a proud group amassing increasing wealth and territory in the 1830s to a dwindling population confined to reserves in the 1880s.”⁴⁶

THE STRUGGLE FOR SCHOOLING AT CAPE MUDGE, 1892–1924

Even before missionaries arrived at Cape Mudge, Chief Billy Assu (1867–1965) of the We Wei Kai Nation knew of the political wrangling of Roman Catholic, Anglican, and Methodist churches vying for federal funding and control over Indigenous education.⁴⁷ Chief Assu was aware

⁴³ Jeanette Taylor, *River City: A History of Campbell River and the Discovery Islands* (Madeira Park: Harbour Publishing, 1999), 26.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Harry Assu, *Assu of Cape Mudge: Recollections of a Coastal Indian Chief* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1989), 41.

⁴⁶ Taylor, *River City*, 32.

⁴⁷ Assu, *Assu of Cape Mudge*, 107.

of problems at the Anglican-run Alert Bay Industrial School – later renamed St. Michael's Residential School – and of complaints from parents who wanted to keep their children closer to home. Hoping to maintain some influence over education, Chief Assu negotiated with Methodist missionaries and requested that a day school be built at Cape Mudge in 1892. Taylor recounts, “in the late 1880s the Wewaikai people of Cape Mudge invited the Methodist Church to send them a teacher, as they attempted to gain an advantage in the new society unfolding around them.”⁴⁸ Chief Assu was known for his wise counsel and guidance of his people, through which they had “become one of the best-educated and more prosperous bands of all the Canadian Indians.”⁴⁹ His political astuteness and concern over educational matters contradict ubiquitous depictions in the official DIA correspondence of Indigenous peoples of Canada as resistant to, or having little interest in, schooling.⁵⁰

In September 1892 conditions were favourable for gaining approval to build a school at Cape Mudge. There were Methodist missionaries in place willing to oversee building and operating the school as well as enthusiasm from the community, which included forty children.⁵¹ The Methodist request for a six-hundred-dollar grant was supported by the local Indian agent,⁵² and it was subsequently recommended for approval to the deputy superintendent of Indian affairs in Ottawa.⁵³ By January 1892, the grant was officially approved, though the vision for a day school was far from realized.⁵⁴ Correspondence between the deputy minister

⁴⁸ Taylor, *River City*, 34.

⁴⁹ Helen A. Mitchell, *Diamond in the Rough: A History of Campbell River* (Campbell River: The Upper Islander, 1966), 5.

⁵⁰ For a discussion of Native peoples' alleged disinterest in education, see Ken Coates “A Very Imperfect Means of Education,” 132-49; E. Brian Titley, “Duncan Campbell Scott and Indian Educational Policy,” in *An Imperfect Past: Education and Society in Canadian History*, ed. J. Donald Wilson (Vancouver: Canadian History in Education Association, 1984), 143; John Leslie, “The Bagot Commission: Developing Corporate Memory for the Indian Department,” in *Historical Papers of the Canadian Historical Association*, presented in Ottawa, 1982.

⁵¹ Minister James H. White and Secretary C.M. Tate to Indian Superintendent A.W. Vowell Esq., 26 August 1892, LAC, Indian Affairs, RG 10, “Kwawkwalth Agency, Cape Mudge Day School,” vol. 6386, file 805-5, pt. 1; Office of the Indian Superintendent to the Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, Ottawa, 6 September 1892, LAC, Indian Affairs, RG 10, “Kwawkwalth Agency, Cape Mudge Day School,” vol. 6386, file 805-5, pt. 1.

⁵² Indian Agent R.H. Pidcock to Indian Superintendent A.W. Vowell, December 1892, LAC, Indian Affairs, RG 10, “Kwawkwalth Agency, Cape Mudge Day School,” vol. 6386, file 805-5, pt. 1.

⁵³ Indian Superintendent A.W. Vowell to Deputy Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Ottawa, LAC, Indian Affairs, RG 10, “Kwawkwalth Agency, Cape Mudge Day School,” vol. 6386, file 805-5, pt. 1.

