

## **Comparative (Post)Colonialisms**

Residential School Architectures in Canada, USA, Australia, and New Zealand

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### **Abstract**

*The removal of Indigenous children from their communities to residential schools was a feature of government policy in the settler states of Canada, the USA, Australia, and New Zealand in the late nineteenth and much of the twentieth centuries. The purpose of these institutions was to assimilate their inmates into Euro-colonial society. The architectural strategies used in administering these policies of assimilation are a crucial but often overlooked aspect of systems of colonization. In this paper, I draw connections among these architectures in four countries descended from the British Empire by examining them as “quotations” of one another—linked through direct simulation such as Canada’s use of American boarding schools as a model, or less direct links like the influence of global actors such as missionary organizations or their shared use of Euro-colonial institutional models. Focusing on four case studies—the Mohawk Institute in Canada, Carlisle Indian Industrial School in the USA, Moore River Native Settlement in Australia, and St. Stephen’s College in New Zealand—I read each through the way its architecture functioned as an ideological tool of control in the context of settler-Indigenous relations. The case studies act as indices towards a comparative framework for the spatial products of colonialism, the aim being to describe the significance of architecture and other forms of spatial organization in facilitating parallel colonizing practices around the globe. Finally, I explore the transformation of these built environments over time, demonstrating how changes reflected settler priorities and not those of the Indigenous peoples they affected, and uncovering ruptures between past and present in the complex histories and memories of (post-colonial) societies.*

In the winter of 1879, an Irish-born lawyer and journalist named Nicholas Flood Davin travelled to the United States to investigate its “Indian” boarding schools as a model for the assimilation of Indigenous peoples in Canada. Having visited government-run institutions in Oklahoma, Virginia, and Minnesota, Davin wrote in his report to Prime Minister John A. Macdonald, “I should recommend, at once, an extensive application of the principle of industrial boarding schools ... were it not that the population, both Indian and half-breed, is so largely migratory that any great outlay at present would be money thrown away”.<sup>1</sup> Instead, he suggested, Canada should enter into contracts with religious denominations already running mission boarding schools, which were “scattered over the whole continent, wherever Indians exist, monuments of religious zeal and heroic self-sacrifice”.<sup>2</sup> Touching on the missionary origins and entanglements of residential school schemes—not only in Canada and the United States, but half a world away in the fledgling settler states of Australia and New Zealand—Davin’s words also suggested the multiple scales of the colonial project, from the vast swathes of land to be cleared for settler occupation to what Sarah de Leeuw has called the “intimate geographies” used to structure the lives of Indigenous peoples caught in the wake.<sup>3</sup>

As the four aforementioned countries developed policies around European settlement in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the necessity of Indigenous assimilation became a foregone conclusion. Children in particular were targeted because they were deemed more culturally malleable than adults, especially when they were removed from the influence of their families and communities. The Davin report, for instance, noted the American government’s experience that when children were able to go home after school, “the influence of the wigwam was stronger than the influence of the school”.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, the Aborigines’ Protection Society, which had some influence over policies towards Indigenous peoples in Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, “had no qualms about separating children from their parents”.<sup>5</sup> In 1847, the Society reported that “all the most encouraging examples have occurred with young persons, early removed from the pernicious influence of their countrymen to enjoy the privileges of a guarded home”. Residential institutions thus became integral in attempts to transform Indigenous populations into “useful” participants in settler colonial economies. In the words of Foucault, the implementation of these colonizing policies required an architecture “that is no longer built to be seen ... but to permit an internal, articulated and detailed control”.<sup>6</sup>

At the same time, residential schools for Indigenous children often participated in what Erving Goffman has termed “institutional display”—a practice of revealing aspects of the institution to outsiders, often to justify its own existence or drum up support from the wider society.<sup>7</sup> This often involved improving or expanding its architecture, which also reflected shifting institutional priorities. Anna Haebich notes in that in Australia, “progress in building programs, for example, could take on a special significance as tangible evidence to the outside world of institutional advance and commitment to the children”.<sup>8</sup> The architecture of these institutions thus played a dual role in colonizing processes, targeting the bodies and minds of the children within them while remaining selectively visible to the settler societies in whose service they operated. In the US context, Jacqueline Fear-Segal observes that the Carlisle Indian Industrial School functioned in this double sense, as “both physical apparatus, where the experiment to transform Indians was being conducted, and living showcase, where the results of this experiment were displayed to the white public”.<sup>9</sup>

Architectural and spatial strategies were thus integral to the operation of these institutions and their functional role within the broader landscapes of settler colonialism. In what follows, I first examine the legal contexts in which residential schools emerged, followed by brief architectural histories and spatial analyses of a single institution in each settler state as “quotations” of one another—the Mohawk Institute in Canada, Carlisle Indian Industrial School in the United States, Moore River Native Settlement in Australia, and St. Stephen’s College in New Zealand. These case studies act as indices towards a comparative framework for the spatial products of colonialism, with the aim of analysing the significance of architecture and other forms of spatial organization in facilitating parallel colonizing practices around the globe. Finally, I explore the transformation of these built environments over time,

demonstrating how changes reflected settler priorities and not those of the Indigenous peoples they affected, and uncovering ruptures between past and present in the complex histories and memories of (post-colonial societies).

### Colonial Contexts

Missionary efforts towards the Christianization of Indigenous peoples in Canada, the US, Australia and New Zealand formed the basis for later government attempts at assimilation through the use of residential institutions to separate children from their communities. In all four states, Christianity was in a symbiotic relationship with “civilization”, each requiring the other as far as the transformation of Indigenous peoples was concerned.

