

Listening to history podcasting and the intertextual stories of silence: A Canadian perspective

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Abstract:

Historica Canada's *Residential Schools* is a history podcast mini-series that 'aims to commemorate the history and legacy of residential schools, and honour the stories of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Survivors, their families, and communities [...] funded by the Government of Canada' ('Residential Schools Podcast Series', 2020). *Residential Schools* is a particularly useful case study for analyzing history podcasting because the program's audio is supplemented by written and visual materials on its website that Historica Canada includes to increase the podcast's educational breadth and connect users to commissioned reports. This podcast supports Indigenous reconciliation in present-day Canada that evaluates perceptions of living in a post-colonial society. Here scholars can examine how intertextual history podcasts shift the listening experience and provide non-Indigenous listeners with the opportunity for a deeper recognition of marginalization, while also creating a listening public of Indigenous peoples based on belonging, community, and cultural memory for traditionally silenced voices in an educational genre promoting immersive audience participation. In this article, I conduct a textual analysis on *Residential Schools*' episodes and website to explore if history podcasts have the ability to facilitate an inclusive community by providing a space for minority listeners to hear themselves represented by people they identify with. I also examine if history podcasts can help all listeners learn about marginalized peoples by using audio alongside archival material that extends participant interaction and research.

Keywords: digital storytelling, history, Indigenous, podcasting, residential schools

Introduction

Between 2008 and 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) brought to light the many injustices produced through residential schooling as a form of genocide

(Chrisjohn and Young 28; MacDonald 125). In accordance with these TRC reports ('Reports'), many media producers are using audio to help Indigenous residential school survivors speak to both their specific communities and the nation at large through increasingly interactive platforms like podcasting. History podcasts particularly, provide opportunities for marginalized publics to discuss their culturally lived experiences in tandem with materials documenting these pasts online. *Residential Schools* is one Canadian history podcast sonically communicating residential school narratives with support from written and visual texts like those produced by the TRC. *Residential Schools* is a three-episode podcast miniseries that

aims to commemorate the history and legacy of residential schools, and honour the stories of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Survivors, their families, and communities. The series is part of a larger awareness campaign created by Historica Canada and funded by the Government of Canada. ('Residential Schools Podcast Series')

History podcasting as a genre has rarely been defined (c.f. Cuffe; Salvati). According to media studies scholar Andrew Bottomley, a history podcast contains a historical narrative 'offering an interpretation or perspective on events of the past, dramatizing the proceedings using music, sound effects, archival recordings, and [...] clips from film and television' (178). Bottomley further states that a history podcast 'with its emphasis on overlooked moments and people in history, and its attention to individual's [sic] emotional lives and humanity – personalizes it and aligns it with the form and politics of the other storytelling modes' (179), like feature-documentary and first-person oral history. History podcasts may also provide additional sources to solidify a narrative's accuracy and direct listeners to further materials that broaden their knowledge and understanding of historic systems, events, and people (Cuffe 561).

History podcasts can create alternative narratives through a combination of audio, as well as written and visual materials critiquing dominant representations and erasures of Canadian history that listeners can interpret for themselves online in an interactive manner. Kathy Hogarth and Wendy Fletcher argue, 'If we are to be allies in this process of reconstructing and reimagining an egalitarian society, we must first come to terms with the mythological nature of the narratives we have bought into' (111). This article illustrates history podcasting's urgency and potential for helping facilitate publicly driven, community media texts by providing a space for excluded groups to voice their lived experiences as colonized subjects in a country that is supposedly post-racial and post-colonial but that continually negates its oppressive history, while simultaneously educating people outside these groups on national histories.

This article will first present the research methods used, followed by a short history of the Indian Residential School (IRS) system. Afterwards, a section will explain *Residential Schools'* episodic structure for contextualization. The podcast audio will then be analyzed

for its narrative structure that transmits marginalized voices and silenced histories. The podcast's additional online materials, including its homepage, Canadian Encyclopedia articles and videos, and educational guides will also be analyzed for their contribution to *Residential Schools* as a history podcast beyond its audio. This article concludes with a discussion of *Residential Schools*' utilisation of additional materials for enhancing audience interaction with, and understanding of, the audio content itself for both Indigenous community members and non-Indigenous Canadians. But before *Residential Schools* as an intertextual history podcast can be analyzed, its production company Historica Canada, and the company's motives, must be considered in order to understand the podcast's overall goals and online presence.

Historica Canada

Historica Canada released *Residential Schools* weekly during March of 2020. As a funded media company located in Toronto, Canada, that produces digital content on Canadian histories, with an emphasis on community engagement and interaction, Historica Canada provides freely accessible and educational tools including articles, videos, archive collections, and an encyclopedia database on Canadian histories and cultures. Overall, Historica Canada recognizes

that the stories we tell matter – and the way that we tell them matters. Across the world, as well as within Canada, we see the impacts of historical injustice and the evolving discourse about systemic racism faced by Black, Indigenous and racialized communities. We are committed to helping to build a better Canada that amplifies missing voices; that recognizes multiple perspectives; that celebrates our achievements and acknowledges our failings. We know that we have a responsibility to do better, to listen more carefully, and to act more deliberately. ('About')

Recently, Historica Canada has aimed to fulfill their mandate promising to amplify missing voices and perspectives by producing two podcasts, *Record of Service*, which discusses Canadian WWII veterans' experiences, and *Residential Schools*. With the help of the public, Historica Canada continually expands its online database and produces podcasts as forms of alternative media. The foundation challenges mainstream audio media practices in radio by providing additional written and visual content, and emphasizing 'first person, eyewitness accounts by participants' (Atton 267) through lived experience testimonials on Canadian events and histories in a documentary-style presentation.