⁵⁴ President BC Methodist Conference J.H. White to Indian Superintendent A.W. Vowell, 12 January 1893, LAC, Indian Affairs, RG 10, “Kwawkwalth Agency, Cape Mudge Day School,” vol. 6386, file 805-5, pt. 1.

and Methodist missionary R. Galloway in Cape Mudge shows that the operating budget for the 1891-92 fiscal year had funds available to cover the costs for the school, yet budgetary approval for the six hundred dollars was slow to be granted.⁵⁵

In 1893, plans for the school were drawn up and submitted to Ottawa for approval and release of the funds, but even after the federal grant had been approved, negotiations continued between Ottawa and the local Indian agent, R.H. Pidcock. For unstated reasons, federal officials were reluctant to commit to the school and asked for confirmation that it “was being conducted purely in the interest of Indian children,”⁵⁶ implying that the Methodists might have another agenda. Over several months, the school budget was questioned, plans were sent back by Ottawa, and assurances were returned by Agent Pidcock from Cape Mudge.⁵⁷ Meanwhile, in 1892, the Methodist missionary Galloway had begun teaching the children in “a small Indian house on the Indian reserve, no school room being yet built.”⁵⁸ After two years of bureaucratic wrangling, the Cape Mudge Day School was finally built in 1894, largely due to the persistence of Agent Pidcock and the Methodist missionaries in the area in the face of prolonged struggles with DIA officials in Victoria and Ottawa.

For unknown reasons, there is a gap in the official records regarding the Cape Mudge Day School, and the next documented reports available begin in 1907. Somehow, in the fourteen intervening years, Indigenous attitudes towards schooling at Cape Mudge changed radically. When records begin again in 1907, the We Wei Kai were no longer cooperating with the missionary school, and there were significant attendance issues even though members of the community had expressed willingness to send their children to school regularly in order to prevent its closure.⁵⁹ By 1910, the situation had not improved and discussions to close the school continued. By this time, attendance issues – often explained by seasonal migration practices that took the community away from the

⁵⁵ Deputy Minister to R. Galloway, 19 September 1892, LAC, Indian Affairs, RG 10, “Kwawkewlth Agency, Cape Mudge Day School,” vol. 6386, file 805-5, pt. 1.

⁵⁶ A.W. Vowell to Deputy Superintendent of Indian Affairs, 26 May 1892, LAC, Indian Affairs, RG 10, “Kwawkewlth Agency, Cape Mudge Day School,” vol. 6386, file 805-5, pt. 1.

⁵⁷ Indian Agent R.H. Pidcock to A.W. Vowell, August 1893, LAC, Indian Affairs, RG 10, “Kwawkewlth Agency, Cape Mudge Day School,” vol. 6386, file 805-5, pt. 1.

⁵⁸ Indian Agent R.H. Pidcock to A.W. Vowell, 7 July 1893, LAC, Indian Affairs, RG 10, “Kwawkewlth Agency, Cape Mudge Day School,” vol. 6386, file 805-5, pt. 1. In this letter Pidcock also confirmed, without any further elaboration, that the school was “conducted entirely in the interests of the Indian children.”

⁵⁹ Indian Agent W.M. Halliday to A.W. Vowell, 8 April 1907, LAC, Indian Affairs, RG 10, “Kwawkewlth Agency, Cape Mudge Day School,” vol. 6386, file 805-1, pt. 1.

reserve for periods of time – were accompanied by very low enrolment, indicating that parents were resisting sending their children to school.⁶⁰ Correspondence shows that Indian Agent Halliday attributed the low enrolment to the poor efforts of the teacher, J.E. Rendle, who had allegedly “been only half hearted on school matters.”⁶¹ When Ottawa suggested replacing the teacher,⁶² Rendle replied with a lengthy five-page handwritten letter in which he presented the situation from a very different perspective. Rendle, who had already been stationed in Cape Mudge for seven years, was quick to acknowledge that, “for the last three years[,] the school [had] been a failure.” However, rather than a lack of effort on his part, or a lack of interest on the part of the community, Rendle pointed to land and resource issues that were adversely affecting life at Cape Mudge.⁶³

The school had flourished and attendance was strong until the winter of 1907–08, when the community had a visit from Capilano Joe, a “well known political agitator who first started the controversy in BC re Indian lands.”⁶⁴ Rendle chronicled how Capilano Joe’s visit changed conditions at Cape Mudge and stirred in the people political resistance to a bureaucratic mire that restricted their access to timber. Due to a dispute between the provincial and federal governments over the allocation of land title, the We Wei Kai were not allowed to work the timber on their lands. As a result, the We Wei Kai had to travel to find work elsewhere, taking their children with them. Combined with regular seasonal fishing and canning work undertaken several kilometres away, the community was very seldom at its village at Cape Mudge.⁶⁵ Rendle noted that, in September 1910, “the people asked permission of the Department to exchange the timber on a portion of the reserve for a building suitable for their children to sleep and eat in during their parents’ absence,” a boarding house that would have enabled the children to stay at Cape Mudge and attend school, but “this request was refused by the Department on account of the dispute between the BC government over

⁶⁰ S. Stewart to W.M. Halliday, 28 July 1910, LAC, Indian Affairs, RG 10, “Kwawkewlth Agency, Cape Mudge Day School,” vol. 6386, file 805-1, pt. 1.