In what was to become Canada, missionary education was introduced in early seventeenth-century New France and continued in the Maritimes in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.<sup>10</sup> By the middle of the nineteenth century, the colonial government’s plans for Indigenous peoples included dispossessing them of lands through treaty-making, confining them to reserves, and cultural assimilation.<sup>11</sup> Various laws, including the 1857 *Gradual Civilization Act* and the *British North America Act*, 1867, contained provisions for controlling Indigenous peoples (specifically, First Nations) and paved the way for the first *Indian Act* in 1876. This piece of “cradle-to-grave legislation”,<sup>12</sup> currently still in force, defines how reserves are governed and who is and is not a “status Indian”.<sup>13</sup> When Davin tabled his report to the Canadian government in 1879, twelve mission boarding schools, including the Mohawk Institute, were operating in four Canadian provinces.<sup>14</sup> The residential school system grew rapidly thereafter, with the government providing funding and policy direction, and various Christian denominations managing the schools. In 1884, an amendment to the Indian Act made schooling compulsory for Indigenous children.

In the United States, both Spanish and English missionaries established schools as part of missions beginning in the 1600s.<sup>15</sup> School attendance was made compulsory for Indigenous children by two pieces of legislation, enacted in 1891 and 1893, around the same time as Canada and New Zealand passed similar laws. In practice, however, it was not until the twentieth century that their enforcement became common.<sup>16</sup> In 1928, *The Problem of Indian Administration*, known as the Meriam Report, recommended that education be brought closer to the communities from which students came and that the curriculum encompass Indigenous cultures. In many ways, off-reservation boarding schools in the United States were similar to Canadian residential schools; a major difference was that most schools in the US were run by the government, not churches (although religion remained a part of the institution). Another difference was an emphasis on extra-curricular activities such as team sports and arts, and periods when Indigenous cultures were allowed to flourish, for example in response to the Meriam Report.<sup>17</sup>

In Australia, as in Canada and the United States, early efforts at “civilizing” Aboriginal children were first conducted by Christian missionaries seeking converts. Colonial policies concerning Aboriginal peoples were developed by each state or territory, rather than at the federal level; however, Queensland’s *Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Bill 1897* influenced legislation later introduced by the Northern Territory, South Australia and Western Australia. This act allowed Protectors to remove any Aboriginal or “half-caste” child or adult to anywhere in the state—often to Christian missions.<sup>18</sup> In Western Australia, the *Aborigines Act 1905* made the Chief Protector the legal guardian of all Aboriginal and “half-caste” children up to sixteen years of age, extended to twenty-one in 1936.<sup>19</sup> A.O. Neville, an English-born bureaucrat appointed Chief Protector in 1915, began his appointment by establishing the native settlements of Carrolup in 1915 and Moore River in 1918. Neville preferred to remove children, especially “half-castes”, to these government-run settlements rather than to the missions, with whom relations were often strained. Again, the separation of children from their communities was paramount in this scheme; Neville proclaimed that “until the children are taken ... and trained apart from their parents no real progress towards

assimilation is to be expected".<sup>20</sup> Australian authorities were generally aware of American Indian policy; however, it is unclear whether they had specific knowledge of the boarding schools or whether this was influential in developing the settlements.<sup>21</sup>

The first missionary school for Māori children in New Zealand was started in 1816 by the Anglican Church Missionary Society. By the 1830s, there were several more schools that formed part of religious missions around the islands, and Māori who attended often established their own village schools using the Māori language. Like in other colonial contexts, religious conversion went hand in hand with cultural assimilation, as suggested by the first Anglican Bishop of New Zealand, George Selwyn, in 1842:

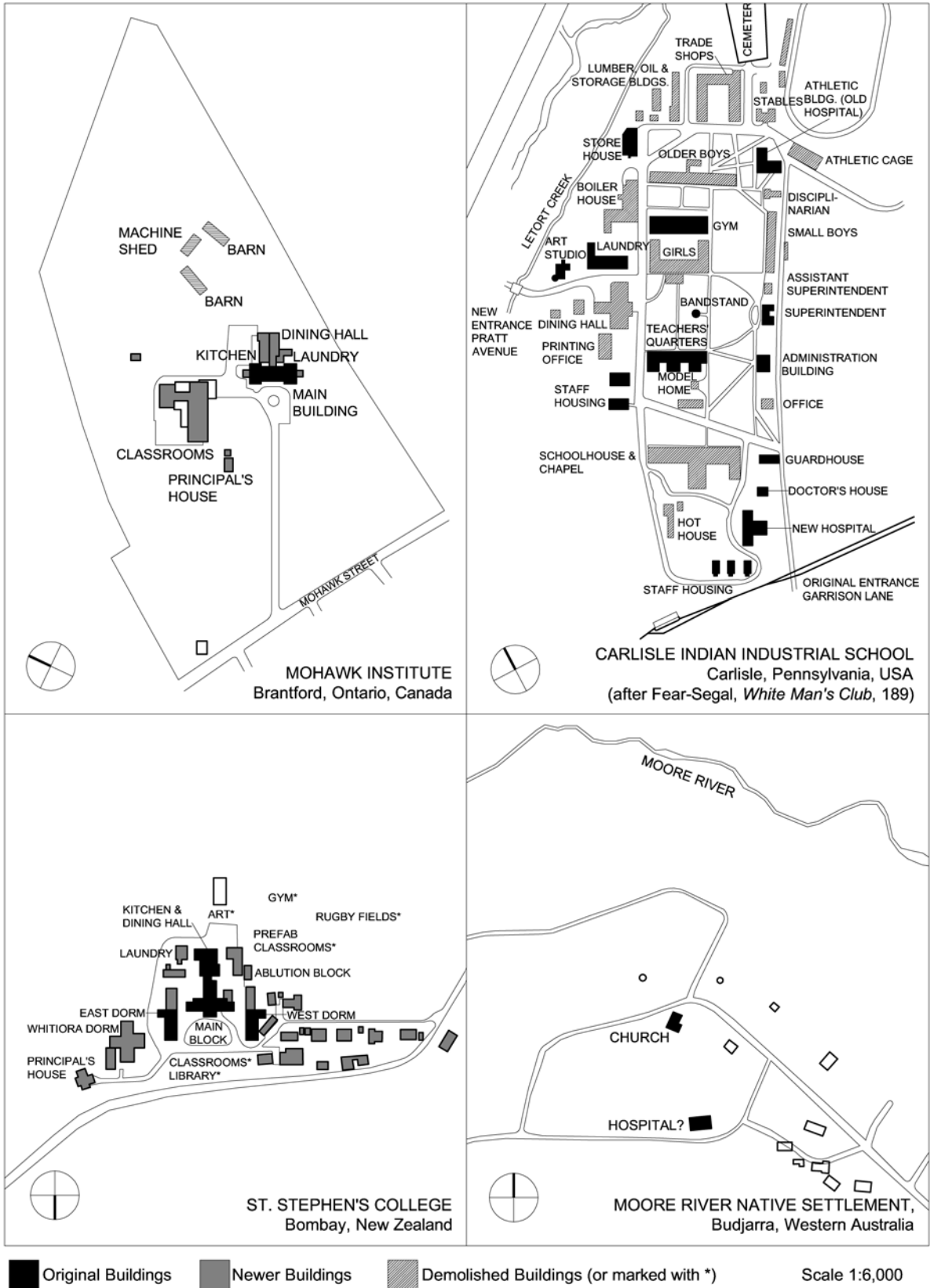
We shall be called upon immediately to form institutions for the effectual training of the native children from the earliest childhood that they may become habituated from the first to English customs ... and be instructed as well in the principles of true religion as in all the useful arts which may fit them to their place among the English settlers without distinction of persons.<sup>22</sup>