As a repository, Historica Canada combines its podcasts with expansive archive collections. *Residential Schools* is internally linked to the Canadian Encyclopedia's 'Indigenous Peoples' collection, specifically found under the subheading 'Colonial History.' Other topics in the Indigenous collection include 'Historic Peoples' and 'Social Issues and Activism.' Altogether, Historica Canada provides a hub for free education on Canadian

histories and experiences that are often un(der)represented and combines historic documents with modern audio media iterations like podcasting to create a digital archive accessible to audiences of all ages and across all cultures in Canada with Internet access.

Methodology and Justification

This paper looks at Historica Canada's *Residential Schools* podcast to explore the use of supplementary online content that the intertextual history podcast on Indigenous residential schools provides beyond the podcast's audio, which resultingly structures the podcast narrative itself in order to facilitate a specific learning experience for the audience. Utilizing textual analysis on *Residential Schools'* audio episodes and the Canadian Encyclopedia website, this paper asks if a minority-hosted, intertextual podcast can build an intimate listening experience and community of belonging for marginalized listeners who identify with the subjects and content, and if podcasts can perform as educational, intertextual resources for listeners from different socio-cultural backgrounds. *Residential Schools'* three episodes were listened to in their entirety and their transcripts were consulted for linguistic clarification. Residential schooling is an especially pressing history in Canada that has yet to be acknowledged fully in dominant national discourse. 'By listening to detailed personal experiences of 'others,' listeners become connected to the people whose stories they share. Listeners feel like they know the people speaking' (Lindgren 27). In *Residential Schools*, Indigenous subjects detail their lived experiences using digital storytelling as a form of orality and sonically share group memory with Indigenous communities while educating listeners and building empathy and understanding for those who are unfamiliar or removed from these victimized experiences personally or ancestrally, which is then accompanied by a multitude of non-audio, communicative texts (Barber 3).

Residential Schools' audio and transcripts are freely available on the Canadian Encyclopedia website (run by Historica Canada) and are accompanied by internal links to other Indigenous content, contributed by Indigenous people, in Historica Canada's repository. There are also external links to additional readings, contact information for community outreach groups, and multiple YouTube videos on the timeline and effects of residential schooling's colonizing force in Canada. *Residential Schools'* related documents, compiled by Historica Canada through various community-based partnerships, create a storytelling network where 'residents, local and ethnic media, and community organizations are key actors involved in telling stories about what is happening in a community' (Wenzel 148). For *Residential Schools*, Legacy of Hope Foundation (Legacy of Hope Foundation) provides the survivor audio testimonies used in the podcast. The University of Manitoba's National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation) hosts the TRC reports ('Reports'), which the podcast is shaped around, on its website for easy access to additional information.

Indian Residential School (IRS) System in Canada

Between 1876 and 1996, over 150,000 Indigenous children in Canada, predominantly between the ages of five and sixteen (MacDonald and Hudson 431), were forced into government-funded residential schools imposing Eurocentric, Christian teachings on Indigenous peoples (The Truth and Reconciliation Commission, *What We Have Learned* 6). Justice Murray Sinclair estimates that at least 6,000 of these Indigenous youth either died during their residential schooling or afterwards (Tasker) as a result from the trauma endured through the physical, sexual, and mental abuse perpetrated by Christian teachers and clergymen (Miller) who served Catholic, Presbyterian, Methodist, and United Churches (MacDonald and Hudson 431). Many of these students' stories, voices, memories, and experiences have been silenced nationally, but media programs have begun facilitating online spaces for Indigenous peoples to self-represent their stories and be heard across Canada, including the podcast *Still Here Still Healing* (Roberts) and Legacy of Hope Foundation (Legacy of Hope Foundation). This aligns with the TRC's 'commitment to offer everyone involved with the residential school system the opportunity to speak about their experience' (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling the Future* 25).

A main component of these residential school narratives is intergenerational trauma. Intergenerational trauma refers to the 'collective complex trauma inflicted on a group of people who share a specific group identity or affiliation – ethnicity, nationality, and religious affiliation' (Evans-Campbell 320). For Indigenous communities, the trauma experienced in residential schools has led to continued psychological, physiological, and sociocultural suffering, both for people who attended the schools and for their families over generations (Bombay et al. 329; Menzies). Residential school survivors 'left these institutions, they returned to their home communities without the knowledge, skills or tools to cope in either' (Menzies), which has influenced the ways that survivors deal with their own trauma and socially interact with their families (MacDonald and Hudson 432).

Future generations related to residential school survivors can experience trauma themselves directly or indirectly. Teresa Evans-Campbell argues that direct intergenerational transmission occurs when a survivor's family members 'vicariously experience events via stories heard about the experiences of their parents or grandparents' (328). Indirect intergenerational transmission occurs when a survivor's trauma influences the way they act (e.g. parenting style), which can directly impact family members (Evans-Campbell 328). Thus, intergenerational trauma derived from residential schooling has lasting effects, even for those who did not attend the schools. Intergenerational trauma has led to mental health issues including depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) for survivors and their families, which has helped cause systemic issues of homelessness, unemployment, and prison time for those directly or indirectly impacted by residential schooling (Menzies). Inside these communities there are physiological, psychological, and sociocultural impact factors. From outside these communities, cultural discrimination and economic marginalization has sustained intergenerational trauma since there is a lack of support for

changing the destructive patterns residential schooling has caused due to social and geographical marginalization (Menzies).