⁶¹ W.M. Halliday to J.D. McLean, 1 October 1910, LAC, Indian Affairs, RG 10, “Kwawkewlth Agency, Cape Mudge Day School,” vol. 6386, file 805-1, pt. 1.

⁶² J.D. McLean to Superintendent of Methodist Schools Rev. T. Ferrier, 11 October 1910, LAC, Indian Affairs, RG 10, “Kwawkewlth Agency, Cape Mudge Day School,” vol. 6386, file 805-1, pt. 1.

⁶³ J.E. Rendle to Rev. T. Ferrier, 19 November 1910, LAC, Indian Affairs, RG 10, “Kwawkewlth Agency, Cape Mudge Day School,” vol. 6386, file 805-1, pt. 1.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

land titles.”⁶⁶ In spite of the fact that the We Wei Kai “earnestly desire[d] their children to go to school, [they could not] better their condition in that respect on account of existing conditions.”⁶⁷ Ottawa ignored both the issue of the land dispute and the request for a boarding school, and, in spite of Rendle’s account, officials continued to insist that “the Indians [did] not appreciate the privilege of having a school at their door” and suggested that the children be sent to industrial schools elsewhere.⁶⁸ The government’s response to the We Wei Kai was in keeping with the DIA’s broader policy of parsimony exercised by Deputy Superintendent Duncan Campbell Scott. Indeed, DIA secretary and chief clerk J.D. McLean had been known to exclaim that it was best to prepare Indian students to earn their livelihood on their own reserves and not “to compete” with “white people.”⁶⁹ The school was closed in 1918.⁷⁰

Even with the school closure, requests to Ottawa for a boarding school at Cape Mudge continued, with the We Wei Kai offering to “assist financially and with a grant of land,” and with both the Methodist Church and Indian Agent Halliday offering support.⁷¹ Yet Ottawa also refused this request, “owing to a lack of funds.”⁷² By December 1919, the Cape Mudge Day School was reopened with a new teacher, M.B. Wright. Advocacy for a boarding school for the children of Cape Mudge continued through the following year, and plans were extended to offer education to Wei Wai Kum children from Campbell River, who had never had access to school. Correspondence shows how, in spite of government refusal, the We Wei Kai and Methodist missionaries collaborated to arrange a cost-sharing agreement, with Chief Assu pledging “\$10,000 from their capital account for the building of a boarding school” in addition to a previous offer of ten acres (four hectares) of land and a pledge for another

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ J.D. McLean to Rev. T. Ferrier, 12 September 1917, LAC, Indian Affairs, RG 10, “Kwawkewlth Agency, Cape Mudge Day School,” vol. 6386, file 805-1, pt. 1. McLean’s suggestion that students attend industrial schools elsewhere was unacceptable to parents since the only options were located far away: Ahousat (100 kilometres away); Alberni (149 kilometres away); and Alert Bay (132 kilometres away). The closest day schools to Campbell River were at Ladysmith (178 kilometres away) and at Ahousat (100 kilometres away). As a result, children did not have the option of attending day schools elsewhere.

⁶⁹ Hall, *Clifford Sifton*, 270.

⁷⁰ J.D. McLean to Rev. T. Ferrier, 19 April 1918, LAC, Indian Affairs, RG 10, “Kwawkewlth Agency, Cape Mudge Day School,” vol. 6386, file 805-1, pt. 1.

⁷¹ R.C. Scott to Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, 26 November 1919, LAC, Indian Affairs, RG 10, “Kwawkewlth Agency, Cape Mudge Day School,” vol. 6038, file 156-6A-1, pt. 1.

⁷² Rev. R.C. Scott to Rev. A. Barner, 29 September 1920, LAC, Indian Affairs, RG 10, “Kwawkewlth Agency, Cape Mudge Day School,” vol. 6038, file 156-6A-1, pt. 1.

\$10,000 from the Methodist Church, leaving only \$10,000 remaining for the federal government to contribute.⁷³ Yet, still, approval was withheld and the boarding school was not built. The We Wei Kai's documented support for education runs counter to government depictions of them as being without an aptitude for or interest in education.⁷⁴ The We Wei Kai demonstrated their commitment to education in spite of governmental interference and obstacles.