Based on Governor George Grey's racial amalgamation policy and the view that education could be a tool of pacification—as in the United States—the colonial government began to support existing mission schools through the *Education Ordinance 1847*. The first *Native Schools Act 1858* provided annual funding while mandating the use of English and that Māori students at these schools live away from home in a boarding arrangement.<sup>23</sup> By the wars of the 1860s, most mission schools had closed. The *Native Schools Act, 1867* enshrined colonial control over education but also established community committees for the management of these segregated schools in an effort to rebuild Māori trust in schools.<sup>24</sup> Compulsory schooling for Māori was legislated in 1894, ten years after Canada enacted similar legislation affecting First Nations. Until the 1940s, a network of boarding schools run by religious denominations, including St. Stephen's, offered the main option for secondary-level education for Māori students. By the 1980s, all church-run schools had been integrated into the state education system, often against the wishes of Māori communities.

While the legal and social contexts of colonization and European settlement provided the impetus for the establishment of residential institutions for Indigenous children, the parallels and differences in their physical manifestations help reveal how settler colonial ideology and policy materialized at different times and in different parts of the world. The architecture of each of the four institutions discussed below serves as evidence of its distinct colonial context while their similarities, especially at the functional level, demonstrate the remarkable consistency in the spatial strategies of colonization across the globe.

### **Worlds Apart**

Anna Haebich notes that Australian governments “drew principally on missionary methods for ‘civilising’ indigenous peoples in the colonies and nineteenth-century practices for controlling white ‘problem populations,’” seeing in the centralized institution “an administratively efficient and economical solution” to the perceived problems of Indigenous segregation and assimilation.<sup>25</sup> This description applies equally well to institutions in Canada, the US, and New Zealand, all places where Indigenous children were taken to live apart from their communities in order to “lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life”<sup>26</sup> for the purpose of training and assimilation. In their architecture, these institutions differed significantly in a formal sense, but provided functionally similar built environments enabling the realization of settler government policies aimed at Indigenous peoples (Fig. 1).



**Figure 1.** The four institutions discussed in this paper. (Drawings, Magdalena Miłosz).

### Mohawk Institute

The Mohawk Institute was the longest-running residential school for Indigenous children in Canada. Established in 1829 by the New England Company (NEC), a Protestant missionary organization, it was built on land granted by Six Nations and the colonial government near the settler town of Brantford, Ontario. Initially a “mechanic’s institute” for male students from Six Nations, it soon expanded to accommodate females and boarders.<sup>27</sup> The NEC acquired a large farm for the school in 1860, which became a profitable exercise in “vocational training” for the students. In 1891, the institution became part of the network of residential schools proposed by Davin and began to receive per-capita funding from the federal government, a system documented to have had negative impacts because it motivated administrators to overcrowd facilities.<sup>28</sup>

The Mohawk Institute’s buildings were destroyed by fires in 1854 and again in 1903, possibly set by students protesting poor conditions. In 1904, a replacement school was built to plans by the principal, Reverend R. Ashton, and his son—one of the last residential school designs to originate outside the federal Department of Indian Affairs (Fig. 2).<sup>29</sup> The new building served as a model for later schools built by government architects across Canada—like the Mohawk Institute, many of these had an E-shaped plan containing classrooms on the ground floor and two storeys of gender-segregated dormitories above, as well as a back wing with service and assembly spaces such as a cafeteria and chapel. The Mohawk Institute’s neoclassical, red-brick main building was set well back from the street at the end of a long drive, with Doric columns supporting a two-storey verandah (which has since been reduced to one storey) and a domed cupola, another feature shared by schools across the country.



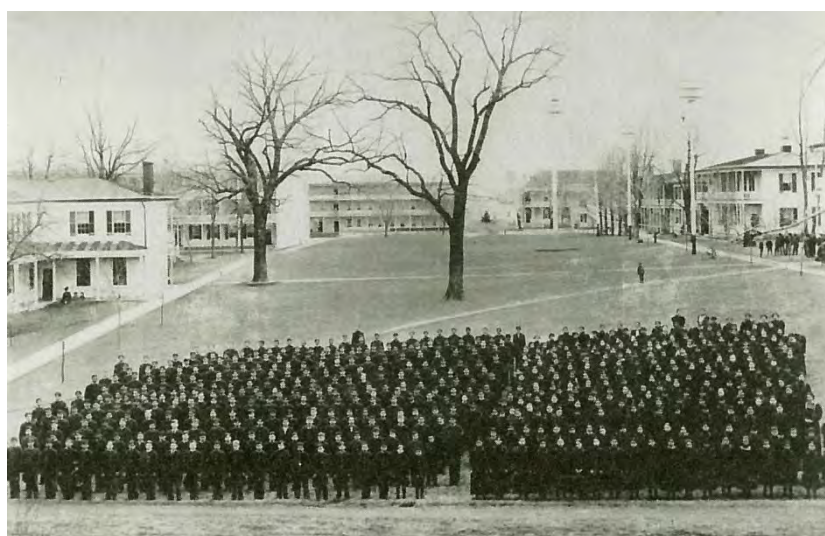
**Figure 2.** The former Mohawk Institute in Brantford, Ontario, Canada was reused as the Woodland Cultural Centre after the school’s closure in 1972. First Nations artist Kevin Lamure’s *Up the Creek* (2015) and other pieces have been installed on the grounds. Originally established in 1829, the extant building was constructed in 1904; photo 2016. (Photo, Magdalena Miłosz).