Residential Schools addresses intergenerational trauma in its podcast program. This is important for Indigenous communities since speaking about trauma on a community scale can ‘significantly affect individual and communal posttraumatic adaptation and healing’ (Evans-Campbell 330). The podcast may act as an educational tool for future generations of Indigenous peoples whose ancestors do not discuss residential schooling. For non-Indigenous peoples, *Residential Schools* can also act as an educational resource. Amy Bombay et al. argue, ‘Knowledge of these continued consequences of historical trauma among non-Aboriginal Canadians may similarly help foster improved intergroup relations by increasing understanding of the complicated issues contributing to the health of Aboriginal peoples’ (333). *Residential Schools* as a history podcast contextualizes the IRS system to explain these systemic traumas by using audio and non-audio materials.

Residential Schools - Episodes

Aligning with Historica Canada’s mandate focusing not only on telling stories, but also how stories are told, *Residential Schools* uses audio to capture marginalized voices through ‘digital storytelling,’ which is the practice of transmitting personal stories using digital technology (Couldry 374). ‘[D]igital storytelling is increasingly deployed in culturally diverse communities as a strategy for empowerment through ‘finding a voice’’ (Dreher 446). Each episode centers on one specific Indigenous community where survivors vocally recount their experiences during and after their residential schooling in Canada. Host Shaneen Robinson-Desjarlais, a Cree and Gitksan First Nation journalist who has reported for Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN) and CTV (Robinson-Desjarlais, ‘Shaneen Robinson-Desjarlais’), guides listeners through the podcast with the support of archived audio clips and subject interviews that piece together micronarratives and historical information on either First Nations, Métis, or Inuit survivors, which coalesce into a macronarrative speaking on Indigenous subjection through one facet of Canadian colonial history (Fauteux 340, 355).

Although written words can be powerful in communicating emotion, ‘[t]here is undeniably something about sound – music and voice – as a commanding entity of connection and emotion it can so powerfully pull us backward and forward through our own memories, thoughts and feelings’ (Copeland 212), which affects both podcasters and listeners. This is not to say that the written transcripts *Residential Schools* provides do not capture survivor testimonies elaborately, but that the emotion heard in the survivors’ voices adds to the realization that these are not simply stories, but actual human lived experiences (McHugh 195). Furthermore, the voice’s utterance is the speaker’s source of truth and the listener’s tool of learning and discovery (Vallee 53). Dario Llinares argues, ‘The resonance of speech operates both in the dramatising of a story – injecting a sense of emotional texture to a narrative whether fictional or non-fictional – and as the vital component of public discourse, debate and argument’ (133). Experiences shared in a public forum like a government-funded, community podcast project fulfills the dual right for people to voice

themselves openly and listen to others speak. Digital storytelling enhances both practices through its production and online dissemination via history podcasting.

Episode one, 'First Nations Experiences,' examines the residential schooling experiences of First Nations people in Canada using survival testimonials provided by Riley Burns and Ed Bitternose in association with the Legacy of Hope Foundation. Burns explains his interaction with sexually abusive staff over nine years in Saskatchewan, where over time his institutionalization tried to force him to shed his language and cultural identity in exchange for a Eurocentric identity. Bitternose describes abusive relationships formed between students as well, which adds to the childhood trauma that is still difficult to discuss, stating, 'I don't know how to talk to my wife. I don't know how to talk to my kids. I don't know what to do with all these feelings' ('First Nations Experiences,' 16:03). This podcast episode provides a space for Indigenous peoples to speak and educate audiences about one Indigenous group, valuing the micronarratives of one community rather than conflating all Indigenous survivors as homogenous. The narratives shared by First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples all speak to a larger form of colonization, but this podcast allows each episode to reflect individual experiences and stories.

Episode two, 'Métis Experiences,' invites survivors Linda Blomme, Larry Langille, and Louis Bellrose to describe residential schooling as a Métis person, which is unique since Métis people were not included in the 1876 *Indian Act*, resulting in a lack of funding for their healthcare and school systems. The Government of Canada derogatorily defined Métis people based on their individual degree of assimilation as either white, 'Indian,' or 'halfbreed' (offspring of Métis woman and white man) ('Métis Experiences,' 3:08). Reflecting on these categorizations, the testimonies represent the unique experiences of the Métis community comprised of heterogeneous people essentialized as 'other' by white Canadians. Langille speaks to the inadequate education he received in these schools despite their promise to teach all Indigenous youth writing and reading, and Blomme and Bellrose recount the verbal abuse and name-calling from staff that enforced the internalization of being 'other,' or what Bellrose calls an 'extern' ('Métis Experiences,' 9:11). Naming as a form of verbal abuse was consistently practiced across all residential schools. Overall, the Métis narratives attest to the displacement fuelled by being too 'Native' to attend public schools and too 'white' for residential schools due to discriminatorily defined physical characteristics symbolically purporting impurity, 'half-difference,' and thus, a lack of Canadian belonging (Gilroy 106).