Further evidence for the We Wei Kai's support for education is illustrated in the community's backing of adequate lodging for the missionary schoolteacher, Florence Howard, who moved into the area with her two daughters in 1921 and requested federal funding to build a teacherage.⁷⁵ Howard's request for twelve hundred dollars was supported by Reverend Ferrier as well as by the community. In August 1922, Chief Assu wrote a petition to the DIA in which he cited his community's abandonment of the potlatch, its growing population, its appreciation of the educational work being done on its reserve, and its hope for the continuation of this work in support of the grant for a teacherage. Chief Assu additionally pledged "to supply all needed labour for the erection of the said teacher's residence, as well as the transportation of materials from point landed by steamer to the building site, AND [*sic*] to grant to the Department of Indian Affairs one half acre of land, as a site for the above teacher's residence."⁷⁶ To this the DIA replied that the government had no funds left in that year's budget and expressed its hope that the money could be found in the next fiscal year.⁷⁷

Over the next few months, the offer of labour made by Chief Assu was discussed several times by the secretary of Indian affairs in Ottawa, J.D. McLean, and the local Indian agent, W.M. Halliday,⁷⁸ who informed the DIA that the work could "go ahead any time after the first of April" in order to complete the project before the We Wei Kai took up their seasonal fishing at the end of June.⁷⁹ Yet, while the DIA confirmed that

⁷³ D.C. Scott to Rev. R.C. Scott, 11 December 1919, LAC, Indian Affairs, RG 10, "Kwawkewlth Agency, Cape Mudge Day School," vol. 6386, file 805-1, pt. 1.

⁷⁴ See, for example, Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision*, 133.

⁷⁵ Florence Howard to Indian Agent Halliday, LAC, Indian Affairs, RG 10, "Kwawkewlth Agency, Cape Mudge Day School," vol. 6386, file 805-8, pt. 1.

⁷⁶ Chief Billy Assu to Department of Indian Affairs, 21 August 1922, LAC, Indian Affairs, RG 10, "Kwawkewlth Agency, Cape Mudge Day School," vol. 6386, file 805-8, pt. 1.

⁷⁷ J.D. McLean to W.M. Halliday, 29 September 1922, LAC, Indian Affairs, RG 10, "Kwawkewlth Agency, Cape Mudge Day School," vol. 6386, file 805-8, pt. 1.

⁷⁸ J.D. McLean to W.M. Halliday, 15 December 1922, LAC, Indian Affairs, RG 10, "Kwawkewlth Agency, Cape Mudge Day School," vol. 6386, file 805-8, pt. 1.

⁷⁹ W.M. Halliday to Department of Indian Affairs, 29 December 1922, LAC, Indian Affairs, RG 10, "Kwawkewlth Agency, Cape Mudge Day School," vol. 6386, file 805-8, pt. 1; W.M.

the funds would be made available,⁸⁰ negotiations over the selection of a carpenter, requests for estimates for plans and building materials, and the details of construction continued through the spring.⁸¹ When, in October 1924, Howard submitted receipts for a labourer she had hired to erect her fence, the DIA reimbursed her only reluctantly, citing the pledge made by the We Wei Kai to supply all the labour and overlooking the fact that the project had been delayed by many months.⁸² With the Indigenous labourers now all away, officials blamed them for failing to fulfill their obligation, even though building was far behind schedule and conflicted with We Wei Kai seasonal work. Even Indian Agent Halliday, who was often supportive of the We Wei Kai, said the community “left [Howard] in the lurch,” further perpetuating the myth of unreliable Indians – in spite of the reality of the situation. The Cape Mudge Day School continued to operate through the next two decades.

THE STRUGGLE FOR SCHOOLING AT CAMPBELL RIVER, 1911-55

The first school to educate Indigenous children in Campbell River was built in 1935,⁸³ though requests from the Wei Wai Kum Nation started much earlier. Campbell River’s first school for non-Indigenous children opened in 1911, with sixteen pupils, built on land donated by the local Thulin family.⁸⁴ Soon the student population of forty was putting pressure on the one-room schoolhouse, and plans were made to acquire a new facility.⁸⁵ Along with a purchase of additional land from the Thulins, the Wei Wai Kum “were persuaded to donate a strip of land to enlarge the

Halliday to Department of Indian Affairs, 20 January 1923, LAC, Indian Affairs, RG 10, “Kwawkewlth Agency, Cape Mudge Day School,” vol. 6386, file 805-8, pt. 1.

⁸⁰ J.D. McLean to W.M. Halliday, 5 February 1923, LAC, Indian Affairs, RG 10, “Kwawkewlth Agency, Cape Mudge Day School,” vol. 6386, file 805-8, pt. 1.