A key architectural feature shared by the Mohawk Institute with later residential schools in Canada was the “Indian parlour” or “Indian room”, often located off the main hall directly inside the main entrance, or sometimes with a separate entrance. This room served as a controlled point of access for parents of children in the institution, where they would conduct visits under the supervision of staff to ensure Indigenous languages were not used. Geoffrey Carr also contends that these rooms were situated so as to limit sightlines into the building, preventing parents from gaining knowledge about what was happening in the school.<sup>30</sup>



### Carlisle Indian Industrial School

The same year that Davin made his visit to American boarding schools, Captain Richard Henry Pratt established the Carlisle Indian Industrial School at a former army barracks in Carlisle, Pennsylvania—the first federally funded, off-reservation boarding school in the United States (Fig. 3). Pratt's earlier experience educating Kiowa, Comanche, Cheyenne, and Arapaho prisoners at Fort Marion, Florida informed his choice of an isolated environment and preference for a captive inmate population at Carlisle.<sup>31</sup> These were crucial considerations, especially in the context of pacifying Indigenous peoples being dispossessed of their lands, as children were often treated as hostages to guarantee compliance.<sup>32</sup> The location in Pennsylvania would separate the students from their home communities in the west by a considerable distance and the physical features of the army barracks would enable control and surveillance, as well as provide opportunities for expansion.



**Figure 3.** Carlisle Indian Industrial School, Pennsylvania, United States (Richard Henry Pratt, *Battlefield and Classroom: Four Decades with the American Indian, 1867-1904* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), 362).

Although Carlisle's architecture was, at the outset, determined by the layout of the existing army barracks, Pratt continued to modify its physical fabric throughout his twenty-five-year tenure at the institution.<sup>33</sup> He added buildings like the dining hall, gymnasium, and laundry, modified or replaced others, and erected a seven-foot-high fence within a week of the school's opening.<sup>34</sup> Fear-Segal argues that the schools' professed goal of training Indigenous students as equal citizens was belied by the spatial organization of the campus, with the dining hall, bandstand, and superintendent's quarters forming an axis across the central parade ground that separated the students' half of the site from that of the white staff.<sup>35</sup> This duality was emphasized through the placement of the trade shops, where industrial training took place, in a large barracks building at the far end of the students' side of the campus, while the school house was at the very opposite end of the staff side, past the teachers' quarters and administration buildings. The message was that academic success was a notional goal, whereas the transformation of the students into a new working class was the true aim of the institution. This tension between academic space as enabler of "civilization" and the spaces of industrial training as the true focus likewise manifested in all four institutions under discussion.

### Moore River Native Settlement

In Australia, Aboriginal children were subject to discriminatory laws that enabled their removal by the state to a variety of institutions. The Moore River Native Settlement, established just west of Mogumber, Western Australia in 1918, was exemplary of the large government-run settlements

introduced in the twentieth century. Other institutional forms included smaller children's homes as well as the church-run missions.<sup>36</sup> Unlike in North America and New Zealand, larger boarding schools were uncommon in Australia. At Moore River, children were kept in a separate compound that formed part of a larger, multi-purpose camp, which also housed destitute adults, those in conflict with authorities, those forcibly removed from town camps on the insistence of white settlers, and (sometimes) the mothers of the "half-caste" (mixed-race) children in the compound.<sup>37</sup> The buildings of the compound, several hundred yards west of the remainder of the settlement, comprised a church, schoolhouse, dining room with cook house and bakery, boys' and girls' dormitories, nurses' and teachers' quarters, store, and laundry. Additional spaces were a kindergarten, sewing room, hospital, and the "Big House", or superintendent's residence.<sup>38</sup> Most of these were one-storey, hip-roofed buildings, many with verandahs. The church was a small, Gothic country church. Jack Davis writes that in 1932, "the whole area was ringed by a three-metre netting fence topped with barbed wire. That was called the compound".<sup>39</sup> One road led out towards Mogumber.

### St. Stephen's College

St. Stephen's College (Tīpene in Māori) began as an Anglican girls' school in 1844 and became a boys' school in 1860, with a secondary school program developed in the 1920s. Until 1930, the school was run by the Anglican church in a complex of small buildings on St. Stephen's Ave. in Parnell, a suburb of Auckland, New Zealand. In 1931, the school was moved to a rural site south of Auckland in Bombay, which put it in a context akin to those of the Mohawk Institute and Carlisle in order to provide agricultural training to the students.<sup>40</sup> This move was vigorously opposed by the principal, Albert Wilson, because he believed its proximity to Auckland University and presence in the city were more important to the institution than teaching farm work.<sup>41</sup> Nevertheless, the campus was moved to Bombay. The school, dormitories, and other buildings were built in a distinctive Spanish Colonial or Mission style, with curvilinear gables, niches, and arched portals (Fig. 4).



**Figure 4.** St. Stephen's College Old Boys at a gathering next to the now vacant school, Bombay, New Zealand. A dormitory building appears to the left of the main academic block. (Māori Television, "Old Boys Return to St Stephen's for Reunion", online video, 2:32, October 27, 2013, <http://www.maoritelevision.com/news/regional/old-boys-return-st-stephens-reunion>).