Episode three, 'Inuit Experiences,' features the narratives of Piita Irniq and Abraham Anghik Ruben. Irniq and Ruben provide Inuit perspectives detailing residential schools' reshaping of Indigenous bodies through cutting hair, stripping traditional clothing, and silencing Indigenous languages in exchange for English and French wardrobes and linguistic forms. Ruben explains,

You get into the lineups, they'd get you in, cut the bulk of your hair off. After, they put you through delousing or whatever they call it, you were in for

showers, scrubbed down, into another lineup for your clothes. And most kids couldn't speak English, this was their first day run. ('Inuit Experiences,' 2:22)

Near the episode's conclusion, Irniq attests to Indigenous youth's forced silence over residential school conditions, stating, 'Who can you go and tell? Even if you were to complain about things that were happening to somebody in Chesterfield Inlet, no one would have believed us anyway' ('Inuit Experiences,' 17:16). *Residential Schools* offers an inclusionary space for voicing individual stories silenced or dismissed over time that constructs a larger narrative of colonial practice and its perpetual effects on survivors.

However, in accordance with this journal's special issue, and *Historica Canada's* mandate mentioned earlier, particular emphasis must be placed on *how* these stories are told by *Residential Schools* in its goal to incite a particular listening experience for publics interacting with these stories. The narrative's overall structure needs to be analyzed as much as the content itself in order to grasp the social and educational function of history podcasting determined through production and consumption practices.

Audio Narrative Structure

History podcasts, as mentioned earlier, are increasingly coupled with additional sources beyond their audio to enhance listener learning and verify episode information. 'Sourcing is only one of many ways in which the practices of journalists form the representations of people, institutions, and events' (Buozi 266). Malcolm Gladwell's *Revisionist History* website, for instance, includes American government documents, television clips, and academic sources under many episodes (Gladwell), and *Dan Carlin's Hardcore History* provides book links that host Dan Carlin consulted (Carlin), which influences the narrative structure and content of the podcast. Foundationally, however, history podcasts are defined by their audio narratives allowing listeners to interpret past events and examine overlooked or un(der)represented perspectives, which are often transmitted using feature-documentary or oral history techniques centering on subjective testimonies (Bottomley 177-179, 215).

Podcasting is particularly useful for teaching and interpreting history since its unregulated mode can provide detailed accounts and expansive stories that constricted media like television and radio cannot due to their commercial segmentation, which informs narrative content, narrative structure, and overall consumer experience (Cuffe 554). Honae Cuffe argues,

The narrative is a dynamic framework which allows the historian to reconstruct the past through the provision and interrogation of evidence while also reflecting on the contemporary significance of the story. While podcasts did not invent history through narrative, they have certainly reshaped how history is being consumed and by whom. (558)

Residential Schools interrogates residential schooling in Canada from an Indigenous perspective, rather than the perspective of white Canadians who have constructed dominant perceptions of national history, and explores the remaining traumatic effects for Indigenous peoples caused by 120 years of the IRS system. History podcasters ‘engage with their topics [...] from the bottom up, constructing empathetic, character-driven accounts of realities experienced by individuals at local levels in a way that humanizes general and global issues’ (Salvati 234).

Podcasts offer a potential alternative to media like television and radio that have traditionally excluded Indigenous communities. Settler-Canadians have stereotypically represented Indigenous peoples on screen through media products aimed at white audiences (Roth 18). However, with increased pressure for policy transformation and technological access over time, geography has become less of a barrier for Indigenous peoples to produce and consume content by their communities for their communities, like APTN (Roth 22). Indigenous media

provide sites for public opinion formation; sites where citizens can engage in collective efforts to bring their issues to the dominant public sphere; and sites where Indigenous people can attempt to influence the policies of various governments through the pressure of public opinion. (Meadows 264)

Residential Schools transmits survivor testimonies to inform the public and address the need for more government action. Podcasting can help contest institutionalization structured by a white majority that has continually excluded Indigenous media participation and removed settler-Canadians from accounting for their colonial past.

History podcasts that marginalized people produce, allow the public to cross knowledge and context boundaries through listening. According to Lukasz Swiatek, crossing knowledge boundaries helps ‘individuals and groups access new insights, from both inside and outside their areas of expertise and interest’ (173), and crossing context boundaries supports human interaction between people from ‘diverse locations and socio-cultural backgrounds’ (174). People from across Canada can listen to stories and experiences they may not have otherwise, building awareness, empathy and understanding in the process of reconciliation for marginalized Indigenous communities. *Residential Schools* allows people to ‘listen out,’ to have ‘politically engaged openness to hearing material that is potentially personally unsettling or destabilizing’ (Spinelli and Dann 131) in its historical accounts of oppression that are still felt today and need to be acknowledged.

Nick Couldry argues that online narratives face four pressures: 1) ‘to mix text with other materials (sound, video, still image) and more generally to make a visual presentation,’ 2) ‘to limit the length of narrative’ because of consumer attention, 3) to standardize narrative structure so audiences can interpret a familiar form, and 4) to acknowledge that a narrative may be interpreted differently, and by a different audience, than the producer intends (382). *Residential Schools’* narratives confront these same

pressures, which influences how listeners interact with the final podcast product. The first pressure will be discussed later, but the length of narratives, the standardized structure of narratives, and the potential for diverse listening publics can all be addressed now by analyzing the podcast's audio as text.

The length of each episode is roughly twenty-two to twenty-six minutes including a short introductory advertisement on Historica Canada's other podcast *Record of Service*, and a short advertisement in the middle of the podcast for Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's (CBC) *The Secret Life of Canada*, a program mirroring *Residential Schools* in its exploration of Canadian histories interpreted from minority perspectives. The podcasting industry theoretically enables unlimited episode lengths because of its separation from commercially controlled and regulated time slots found in television and radio (Bottomley 212). *Residential Schools'* can be consumed fully without extended external commercial interruptions. *Residential Schools'* narrative lengths align with the widely perceived notion of shorter attention spans of modern audiences in a digital era more generally (Couldry 382), but the podcast predominantly excludes commercial advertising found in other media industries like radio and television.