⁸¹ W.M. Halliday to Department of Indian Affairs, 3 March 1923, LAC, Indian Affairs, RG 10, “Kwawkewlth Agency, Cape Mudge Day School,” vol. 6386, file 805-8, pt. 1; J.D. McLean to W.M. Halliday, 13 March 1923, LAC, Indian Affairs, RG 10, “Kwawkewlth Agency, Cape Mudge Day School,” vol. 6386, file 805-8, pt. 1; D.C. Scott to Charles Stewart, 27 April 1923, LAC, Indian Affairs, RG 10, “Kwawkewlth Agency, Cape Mudge Day School,” vol. 6386, file 805-8, pt. 1; W.M. Halliday to Department of Indian Affairs, 1 May 1923, LAC, Indian Affairs, RG 10, “Kwawkewlth Agency, Cape Mudge Day School,” vol. 6386, file 805-8, pt. 1; W.M. Halliday to Department of Indian Affairs, 27 December 1923, LAC, Indian Affairs, RG 10, “Kwawkewlth Agency, Cape Mudge Day School,” vol. 6386, file 805-8, pt. 1.

⁸² F. Howard to Rev. T. Ferrier, 6 October 1924, LAC, Indian Affairs, RG 10, “Kwawkewlth Agency, Cape Mudge Day School,” vol. 6386, file 805-8, pt. 1; J.D. McLean to W.M. Halliday, 5 November 1924, LAC, Indian Affairs, RG 10, “Kwawkewlth Agency, Cape Mudge Day School,” vol. 6386, file 805-8, pt. 1.

⁸³ Mitchell, *Diamond in the Rough*, 5.

⁸⁴ Taylor, *River City*, 90.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

school property, with the understanding that their children could attend the new school.⁸⁶ However, when the school opened in 1924, Indigenous families were told that their children were not eligible to attend because their parents weren't taxpayers.⁸⁷

The earliest available records show that the Wei Wai Kum formally asked the DIA for a day school at Campbell River in 1931, though they had registered complaints about the lack of local school opportunities much earlier. During the McKenna-McBride Commission hearings (1913-15), which were established to examine land settlement issues in British Columbia, Chief Charlie Smith testified that there was no school at Campbell River, which forced parents to send their children to Cape Mudge on Quadra Island.⁸⁸ This was problematic when inclement weather prevented boats from travelling to the island, thus hampering the children's access to schooling.

In a 1931 letter addressed to Deputy Superintendent D.C. Scott, the Wei Wai Kum chief and elders indicated that their community of eighty was home to eighteen school-aged children, the same size as many white communities that were provided schools. They closed their letter with the question: "We have the same rights [as white communities], have we not?"⁸⁹ The elders pointed out that, in their community, women stayed home year-round, ensuring high enrolment and regular attendance. The Wei Wai Kum were unhappy with the option of sending their children to boarding schools, some of which were as far away as two days' travel, and parents worried about their children's health and well-being. Wei Wai Kum elders reminded the department that "the education of [their] children was guaranteed to [them] by the white man's Govt. [*sic*] and [that they] were not told [they] had to lose [their] children during almost all their youth ... [They] were promised day schools adjacent to [their] reserves."⁹⁰ Soon after, enrolment numbers were confirmed and Indian Agent Halliday, School Inspector Barry, and BC Indian commissioner Ditchburn all expressed support for the construction of a day school at

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 113.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 115.

⁸⁸ British Columbia Archives (BCA), GR-1995, Royal Commission on Indian Affairs in British Columbia (1913-16), transcripts of evidence, meeting with the We-way-a-kum Band or Campbell River Band, 2 June 1914, 202.

⁸⁹ Wei Wai Kum Chief and head men to D.C. Scott, n.d., LAC, Indian Affairs, RG 10, "Kwawkwalth Agency, Campbell River Day School," vol. 6418, file 855-5, pt. 2. While this letter is undated, a letter from BC Indian commissioner W.E. Ditchburn to D.C. Scott, 30 July 1931, acknowledges its existence.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

Campbell River.⁹¹ As was so often the case, the DIA replied that there were no funds available in the budget.⁹² It wasn't until 1935 that funds were finally approved,⁹³ though the tangle of bureaucracy continued to block the building of the school.