The main buildings, visible from the entrance to the site, are a large classroom block with a prominent tower, flanked by two plain dormitory buildings framing a central court. The dining hall and kitchen were directly to the rear of the main classroom block. Other buildings, including the staff houses, laundry, and gymnasium, which had been built by the students at the Parnell site and re-erected in



Bombay, surrounded the main building and dormitories. In 1942, St. Stephen's was closed and used as a military hospital, reopening in 1947 under Patrick Smyth, the first Headmaster born in New Zealand and one of the first Maori headmasters of a secondary school in the country.<sup>42</sup> It is important to remark that there is a key distinction between St. Stephen's and the three previously discussed institutions, in that attendance at St. Stephen's was never compulsory. Peter Cleave notes that the school was seen by many pupils and parents as an "alternative" to state schools, allowing the expression of Maori culture and language and producing prominent Maori graduates.<sup>43</sup> It was also a multicultural institution; although the student body was predominantly Maori, at different times it also included Pakeha (European), Polynesian, Melanesian, and Asian pupils. With this in mind, its inclusion in this analysis is based on several factors, namely: its origins and continuation as an Anglican missionary institution, its Euro-colonial architecture, its funding by the state (through scholarships and, later, directly), and the fact that its control was ultimately in non-Indigenous hands.

### Comparing Colonial Institutions

Although these four institutions in four different settler states present vastly different appearances, they all shared the fact that their architecture was European, which is significant in their role as institutions imparting Euro-colonial culture and religion to non-European children. Furthermore, they share many similarities in program, although this program was arranged differently at each institution. The single, main building of the Mohawk Institute contained classrooms and sleeping quarters for children and staff, whereas Carlisle, Moore River, and St. Stephen's separated these functions into distinct buildings. Other than classrooms, the key elements of the shared program of the four institutions includes religious space (church or chapel), dormitories, carceral spaces (although probably not at St. Stephen's), and spaces of industrial education.

At the Mohawk Institute, which was staffed by Anglicans, children attended religious services down the road at the Mohawk Chapel. This free-standing church is the oldest in Ontario, given to the Mohawk people by the Crown in 1785 for their support during the American Revolution. Likewise, Moore River had a stand-alone church that resembled the Mohawk Chapel with its gable roof, row of gothic windows, and wood siding, although it was smaller and simpler. At Carlisle and St. Stephen's, chapels were integrated into the main school buildings, although St. Stephen's students would also go to St. Peter's in the Forest Church in Bombay until the late 1950s.<sup>44</sup> In the early 1970s, Cleave noted that at St. Stephen's, "the chapel acts as a focus for the interplay between Maori culture and Christianity since contact",<sup>45</sup> reflecting missionary influence and the complexity that often evolved out of these encounters.

Dormitories were a central feature of institutional life and enabled the schools to fulfil their *raison d'être*—the full-time accommodation of Indigenous children in order to separate them from their communities and impart Euro-colonial culture. They also played a role in spatially dividing inmates within the institution based on sex, age, and nationality, depending on the criterion most important to the school administration at a given moment. At Moore River, Carlisle, and St. Stephen's, the dormitories were stand-alone buildings separated from other institutional functions. As such, they corresponded with Davin's suggestion, among other architectural recommendations gleaned from his visit to American boarding schools, that the dormitory should be separated from the school so that "the children are kept from spoiling the [school] building".<sup>46</sup>

At the Mohawk Institute, however, as at most Canadian residential schools built in the twentieth century, the dormitories were integrated into one imposing building along with classrooms, work, leisure, dining, and staff living areas. Despite their location within a single structure, the dormitories were strictly segregated by sex, with girls housed in the east wing and boys in the west, each with their own staircase. The central section of the building—containing the principal's residence on the second storey—completely separated the two sides. On the third, attic storey, the boys' and girls'

dormitories were divided by a staff bedroom and nurse's station in the centre, ensuring that there was no contact between the two sides.

At Carlisle and Moore River, the separation of boys and girls was achieved with separate, free-standing quarters for either sex, and Carlisle also had separate quarters for small boys and older boys. Likewise, at St. Stephen's, stand-alone dormitories on either side of the main academic block segregated the boys by age. The dormitory buildings at Carlisle differed from those at the other three institutions in that they were composed of smaller bedrooms each accommodating three to four students. This arrangement was used to the advantage of the school's goal of assimilation when it was discovered that Cheyenne and Kiowa students were learning Sioux rather than English, because of the large proportion of Sioux students. Thereafter, the exclusive use of English was mandated and no students speaking the same Indigenous language were roomed together.<sup>47</sup> Larger dormitories permitted increased surveillance, and this was the form used in most Canadian residential schools. Many residential schools built after the Mohawk Institute also had "monitor rooms" with windows looking directly into dormitories.<sup>48</sup> The control of behaviour and suppression of indigeneity through surveillance was often augmented with the threat of imprisonment in carceral spaces contained within the institution.

In the early 1930s, the Royal Commission on Aborigines investigated allegations of slavery, mistreatment and abuse of Aboriginal peoples in Western Australia. Commissioner H.D. Moseley, a Perth magistrate, reported on the appalling physical conditions of the children's compound at Moore River: the dormitories were "dilapidated", "crowded", and "vermin ridden", and the bough shed used as a classroom could not be used in the rain, the dormitories providing the only shelter in wet weather.<sup>49</sup> However, he also lamented that "there are no means of keeping the inmates in the dormitories at night", since despite locked doors, the lattice walls could be broken by inmates intent on visiting the camp beyond the compound. He recommended that all openings in the dormitory be "guarded by a strong link mesh netting" of the type he had seen at the New Norcia Mission, located about 20 kilometres north-east of Moore River. In her account of Moore River in *Rabbit-Proof Fence*, Doris Pilkington describes how a child perceived these conditions, offering this perspective from her mother, Molly, as a fourteen-year-old in 1931:

As they approached they noticed that the door was locked with chains and padlocks. Molly saw that the uninviting weatherboard and latticed dormitory had bars on the windows as well. Just like a gaol, she thought, and she didn't like it one bit.<sup>50</sup>

While clearly not against this carceral aspect of the compound, Moseley was taken aback by another element of the landscape: "I was shown a place of detention commonly called 'the boob' and I disliked its appearance very much".<sup>51</sup> Pilkington describes the physical characteristics of this structure:

The "boob" was a place of detention ... a small, detached concrete room with a sandy floor, with only a gleam of light and little ventilation coming through a narrow, barred opening in the north wall. Every inmate of the settlement dreaded being incarcerated in this place.<sup>52</sup>

Moseley insisted that this structure "should be pulled down" and the maximum detention period of fourteen days "considerably reduced".<sup>53</sup> However, in 1948—thirteen years later—Commissioner of Native Affairs Stanley Middleton was once again shown the "boob" and told by the superintendent that "if they've done anything they shouldn't we put them in here for the night".<sup>54</sup>



**Figure 5.** Moore River Native Settlement, with hospital on the far left and church on the far right. The small structure in the foreground of the church is the “boob”.

These types of carceral spaces were common, yet “unofficial”, features of institutions for Aboriginal children across Australia and included a former hospital morgue and other contained spaces, like cupboards.<sup>55</sup> At the Mohawk Institute, a cupboard under the stairs on the boys’ side was used in a similar manner in the 1960s.<sup>56</sup> Martha Hill, a student at the Mohawk Institute from 1912 to 1918, describes an earlier version of this mode of punishment used by Principal Ashton:

They had one little room – it ... just had room to crawl in and go in the bed if you done anything wrong. That’s how he’d punish you – he’d make you go in that room. No light – shut the door and lock it from the outside. You couldn’t get out of there and you had to stay in there so many hours.<sup>57</sup>

At Carlisle, the guardhouse at the entrance to the site—a remnant from its days as an army barracks—served a dual purpose as a checkpoint and as a jail.<sup>58</sup> The stone building contained four cells in which students were imprisoned as punishment, a practice against which some parents, such as Brulé leader Spotted Tail, protested by withdrawing their children from the school.<sup>59</sup> Significantly, I found no published evidence of such a carceral space at St. Stephen’s.

Another significant element shared between all four institutions was the large proportion of space dedicated to “industrial education”. This was a response to government policies to transform Indigenous populations into labouring classes for the settler economy, and included training in trades or farming for boys, and various domestic tasks, such as sewing, knitting, spinning, or laundering for girls. Agricultural education, as discussed earlier, was the rationale for moving St. Stephen’s from its urban location to a rural site, although in practice this stream of training never formed an important part of the curriculum. Many institutions, including the Mohawk Institute, Carlisle, and Moore River had “outing” programs through which children went to work in settler homes and on farms, satisfying a demand for cheap labour. A “half-day” system, in which half the day was spent in the classroom and the other half working, was also typical. In this way, student labour subsidized operation costs, and the entanglement of this labour with the maintenance of the institution sometimes extended to erecting the buildings themselves, either directly or by financing their construction. In the 1890s, for instance, older boys at Carlisle contributed earnings from their farm work to build a new, three-storey dormitory for 300 residents on the site of a former barrack building, complete with “library, reading, assembly, bath and clothing rooms”.<sup>60</sup>

Like the dormitories, the spaces of “industrial education” were highly gendered, with girls trained in domestic tasks such as sewing in special rooms dedicated to this purpose. At Carlisle, the sewing room was located in the “girls’ industrial hall”, which was located in the same building as the dining room, tying the girls’ industrial activities to the kitchens as well. At the Mohawk Institute, the sewing room was adjacent to the girls’ reading room, while at Moore River, it was a standalone building. Like the farm work, the labour of these sewing rooms was often used to help finance the institution, either by making clothing for the resident children or for use elsewhere.

### Post-Colonial Spaces

The eventual closure of residential institutions for Indigenous children in Canada, the US, Australia and New Zealand was a gradual process that unravelled differently in each settler state. In Canada, First Nations communities took charge of many residential schools in the late 1960s and early 1970s as the government distanced itself from the system. They were either continued as residential institutions or converted to day schools or other uses, as was the case at the Mohawk Institute following its closure in 1969. In 1972, the Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians reused the site as the Woodland Cultural Centre (WCC), which has since developed programs in arts, languages, and education, as well as a substantial museum collection, as ways of reviving the Indigenous cultures curtailed by the residential school system. In 2013, a community consultation revealed an overwhelming preference to keep the existing school building from 1904, and a fundraising campaign called “Save the Evidence” was launched. The WCC is currently reimagining the structure as a residential school museum, the first of its kind in Canada.<sup>61</sup> At a larger scale, the federal government issued an apology for the residential school system in 2008. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, which gathered the stories of residential school survivors alongside in-depth archival research over its seven-year mandate, released its final report, *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future*, in 2015.<sup>62</sup>

American Indian boarding schools were generally phased out in a similar time frame as Canadian schools following the *Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975*. Carlisle itself, however, had ceased operation in 1918, following declining enrolment throughout WWI. The site reverted to the US Army for use as a military hospital and, three decades later, it became the US Army War College, which still occupies the site today. The site is a US National Historic Landmark and bears historic markers, although the entirety of the site belongs to the College. Unlike in Canada, there has been no official apology for the harms done in the boarding schools, although these have been outlined in two reports, Meriam (1928) and Kennedy (1969).<sup>63</sup>

The Moore River Native Settlement became the Mogumber Native Mission under the Mogumber Methodist Mission in 1951,<sup>64</sup> when the Western Australian government handed over its settlements to various denominational missions. In 1974, the mission was closed and its land taken over by the Aboriginal Lands Trust. Through the Trust, the former settlement was given to the Wheatbelt Aboriginal Corporation in 1990 on a 99-year lease. The settlement itself is listed in Western Australia’s heritage register, but only the church and isolation ward remain.<sup>65</sup> The Wheatbelt Aboriginal Corporation’s efforts at restoring the settlement were met with a lack of approval on the part of local Aboriginal people, who felt they should have been consulted about what should happen with the site.<sup>66</sup> Like in Canada, a national inquiry into the removal of Aboriginal children, known as the Stolen Generations, produced a report, entitled *Bringing Them Home*, in 1997. The Australian federal government issued an apology in 2008.