Residential Schools divides its intensive analysis on one topic over three weeks. The podcast thus gives listeners a chance to reflect on the survivor narratives, especially considering their sensitive and traumatic content. After its initial weekly release between March 3 and 17, the podcast is now available to be consumed in one sitting, which, when combined into one listening session, includes over an hour of information that closely aligns with feature-documentary modes found in other history podcasts. The ability for listeners to consume at their own pace helps *Residential Schools* structure the narratives in detailed ways of addressing one Indigenous group's experiences in depth, but that can alternatively be listened to seamlessly one episode after the other in a serial-type formulation.

Residential Schools' episodes are structured in a familiar podcasting format, intertwining survivor testimonies, expert contextualization, and the host's conversational guidance from subject to subject logically over background piano instrumentals. Particularly for history podcasting as a genre, which is defined by how its content is communicated rather than the content alone (Gröppel-Wengener and Kidd 25), its digital history narratives interpret the past and reflect on overlooked moments or people by using first-person lived experiences or expert/scholar consultation to help strengthen its accuracy (Bottomley 212). Each episode of *Residential Schools* not only has a knowledgeable host in Robinson-Desjarlais, but survivors speak for themselves and represent their experiences at various times of the episode, and Indigenous scholars are either consulted in the narrative's construction or speak within the episodes themselves. The multitude of voices presented are emblematic of educational history podcasts desiring to dissect a critical topic and provide the most accurate and experiential information possible. Each person speaks in short intervals and returns throughout the podcast, individualizing residential school lived experiences that reflect larger arguments being made at their particular utterances.

Residential Schools helps its audience hear primary sources of these past systems that have been omitted from national memory for so long.

In 'First Nations Experiences,' Robinson-Desjarlais reveals that four female students accused a male principal at Gordon's Indian Residential School in Saskatchewan of sexual abuse. However, 'this charge was denied by the principal and investigated by a senior teacher who exonerated him. The principal then resigned his position. There is no record of a report to Indian Affairs or the police' (Niessen 65). Moments after Robinson-Desjarlais summarizes this predator's behaviour, survivor Riley Burns recounts his impression of the same principal,

In those two years – it seems like for forty years – but those were the years that were rough. This man lost his mind. He'd take it out on the kids. It wasn't our fault, but it was our fault because we were 'savages.' ('First Nations Experiences,' 12:12)

Shortly afterwards, Dr. Niigaanwewidam James Sinclair, a professor at the University of Manitoba and expert consultant in this episode, identifies how First Nations students attempted resisting the abusive behaviour experienced in the residential schools. Disseminating a collage of perspectives, this history podcast abides by standard audio documentary practices that include clear audio, expressive background music, and a guiding host who introduces and contextualizes the people and sound bites being heard into a coherent narrative, which is then easily followable for listeners interacting with a sensitive topic.

Each episode of this history podcast can be partially considered a life narrative where survivors subjectively narrate their own experiences and their internalization of outsiders' (white) gazes (Smith and Watson 5). The audience may also be part of this 'outsiders' group. Indeed, 'narrators are at the same time in dialogue with the processes and archives of memory and the expectations of disparate others' (Smith and Watson 18), meaning that personal testimonies in history podcasts are always a recollection of past events, peoples, or experiences constructed for a potentially heterogeneous listening public that may include listeners who are being scrutinized (in)directly. However, *Residential Schools* is not intended to guilt or blame white Canadians for historical oppression, but, in the words of episode three guest and residential school survivor Piita Irniq, 'to make sure that these things never happen to young people again' ('Inuit Experiences,' 24:20). Reflecting Couldry's argument that narrative production entails considering potentially diverse audience interpretations (382), *Residential Schools* presents historical information and testimonies aimed at all Canadians by using simple language and contextualizing cultural terms potentially unfamiliar to non-Indigenous Canadians. Framed as history lessons, the episodes resemble guest lectures. The narratives themselves are spoken in a calm and conversational manner to educate the potentially diverse audience. But the episodes are also shaped for Indigenous peoples who can identify with similar experiences

where they have felt, or where their ancestors have felt, 'other.' *Residential Schools* is not for one particular/niche audience, but for all people in Canada to either acknowledge, or identify with, a history of colonial oppression nationally over time.

Overall, *Residential Schools'* digital stories produce what Martin Spinelli and Lance Dann call 'experiential diversity,' which is 'a nexus of making, listening, sharing, social interaction, and group and individual identity formation [...]. In the shared act of personal podcast storytelling, difference is neither erased nor does it become a barrier to interpersonal connection' (136). Helping listeners cross knowledge and context boundaries, this history podcast enacts experiential diversity by constructing a relationship between marginalized podcast subjects and heterogeneous listeners through storytelling and listening practices defining Indigenous survival and identity from within its own communities for Indigenous participants. The podcast also gives non-Indigenous listeners the chance to hear perspectives and histories they might not have otherwise due to institutionalized knowledge perpetuating dominant discourse produced by white Canadians excluding non-white Canadians traditionally (Vrikki and Malik 281). *Residential Schools'* narratives are ultimately tools for history education, using audio to allow Indigenous peoples to speak for themselves, rather than being represented by white communities, in a call for national awareness, acknowledgement, and reparations.