Before the school could be built, an appropriate location had to be determined, and the DIA suggested that "the Indians should donate a site free of cost."⁹⁴ Unsure of how to handle this stipulation, the Indian agent asked "if [the department] would kindly advise the procedure to be followed in erecting a school on a reserve, [and to let him know] whether it [was] necessary to have the site surveyed and a Surrender taken from the Indians so that the ownership of the property [would] remain with the Department and not with the Band concerned."⁹⁵ The issue of formal land surrender was skirted, and it was decided that the land should be donated by the Wei Wai Kum, with the school administered by missionaries of the United Church.⁹⁶ The final statement of costs to the government regarding the erection of the Campbell River Day School was \$2,305.48.⁹⁷ The school operated for almost a decade with no upkeep,⁹⁸ and, by 1944, the school building was in disrepair. When recommendations were made for a fresh coat of paint and the installation of artificial lighting to facilitate working conditions,⁹⁹ it was decided that the costs of wiring would be paid from general band funds, once again reflecting the low level of federal government investment in Indigenous education in the first half of the twentieth century.¹⁰⁰

⁹¹ W.E. Ditchburn to D.C. Scott, 30 July 1931, LAC, Indian Affairs, RG 10, "Kwawkewlth Agency, Campbell River Day School," vol. 6418, file 855-5, pt. 2.

⁹² A.S. Williams to W.E. Ditchburn, 13 August 1931, LAC, Indian Affairs, RG 10, "Kwawkewlth Agency, Campbell River Day School," vol. 6418, file 855-5, pt. 2.

⁹³ J.D. Sutherland to Dr. McGill, 1 May 1935, LAC, Indian Affairs, RG 10, "Kwawkewlth Agency, Campbell River Day School," vol. 6418, file 855-5, pt. 2.

⁹⁴ M.S. Todd to Department of Indian Affairs, 21 June 1935, LAC, Indian Affairs, RG 10, "Kwawkewlth Agency, Campbell River Day School," vol. 6418, file 855-5, pt. 2.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ A.F. MacKenzie to Department of Indian Affairs, 9 July 1935, LAC, Indian Affairs, RG 10, "Kwawkewlth Agency, Campbell River Day School," vol. 6418, file 855-5, pt. 2. In 1925, the Methodist Church had joined with the Congregational Union of Canada, the Union of Western Churches of Canada, and two-thirds of the Presbyterian Church in Canada to form the United Church of Canada.

⁹⁷ M.S. Todd to Department of Indian Affairs, 21 March 1936, LAC, Indian Affairs, RG 10, "Kwawkewlth Agency, Campbell River Day School," vol. 6418, file 855-5, pt. 2.

⁹⁸ M.S. Todd to Department of Indian Affairs, 8 June 1944, LAC, Indian Affairs, RG 10, "Kwawkewlth Agency, Campbell River Day School," vol. 6418, file 855-5, pt. 2.

⁹⁹ R.A. Hoey to M.S. Todd, 6 January 1944, LAC, Indian Affairs, RG 10, "Kwawkewlth Agency, Campbell River Day School," vol. 6418, file 855-5, pt. 2.

¹⁰⁰ R.A. Hoey to M.S. Todd, 14 August 1944, LAC, Indian Affairs, RG 10, "Kwawkewlth Agency, Campbell River Day School," vol. 6418, file 855-5, pt. 2.

By the late 1940s, the DIA was in search of a new Indian education policy. Following the hearings of the 1946-48 Special Joint Committee of the Senate and the House of Commons, recommendations were made to integrate Indigenous children into provincial school systems across Canada.¹⁰¹ Though federal legislation would not be tabled until 1951, British Columbia's government anticipated the changes and, in 1949, amended the School Act to welcome Indian children to its public schools. Among the first communities earmarked to receive federal and provincial funding for new, "integrated" schools were Campbell River and Cape Mudge.¹⁰² Campbell River was to take seventeen Indigenous students, for which the DIA was to pay \$18,700 towards the capital costs of building, and Cape Mudge was to take twenty-three Indigenous students, for which the DIA was to contribute \$30,000. In 1950, the Campbell River Indian Day School closed and its pupils were incorporated into the Campbell River public school system.¹⁰³

CONCLUSION

The experiences of the We Wei Kai and Wei Wai Kum nations reveal the reluctance of officials in Ottawa to respond to the educational requests of Indigenous communities in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Despite official rhetoric that extolled the importance of education to the future success of Indigenous peoples, each of the educational examples offered in this article illustrates how federal officials stymied and refused Indigenous requests for schools and educational support. Even though the We Wei Kai in Cape Mudge first asked for a day school in 1892, it took two years to gain approval and receive funds to build it, during which time the We Wei Kai and Methodist missionaries collaborated to hold school sessions – without funding – in a community member's home. By 1907 it was clear that the day school was not meeting the needs of the community, yet no effort was made to understand or accommodate the special circumstances affecting educational access. With most of the community away for part of the year for seasonal work, the We Wei Kai requested a boarding school to support their children's continued education, and they collaborated with the Methodists to organize a funding plan; yet still Ottawa refused to cooperate to meet the community's educational priorities. Rather than support Indigenous

¹⁰¹ Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision*, 377-83.