St. Stephen’s College was transferred to partial federal government control, and full federal funding, in 1973, under an agreement renewable every 21 years. In 1994, the agreement was renewed, but state funding was cut in 2000 due to negative government perceptions about its management and issues such as bullying, necessitating its closure. Government promises at the time to open a new state-funded Māori boys’ school at the site have not been honoured, despite a flurry of activism for the

reopening of St. Stephen's around 2013. In the meantime, the school has been used for fire, police, and military training and is now abandoned in a state of decay.<sup>67</sup> Since the 1990s, *Kura Kaupapa* Maori schools have been opening to combat the loss of language and culture since colonization and in 2000, the New Zealand government began supporting a number of these.<sup>68</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Residential institutions for Indigenous children in Canada, the US, Australia and New Zealand shared many aspects in their architectural design and spatial organization, particularly from a functional, if not formal, perspective. This resemblance was influenced by the precedent of Christian missions, similar government policies, and the use of Western institutional models of coercion and control originating in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Yet they are distinct from superficially similar institutions for non-Indigenous children because of their entanglement with colonial policies and their role in the larger context of settler colonialism. In the present, they have become sites of spatial memory, no longer what they were but still evocative of the difficult histories of colonization that are yet to be fully confronted by the settler societies in which they are situated. Their role in the memorialization of these troubled pasts has manifested very differently depending on who owns the buildings, the specific historical context, and the degree to which assimilation was imposed on Indigenous peoples and enforced by the specific settler society. With these four examples, I have shown that there were some parallels among residential institutions for Indigenous children that can be read in and understood more deeply through their architecture. With the framework established here, I hope to contribute to a greater understanding of architecture's role in colonization and also its decolonizing potential.



## Endnotes

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- <sup>1</sup> Nicholas Flood Davin, *Report on Industrial Schools for Indians and Half-Breeds* (Ottawa, 1879), 13. Macdonald was Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior, whose purview included Indian Affairs.
- <sup>2</sup> Davin, *Report on Industrial Schools for Indians and Half-Breeds*, 12.
- <sup>3</sup> Sarah De Leeuw, "Intimate Colonialisms: The Material and Experienced Places of British Columbia's Residential Schools", *The Canadian Geographer* 51, no. 3 (2007): 340.
- <sup>4</sup> Davin, *Report on Industrial Schools for Indians and Half-Breeds*, 1.
- <sup>5</sup> James Heartfield, *The Aborigines' Protection Society: Humanitarian Imperialism in Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, Canada, South Africa, and the Congo, 1836-1909* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 120.
- <sup>6</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage, 2012), 172.
- <sup>7</sup> Erving Goffman, *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1961), 104–5.
- <sup>8</sup> Anna Haebich, *Broken Circles: Fragmenting Indigenous Families, 1800-2000* (Fremantle, W.A.: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 2000), 371.
- <sup>9</sup> Jacqueline Fear-Segal, *White Man's Club: Schools, Race, and the Struggle of Indian Acculturation* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007), 185.
- <sup>10</sup> J. R. Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision: A History of Native Residential Schools* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 39–43, 63–66.
- <sup>11</sup> John F. Leslie, *Commissions of Inquiry into Indian Affairs in the Canadas, 1828-1858: Evolving a Corporate Memory for the Indian Department* (Ottawa: Indian Affairs and Northern Development Canada, 1985).
- <sup>12</sup> Michael Morden, "Theorizing the Resilience of the Indian Act", *CAPA Canadian Public Administration* 59, no. 1 (2016): 113.
- <sup>13</sup> Government of Canada, "Constitution Acts, 1867 to 1982", March 6, 2017, <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/Const/page-4.html>.
- <sup>14</sup> Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision*, 102.
- <sup>15</sup> Linda Archibald, *Decolonization and Healing: Indigenous Experiences in the United States, New Zealand, Australia and Greenland* (Ottawa: Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2006), 8.
- <sup>16</sup> David Wallace Adams, *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928* (Lawrence, Kan.: University Press of Kansas, 1995), 64.
- <sup>17</sup> Archibald, *Decolonization and Healing*, 13.
- <sup>18</sup> Haebich, *Broken Circles*, 170–71; Robert Manne, "Aboriginal Child Removal and the Question of Genocide, 1900-1940", in *Genocide and Settler Society: Frontier Violence and Stolen Indigenous Children in Australian History*, ed. A. Dirk Moses (New York: Berghahn Books, 2005), 221.
- <sup>19</sup> Haebich, *Broken Circles*, 187.
- <sup>20</sup> A.O. Neville, *Australia's Coloured Minority: Its Place in the Community* (Sydney: Currawong, 1947): 176.
- <sup>21</sup> Margaret D. Jacobs, "Indian Boarding Schools in Comparative Perspective: The Removal of Indigenous Children in the United States and Australia, 1880–1940", in *Boarding School Blues: Revisiting American Indian Educational Experiences*, ed. Clifford E. Trafzer et al. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 206.
- <sup>22</sup> Letters and Journals of G.A. Selwyn (and others) 1842-1868, Typescript: Auckland Institute and Museum Library, quoted in Peter Cleave, *St Stephens School 1972-74: The Traditions, Society and Everyday World of a Predominantly Maori Boarding School* (Palmerston North, NZ: Campus Press, 2013), 16.
- <sup>23</sup> Ross Calman, "Māori Education – Mātauranga – Missionaries and the Early Colonial Period", *Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, accessed March 7, 2017, [/en/maori-education-matauranga/page-2](http://en.maori-education-matauranga/page-2).
- <sup>24</sup> Maxine Stephenson, "Closing the Doors on the Maori Schools in New Zealand", *Race, Ethnicity and Education* 9, no. 3 (2006): 310–11.
- <sup>25</sup> Haebich, *Broken Circles*, 143.
- <sup>26</sup> Goffman, *Asylums*, xiii.
- <sup>27</sup> Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision*, 73.
- <sup>28</sup> John Sheridan Milloy, *A National Crime: The Canadian Government and the Residential School System, 1879 to 1986* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1999).
- <sup>29</sup> Dominion of Canada, *Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the Year Ended March 31, 1930* (Ottawa: F.A. Acland, Printer to the King's Most Excellent Majesty, 1931), 18.