Beyond the Audio Narrative

Residential Schools' narratives are evidently valuable in and of themselves in explaining the horrid conditions and abuse experienced and their resulting effects today. Audio narratives are also forms of self-representation where marginalized people speak for themselves 'to provide therapeutic benefits' (Thumim 4). However, outside of podcasting's sonic components, history podcasts like *Residential Schools* are increasingly building a foundation of knowledge that grounds their episodes using the Internet's online affordances to share materials on their self-controlled sites for extending learning beyond audio texts. 'The interfaces for organizing, managing, and consuming content generate more value than the content itself' (Morris and Patterson 224). *Residential Schools'* narratives are most effective in collaboration with the podcast's additional materials and the Historica Canada/the Canadian Encyclopedia interface as a whole, where listeners can travel from link to link quickly and freely, which is not often the case with physical archives requiring privileged access and potentially expensive travel costs. Furthermore, although information on historical events, places, and peoples can be found anywhere across the Internet, there is no guarantee that the information is accurate, nor that it applies to the same histories described in the podcasts being listened to. Thus, history podcasts with an educational mandate and reliable host providing supplementary information contributes to a history podcast's knowledge production while informing audiences of how they can actively pursue learning about the historical narratives discussed in the podcast in more detail.

Podcast Homepage

The *Residential Schools'* homepage is on the Canadian Encyclopedia website hosted by Historica Canada. Published on February 21, 2020, as a type of encyclopedic entry, the podcast webpage contains all three podcast episodes, their transcripts, their episode abstracts, their suggested additional readings, and crisis hotlines for Indigenous peoples including the National Indian Residential School Crisis Line, The Hope for Wellness Help Line, and Kids Help Phone ('Residential Schools Podcast Series'). But the podcast is also intended for Canadians as an educational tool where the podcast's transcripts allow people to read along with episodes or clarify any audio they cannot understand and is a resource for non-English speakers and deaf or hard of hearing people who cannot listen to the podcast. The transcripts were added four months after the podcast was released, indicating that the website has been updated and interacted with. Transcripts can also be used by educators to structure lesson plans or pinpoint specific information they want to transmit to students more easily.

Within each episode abstract, there are clickable keywords linking to the Canadian Encyclopedia's directory and other sites where people can access more information related to those specific terms. For example, the terms 'residential school,' 'First Nations,' 'Larry Chartrand,' and 'Inuvik' all lead to either their encyclopedic entries, other Canadian Encyclopedia articles, or to external sites (e.g. The Legacy of Hope Foundation home page). As a form of intertextuality, listeners can use these links at any time before, during, or after listening to the podcast audio. Utilizing the Canadian Encyclopedia database, Historica Canada creates intertextual lessons allowing users to surf freely for accurate information that 'authors and researchers on the leading edge of their fields' ('Call to Canadian Contributors') contribute to residential schooling history and Indigenous cultural knowledge more generally. The website uses 'narratives, statements, and counter-memories that serve as an immediately present context for users' (Florini 322).

Residential Schools and its additional materials are emblematic of the collective movement between the federal government and Indigenous communities for reconciliation in Canada. One of the additional links attached to each episode is the TRC reports. As a database, the Commission's website contains the finalized 2015 reports, 'modern reports,' historical reports, and 'Aboriginal Healing Foundation Reports,' all of which inform the public about the research findings on Indigenous cultures and residential schooling ('Reports'). TRC divides its 2015 reports into summary, survival testimonies, the Commission's principles, and the required calls to action, which the podcast implements in its narratives generally, while aspects of *The Survivors Speak* (Truth and Reconciliation Commission) report are specifically transmitted in the podcast orally. Highlighting the various conditions and the lived experiences of these survivors, the podcast and *The Survivors Speak* (Truth and Reconciliation Commission) report both touch on forced removal, poor meals, intensive labour, religious indoctrination, and physical punishment, among many more abusive forms. Pille Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt and Johanna Willstedt Buchholtz argue, 'Publicness allows participants to raise awareness, but also broadens

understandings of human experience writ large' (265). In these iterations, the report contextualizes the individualized experiences of the episode's narrators as systemic, reflecting larger problematic experiences amongst First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples in residential schools. Introducing these reports through the podcast's narratives and as an 'Additional reading' appendage reinforces the movement towards acknowledgment and reconciliation for Indigenous peoples that listeners actually hear speak.

'Indigenous Peoples' Collection – (Written) 'Articles'

Historica Canada's *Residential Schools* page is found within the 'Colonial History' section of the 'Indigenous Peoples' collection on Historica Canada/the Canadian Encyclopedia website, which combines the podcast with seventeen thematic categories of written articles, five timelines, seven educational guides, and twelve videos ('Indigenous People'). As of August 2020, the Indigenous collection has over 600 written articles, videos, sonic texts, and images in total. For Canadian residential schools specifically, there are eleven written articles by various Indigenous scholars, two educational guides, four videos, one timeline, one image (though there are countless more embedded within all articles), and the *Residential Schools*' three podcast episodes totaling twenty-one residential school-related documents. Library and Archive Canada provide many of the images, though not all of them include information on the students in the photos or the photographers of the images.

Couldry argues that in addition to considering length, familiarity, and a diverse viewership, producers contemplate creating an online narrative that combines writing, sound, video, and images to attract various audiences (382). Historica Canada supplements *Residential Schools*' audio narratives with written articles, including the 'Residential Schools in Canada' (Miller) entry that extensively examines the history of residential schools that the podcast's testimonies corroborate, and an interactive Google Map (Miller) pinpointing all the residential school locations across Canada. Covering various aspects of residential schools in Canada, including intergenerational trauma, government apologies issued by former Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper, former Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne, and current Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, and the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, the writing database extends the experiences and testimonies found within the podcast.