¹⁰² Raptis, "Implementing Integrated Education Policy," 120.

¹⁰³ Among the province's 5,700 Native children, roughly 950 were in provincial schools by 1950. See "Action Progresses for Equal Education," *Colonist*, 13 September 1950.

education at Cape Mudge, despite local Indigenous, Indian agent, and missionary cooperation, federal officials denied efforts to facilitate education to suit local needs. Ottawa also failed to offer adequate funding for church-run education for Indigenous children, as exemplified in the 1920s, when the DIA was reluctant to support adequate housing for the community's teacher, thus inhibiting her ability to perform her duties. The We Wei Kai offered land and labour to help support their teacher, but still their efforts were blocked. Not only did the department stall federal support for education, its policies and the prerogatives of administrators interfered with cooperative efforts between the We Wei Kai and local missionaries.

The slow, halting, and inadequate actions taken by the DIA, as exemplified in the case of the Wei Wai Kum at Campbell River during the 1920s and 1930s, complicate official narratives that hold that Indigenous peoples did not value education. The Wei Wai Kum even donated land to support their request for a school for their children, yet they had to wait more than thirteen years. These examples also reveal that Ottawa's official narratives about the value of Indigenous education and its role on the path to full Indigenous enculturation – however unjust as an assimilative agenda – are contradicted by the historical evidence. Indeed, they illustrate that the overriding consideration guiding federal administrators of Indian education was fiscal thrift, particularly during the tenure of Duncan Campbell Scott who served as Indian Affairs' superintendent of education from 1909 to 1913 and as deputy superintendent general from 1913 to 1932.¹⁰⁴ This obsession with parsimony played an important role in preventing the Canadian government from fulfilling its commitment to providing Indigenous peoples with educational services.¹⁰⁵

The evidence of Indigenous interest in and support for education notwithstanding, historical documents reveal that governmental attitudes perpetuated false and racist narratives about Indigenous peoples, and allowed such beliefs to inform decisions about school provision and funding. At Cape Mudge in the early 1900s, as the We Wei Kai community was proposing a boarding school to meet the needs of its children, collaborating with Methodist missionaries and offering land as well as funding, federal officials continued to attribute low enrolment

¹⁰⁴ See Titley, *Narrow Vision*.

¹⁰⁵ Canada's commitment to providing education for Indigenous communities was first laid out in treaty negotiations but was later enshrined in Canada's Constitution Act, 1982. See James [sákéj] Youngblood Henderson, "Treaties and Indian Education" in *First Nations Education in Canada: The Circle Unfolds*, ed. Marie Battiste and Jean Barman, 245–61 (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1995).

and poor attendance to a lack of interest in education, and ignored the burden that land restrictions placed on the community to travel to work. Failing to accurately assess the situation at Cape Mudge, DIA officials contemplated closing the school rather than funding the boarding school, which would have promoted higher levels of attendance. The impact of racist narratives is also evident in the issue of the teacherage, built in 1924. After the We Wei Kai pledged to provide all labour for the project, with the proviso that the work was to begin in April so that it could be completed before the summer fishing season, Ottawa's bureaucracy repeatedly interrogated every aspect of the project, thus ensuring lengthy delays. When the We Wei Kai were not available to complete the project, officials criticized their trustworthiness and work ethic, conveniently overlooking the role Ottawa had played in delaying things.

The We Wei Kai were entangled in a jurisdictional argument concerning land title between federal and provincial levels of government. As a result of this dispute, the We Wei Kai were restricted from accessing resources on reserve land, which meant they had to choose between staying on the reserve to educate their children and leaving the reserve to gain economic sustenance. The refusal of the federal government to meet its educational obligations to Indigenous people with regard to the land title dispute reveals the low profile of education in relation to other government portfolios, such as those related to land and resources. Government correspondence shows that officials overlooked the effect of resource restriction on the We Wei Kai and the impact that the parents' need to travel for seasonal work had on their children's education. This situation was linked to British Columbia's substandard reserve allotments, something that prompted much political wrangling between federal and provincial authorities.¹⁰⁶ Instead, the DIA treated the We Wei Kai's lack of cooperation with the school as an unrelated event and as evidence of their disinterest in education. The disjointed nature of the federal government's approaches to Indian affairs clearly demonstrates how "policy decisions in one sphere of government can negatively impact the operations of other government branches."¹⁰⁷

Jurisdictional issues also affected Indigenous access to education in Campbell River, where the Wei Wai Kum donated land to expand the local school on the understanding that it would accommodate their children in 1924. Indigenous children were denied access to the local

¹⁰⁶ For details about federal-provincial conflict over reserve allotments, see Harris, *Making Native Space*.