- <sup>30</sup> Geoffrey Carr, “‘House of No Spirit’: An Architectural History of the Indian Residential School in British Columbia” (PhD., University of British Columbia, 2011), 101–4.
- <sup>31</sup> Fear-Segal, *White Man’s Club*, 2.
- <sup>32</sup> Archibald, *Decolonization and Healing*, 8.
- <sup>33</sup> Fear-Segal, *White Man’s Club*, 184.
- <sup>34</sup> Fear-Segal, *White Man’s Club*, 190.
- <sup>35</sup> Fear-Segal, *White Man’s Club*, 187.
- <sup>36</sup> Haebich, *Broken Circles*, 154–55.
- <sup>37</sup> Manne, “Aboriginal Child Removal and the Question of Genocide, 1900-1940”, 224, 275.
- <sup>38</sup> Doris Pilkington, *Rabbit-Proof Fence* (New York: Miramax Books: Hyperion, 2002), 67.
- <sup>39</sup> Jack Davis, *A Boy’s Life* (Broome, W.A.: Magabala Books, 1991), 119.
- <sup>40</sup> Ross Calman, “Māori Education – Mātauranga – Māori Church Boarding Schools”, accessed March 8, 2017, [/en/maori-education-matauranga/page-4](http://en/maori-education-matauranga/page-4).
- <sup>41</sup> Cleave, *St Stephens School 1972-74*, 15.
- <sup>42</sup> Brian Old, *St Stephen’s School: Missionary and Multiracial Origins* (Auckland, N.Z.: B. Old, 1994), 68.
- <sup>43</sup> Cleave, *St Stephens School 1972-74*, 193.
- <sup>44</sup> Old, *St Stephen’s School*, 102.
- <sup>45</sup> Cleave, *St Stephens School 1972-74*, 201.
- <sup>46</sup> Davin, *Report on Industrial Schools for Indians and Half-Breeds*, 2.
- <sup>47</sup> Elaine Goodale Eastman, *Pratt: The Red Man’s Moses* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1935), 206.
- <sup>48</sup> Carr, “‘House of No Spirit,’” 95–97.
- <sup>49</sup> H.D. Moseley, quoted in Sharman N. Stone, ed., *Aborigines in White Australia: A Documentary History of the Attitudes Affecting Official Policy and the Australian Aborigine, 1697-1973* (South Yarra, Vic.: Heinemann Educational, 1974), 168–69.
- <sup>50</sup> Pilkington, *Rabbit-Proof Fence*, 63.
- <sup>51</sup> H.D. Moseley, quoted in Stone, *Aborigines in White Australia*, 169.
- <sup>52</sup> Pilkington, *Rabbit-Proof Fence*, 71.
- <sup>53</sup> H.D. Moseley, quoted in Stone, *Aborigines in White Australia*, 169.
- <sup>54</sup> Haebich, *Broken Circles*, 411–12.
- <sup>55</sup> Haebich, *Broken Circles*, 411.
- <sup>56</sup> This was pointed out to me by a tour guide during a tour of the former Mohawk Institute in the Fall of 2013. The stairs in question had been added in the 1960s.
- <sup>57</sup> Elizabeth Graham, *The Mush Hole: Life at Two Indian Residential Schools* (Waterloo, Ont.: Heffle Publishing, 1997), 356.
- <sup>58</sup> Fear-Segal, *White Man’s Club*, 191.
- <sup>59</sup> Jacqueline Fear-Segal, “The History and Reclamation of a Sacred Space: The Indian School Cemetery”, in *Carlisle Indian Industrial School: Indigenous Histories, Memories, and Reclamations*, ed. J. Fear-Segal and S. D. Rose (Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press, 2016), 168.
- <sup>60</sup> *United States Indian School Carlisle, Penna* (Carlisle, PA: The School, [1895?]), 30, Dickinson College Archives & Special Collections.
- <sup>61</sup> Magdalena Milosz, “Architectures of (De) Colonization”, *The Community Edition*, August 5, 2016, <https://communityedition.ca/architectures-of-de-colonization/>.
- <sup>62</sup> Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*, 2015, <http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/index.php?p=890>.
- <sup>63</sup> Archibald, *Decolonization and Healing*, 13.
- <sup>64</sup> J. R Ingram, “Native Education at Mogumber Mission” (Higher Certificate thesis, Western Australia Department of Education, 1966).
- <sup>65</sup> Government of Western Australia, “Heritage Council of WA - Places Database”, *Mogumber Mission (Fmr) & Cemetery*, January 1, 2017, <http://inherit.stateheritage.wa.gov.au/Public/Inventory/PrintSingleRecord/de5f8a8a-221f-44aa-8426-9335944df135>.
- <sup>66</sup> Hazel Anderson, Ernestine Little, and Wondy Wolfe, *Nyoongar Yorgas Remember: Early Days at Moore River Settlement* (Yinnar, Vic.: Green River Books, 1994), 17.
- <sup>67</sup> Yvonne Tahana, “Panel Eyes Reopening of Maori Schools”, *New Zealand Herald*, February 11, 2013, sec. National, [http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c\\_id=1&objectid=10864579](http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=10864579).
- <sup>68</sup> Archibald, *Decolonization and Healing*, 15.