Like any term found in most encyclopedias or dictionaries, an entry is meant to educate all people and articulate information in the easiest manner. But Historica Canada is aware that official government policies, treaties, and reports are often loaded with confusing language and jargon not easily interpretable for all audiences. Thus, the digital 'Indigenous Peoples' collection includes articles like 'Residential Schools in Canada (Plain-Language Summary)' and 'Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Plain-Language Summary),' written in layman's terms. The plain-language summaries are shorter in length and therefore have less detail, but they provide an overall snapshot of residential schooling and the government-commissioned research findings. Comparing 'Residential Schools in Canada' and 'Residential Schools in Canada (Plain-Language Summary),' both include a 'key facts'

chart and historic images of residential schools, but the in-depth article additionally inserts survivor testimonies found in the Commission reports and *Residential Schools* history podcast. Even the definition of residential schools is explained in more detail in the extensive article despite referring to the same colonial system.

Historica Canada provides these plain-language articles to bridge audiences across knowledge and context boundaries, from all ages and (English/French speaking) cultures and help them understand Canadian residential schooling details. Written articles supplement the podcast narratives more generally, providing context and knowledge that are introduced in the twenty-plus minute episodes. Although *Residential Schools* is voiced by a small group of Indigenous peoples who are directly affected by the content and self-represent their experiences and ancestral histories, a larger community contributes to the written articles within the 'Indigenous Peoples' collection. Written articles expand voices and cultural knowledge that the podcast narratives begin, but ultimately, both the podcast and the written articles work collaboratively towards the same educational goal.

'Indigenous Peoples' Collection – 'Videos'

The podcast is also coupled with videos, adding to Historica Canada/the Canadian Encyclopedia's transmedia database. John Barber argues that transmedia help tell a narrative across multiple media on the same subject, where each medium provides a different experience despite focusing on the same theme (8). Each document can function on its own, just as the *Residential Schools* history podcast can be an isolated audio text and the 'Indigenous Peoples' database collection can be viewed separately (Barber 8). However, when connected together across platforms, each document and its technological affordances creates a unique consumer experience. Effective transmedia affirms the audience as active agents helping construct the content's meaning through their engagement with all texts and potentially contribute to the public database (Spinelli and Dann 157). The 'Indigenous Peoples' collection as a transmedia archive includes videos on residential histories that attest to the Canadian residential schooling macro-narrative alongside individual testimonies and documents providing individualized details.

The video 'Lillian Elias: A Residential School Survivor's Story' is an animated video that Lillian Elias narrates about her experiences within a residential school and her resistance to Euro-Canadian assimilation. On its own, this video's narrative reveals a particular instance of Inuvialuit childhood, but overall, it contributes to the collective history of residential schooling's systemic oppression against all Indigenous peoples similarly found in the history podcast. Furthermore, the video is narrated over illustrations rather than recorded visuals. Here, Historica Canada creates an accessible video for younger audiences in Canada who may not be able to watch live re-enactments of the physical and verbal abuse Lillian Elias experienced. Similarly, *Residential Schools'* podcast program logo created by Halie Finney is produced in the style of a child's drawing, implying that the podcast voices children's colonized experiences while also inviting younger audiences to consume the podcast and its related, transmedia documents.

Historica Canada's compilation of materials containing survivor voices meshed with visual adaptations, images, and written histories constructs an informative and educational media database creating a multi-sensory experience for listeners to grasp the historic residential school system based on the texts individuals choose to interact with.

'Indigenous Peoples' Collection – 'Education' and 'Timelines'

Historica Canada's transmedia production on residential schools is furthered through an educational guide. 'Residential Schools in Canada Guide' is a tool for educators to introduce residential schooling in classrooms, which includes a study guide, a worksheet, and a Heritage Minute video on twelve-year-old Anishinaabe residential school student Chanie Wenjack. Together, these texts create a starting point for elementary and middle school students to 'understand the reasons for the actions, beliefs and decisions that motivated the creation and maintenance of this system for more than a century' ('Residential Schools in Canada Education Guide'). The study guide includes approaches for teachers to address the sensitive subject matter with students, information on residential schooling's legacy, ethical dilemmas of museums exhibiting Indigenous items and/or remains, and the significance of oral traditions.

Historica Canada further implements a timeline on its website, which works closely with the articles and the podcast. The timeline includes important dates and has a written blurb and image accompanying each significant moment that is divided by history and recent reconciliation practices. Timelines are effective visuals to contextualize an extensive history that includes various political legislations, Indigenous peoples, geographic locations, and forms of resistance and reconciliation. By mapping out the extensive history, listeners can better understand where the digital stories voiced through the *Residential Schools* podcast fit within the larger context of residential school histories in Canada. Similarly to the articles and podcast web page, the timeline also includes internal links and clickable keywords to connect audiences to additional resources. In conjunction with the history podcast, people can locate the audio narratives in the timeline themselves, building a larger picture where disparate survivor testimonies and Robinson-Desjarlais's narration land in accordance with each other, visually locating the sonic testimonies in relation to other residential schooling and colonial histories.