¹⁰⁷ Raptis, "Exploring the Factors Prompting British Columbia's First Integration," 542.

school due to their parents' status as non-taxpaying, a condition that was the result of Canadian Indian policy rather than any action of their own. As non-taxpayers, Indigenous people residing on reserves were officially excluded from provincial schools, though historical evidence suggests that rules were repeatedly bent to allow Indigenous children to attend non-Indigenous schools not only in British Columbia but also elsewhere in Canada.¹⁰⁸ In the case of Campbell River, settlers exploited bureaucratic loopholes, accepting the offer of Indigenous land and later excluding Indigenous students. By 1935, when negotiations were under way to build the Campbell River Day School, land title issues arose again. Rather than purchasing the land through a formal extinguishment process, the DIA shirked the responsibility for land surrender and pressured the community to build the school on reserve land, a decision that affected responsibility for the future upkeep and maintenance of the school. These land grabs in Campbell River are not surprising when placed within the broader context of land settlement in British Columbia. The discriminatory insistence of successive BC governments on allocating reserve lands of four hectares or less per family stands in sharp contrast to other Canadian jurisdictions that allocated one hundred acres or more. So reticent was British Columbia to acknowledge property boundaries that many settlers simply settled on Indigenous lands without legal authorization. Despite the political mobilization of Indigenous peoples, as well as several commissions, land settlement claims in British Columbia continue to be unresolved.¹⁰⁹

In contrast to prevailing narratives, dating to the nineteenth century, that attribute the low academic achievement of Indigenous students to the low cultural value Indigenous peoples placed on education,¹¹⁰ the examples of Campbell River and Cape Mudge demonstrate that Indigenous families and leaders were deeply interested and invested

¹⁰⁸ For evidence of Indigenous students attending non-Indigenous schools in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see Jean Barman, "Families vs. Schools: Children of Aboriginal Descent in British Columbia Classrooms of the Late Nineteenth Century," in *Family Matters: Papers in Post-Confederation Canadian Family History*, ed. E. Montigny and L. Chambers (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press, 1998), 74; and Raptis, "Implementing Integrated Education Policy," 119-24. For evidence of federal-provincial collaboration in the education of Indigenous children, see Helen Raptis, "Blurring the Boundaries of Policy and Legislation in the Schooling of Indigenous Children in British Columbia, 1901-1951," *Historical Studies in Education* 27, 2 (2015): 65-77.

¹⁰⁹ Harris, *Making Native Space*, 323.

¹¹⁰ Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision*, 151; Jerry Paquette and Gerald Fallon, *First Nations Education Policy in Canada: Progress or Gridlock?* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 5. While such negative views of Indigenous aptitudes for education run counter to the experiences of teachers of Indigenous students, they are reoccurring throughout official correspondence between Indian agents and the Department of Indian Affairs.

in the education of their children. From as early as 1892, the evidence from Cape Mudge reveals how attuned Indigenous leaders were to the politics surrounding church-run, federally funded schools, and how they advanced their educational interests to local missionaries, Indian agents, and the DIA.

By the late 1940s, moves were being made to shut down the federal system of Indigenous education and to integrate children into provincial schools.¹¹¹ Whereas integration was presented as a solution to the inequity and inadequacies that plagued day and residential schools, it was actually the final stage in a long history of government neglect of Indigenous education. After generations of substandard educational policies and harmful practices, Indigenous children were ill prepared to enter provincial public schools.¹¹² This article attempts to shine a light on the policies and practices that deprived so many generations of We Wei Kai and Wei Wai Kum of their right to be educated.

¹¹¹ Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision*, 382; see also Raptis, "Implementing Integrated Education Policy," 118-46.

¹¹² See Peggy Wilson, "Trauma of Sioux Indian High School Students," *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* 22, 4 (1991): 367-83; Diane Persson, "The Changing Experience of Indian Residential Schooling: Blue Quills, 1931-1970," in Barman et al., *Indian Education in Canada*, 160; and Harry B. Hawthorn, ed. *A Survey of the Contemporary Indians of Canada* (Ottawa: Indian Affairs Branch, 1967), 106.