The timelines, educational guides, and history podcast all coalesce into a transmedia tool for educating Canadians on the residential school system. In sections 62 and 63 of the TRC's *Calls to Action*, the Commission asks that 'federal, provincial, and territorial governments, in consultation with Survivors, Aboriginal peoples, and educators,' provide age-appropriate resources and curricula on residential schooling for students and support educator development regarding *how* to effectively teach residential school histories (7-8). The issue remains that curricula are not nationally, but provincially and territorially, developed, which means that many educators are left to teaching residential school history on their own accord. Thus, the Historica Canada podcast and educational resources offer some support for a national teaching effort despite provincial and territorial divisions of

education. The audio narratives provide an entry and foundation for learning about an oppressive history and its lasting effects that are only beginning to be taught and acknowledged today with the assistance of online materials.

Listener Responses

Residential Schools is emblematic of how podcasting is equally about consumption as it is production since 'a medium is defined by practice and the ways in which participants identify with that practice' (Berry 25). Although history podcasts produce meaning through interviews, archival audio, and personal stories edited together in a succinct narrative alongside external texts, they are equally defined by a listener's interaction with the content that facilitates sociability at the moment of consumption. Jonathan Sterne et al. argue that distribution solidifies a 'diverse range of listening practices' (n.p.). *Residential Schools'* podcast consumption may be analyzed as more than listening to audio, as an interaction with a collection of written, visual, and audio texts.

Podcasts typically 'have a very nuanced set of expectations as to how [they] will be consumed and trust that the audience will live up to those expectations' (Spinelli and Dann 91). As Alyn Euritt notes, podcasts with particular listening expectations may need to provide instructions within their audio to direct listeners on *how* to interact with the program's products for the 'proper' interactive experience (351). Listeners have the option to interact with additional content, which may affect how the audio narrative is interpreted in conjunction with, or separate from, the supplementary resources that the history podcaster provides. *Residential Schools* would benefit from detailing its additional educational resources for listeners who accessed the podcast from a third-party website/application (e.g. Apple Podcasts) to research further into the topic.

Ultimately, whether many Canadians are listening to *Residential Schools* and using the podcast to forward the movement for reconciliation and reparations remains to be seen, but its 4.9/5 audience rating based on 71 reviews from Apple Podcast listeners (as of 23 January 2021) indicates that the program has an audience. Listeners have responded positively to the podcast, specifically referencing its educational breadth and support of Indigenous history. One listener commented, 'This is spectacular and so informative. I learned so much and I'm so happy this podcast was made. Highly recommend' (ghetto nugget). Another listener said, 'Thankful to have access to this information so we can do better as we move forward toward truth and reconciliation' (sydholmes). Listeners have also commented their appreciation of the podcast speakers. One listener wrote, 'I am so grateful to Elders and survivors of residential schools for sharing the truth so that Canadians can understand history and take concrete action on reconciliation' (fullfun). Similarly, TheGoblin1977 commented, 'Absolutely essential. Thoughtful, clear-eyed, and empathetic treatment of a story that bears repeating.' Although the identities of these *Residential School* listeners are anonymous, they collectively acknowledge the podcast's approach to Canada's traditionally silenced history and move towards some form of reconciliation. What

remains to be determined is if *Residential Schools* can grow its listenership over time since it is a limited series with only three episodes.

Conclusion

This article has focused on the *Residential Schools* history podcast and its narrative construction alongside Historica Canada's digital archive and database on the Canadian Encyclopedia website. Found within the 'Indigenous Peoples' collection, the podcast and its supplementary materials produce an extensive educational experience for listeners learning about residential school history in Canada while raising awareness about the overdue need for reconciliation and reparations. The amalgamation of Historica Canada materials creates a transmedia narrative conveying critical interpretations of history through first person lived experiences and Indigenous cultural knowledge typically excluded from dominant public discourse. Branching from the TRC, *Residential Schools* extends the Government of Canada's goal to retrospectively acknowledge and correct the country's oppressive colonial history in accordance with Historica Canada's mandate to facilitate marginalized voices and stories un(der)represented over time. Yet *Residential Schools* also marks a community effort at local levels to curate micronarratives that construct a national macronarrative for Indigenous peoples across Canada. Although this article has emphasized the history podcast and its supplementary archival materials that extend learning beyond audio consumption for all Canadians, Indigenous communities are also foundationally considered in *Residential Schools'* narrative production since the podcast underscores 'concerns that otherwise go unnoticed, are discounted, or limited by the surfeit of hegemonic representations' (Vrikki and Malik 281).

Residential Schools provides a sensitive and disturbing Canadian history that needs to be acknowledged nationally today, even if listeners only consume the podcast's audio. Cuffe argues,

Where a popular history book will generally lack detailed reflections on sources and interpretations – deemed by editors as unpalpable to the general reader – the conventions of podcasting and audio history present an engaging and reflective account of the process of history-making. (569)

If consumed alongside its online archive webpages, *Residential Schools* offers a critical interpretation of Canadian colonial history with unique documents that immerse listeners in the material history of the nation's cultural genocide of Indigenous communities (MacDonald and Hudson 431). The podcast revisits the country's history and provides a space for marginalized voices to speak on behalf of themselves and their communities while simultaneously educating people nationally. Indeed, *Residential Schools* illustrates the potential for history podcasts, in their collection of audio, written, video, and still image

materials digitally distributed, to help listeners intertextually interpret the past and its present effect alongside larger social movements for change and accountability nationwide.

A potential question for further history podcast research, especially for non-commercial programs, voicing marginalized identities and experiences moving forward is: 'how can podcasts promote content effectively to reach the largest audience possible without conforming their narratives and independence to commercial influence?' This question is ripe for future research in podcast studies, especially in the Canadian context.

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