

# THE ART OF BREAKING PEOPLE DOWN: THE BRITISH COLONIAL MODEL IN IRELAND AND CANADA

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Ireland was central to Britain's first colonial expansion and its techniques were honed in its expanded colonization around the world, including in Canada. The common features include control over land and resources and subjugation of Indigenous peoples through enforced assimilation. Britain wanted Ireland and Canada for military strategic purposes, economic profit, and political power. Britain forced its way onto both lands through methods that included forced relocations of Indigenous peoples and legislating assimilation through penal laws in Ireland and the Indian Act in Canada. Britain's "divide and rule policy," cultural and spiritual subjugation, and the use of planted settlers were employed in both Ireland and Canada. The similarities in both places are identified as are the distinctions due to geography and timing. The role that complexities play within Indigenous societies is identified. The common and differing forms of resistance and resilience of the Irish and various Indigenous nations in Canada are also identified.

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## INTRODUCTION

Ireland is the first colony of the British Empire.<sup>1</sup> Its colonization pattern was then applied to overseas colonies such as Canada, India and Ceylon, and Australia.<sup>2</sup> Britain came to Canada as early as 1576-1578 in the Arctic, after France, and spread to colonize most of what became known as North America.<sup>3</sup> At its height, colonization by the British Crown spanned the globe, with Christopher North remarking in his 1829 work *Noctes Ambrosianae*, "His

PEACE RESEARCH

*The Canadian Journal of Peace and Conflict Studies*

Volume 49, Numbers 2 (2017): 15-38

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Majesty's dominions, on which the sun never sets.”

This article explores the nature of the model of British colonialism in Ireland and Canada by addressing two questions: What were the key components or principles of the British colonial model developed in Ireland? How was it applied in Ireland to native Irish peoples and then honed and applied to Indigenous peoples in Canada? This article considers the creation of the British colonial model in Ireland and its application in Canada, highlighting some of its central tenets, including Britain's divide and rule policy, control over land, religious and cultural subjugation, use of the Penal Laws and the Indian Act, and economic and political exploitation.

## BRITISH COLONIALISM IN IRELAND

The British colonial model was designed and perfected in Ireland and then exported to Britain's other colonies.<sup>4</sup> The conflict resulting from British colonialism on the island of Ireland is well over 900 years, since the Norman invasion of the island in 1179. In the 1690 Battle of the Boyne, Ireland's Catholic elites were defeated and the Penal Laws were introduced to Ireland.<sup>5</sup> The Penal Laws gave a privileged position to the Anglican Church and forbade Catholics and Protestant Dissenters from owning land, educating and raising their children as Catholics, Presbyterians, or Methodists, or holding public office. For its colonial objectives to prevent French and Spanish expansion,<sup>6</sup> the English monarchy found the island of Ireland strategically very important, economically, militarily, and politically.

### *Divide and Rule*

The principle of pitting one ethnopolitical group against the other was used by the British to expand its authority and power on the island of Ireland as Protestant settlers and Catholic natives took on more adversarial positions.<sup>7</sup> Ireland had a unique social, economic, political, and cultural context through the Gaels (native Irish) clan based system and the Brehon legal system. These systems survived even though they were altered through the Viking invasion of Ireland from the seventh to the eleventh centuries.<sup>8</sup> In the twelfth century, Norman feudalism, followed by English colonists and lowland Scottish mercenaries and plantations in Ulster in the seventeenth century, eroded the Gael's cultural, legal, socioeconomic, and political structures on the island.<sup>9</sup>

The lowland settlers sent to Ulster included various Protestant

denominations, most prevalently Scottish Presbyterians, Church of England, and Methodists who began settling in support of the plantation economy in the century.<sup>10</sup> The division of religious faiths and identification continued well after the 1603 Ulster Plantation. The British planted Ulster with lowlanders with a view to repress rebel Gaelic forces and impose English culture and language in the region.<sup>11</sup> The British Ulster Plantation granted land to Scottish Calvinist settlers who displaced native Catholics from their land.<sup>12</sup> These settlers rarely intermarried with the native Irish and they lived as segregated communities for centuries.<sup>13</sup> Ireland became a laboratory to create the imperial model and the ethnoreligious divisive formula of conquest that would be exported overseas.

British dominance was enforced through the Penal Laws, which regulated the status of Roman Catholics.<sup>14</sup> The Penal Laws comprehensively discriminated against Catholics who were prohibited from holding government office or commissions or entering the legal profession; this was coupled with acts that prevented them from owning land and limited their access to education and practice of the Catholic religion.<sup>15</sup> These laws divided the agrarian south dominated by Irish Catholics from the industrial north dominated by Protestant elites and working class loyal to England.<sup>16</sup>

According to J.J. Lee, “the 1692 Penal Laws secured a dominant relationship that allowed the Protestant community to force most Catholics outside the socio-economic and political system.”<sup>17</sup> Scholars debate as to whether the oppression was ethnically or religiously based; however, the distinctions between the Irish and the planted Protestants had remained quite distinct ethnically. Some English settlers intermarried with the local Gaels and became more Irish than the Irish themselves.<sup>18</sup>

### *Native Inferiority*

Ireland’s Gaelic identities and traditions remained intact throughout the Viking and Norman invasions. The Celtic language and Catholic Christian religion were not treated as inferior or barbaric, yet, through the subsequent British invasions, they were increasingly affected by Protestant hegemony that led to segregation along language, religion, class, ethnicity, and culture; this became endemic after 1500.<sup>19</sup> Irish Gaelic culture began to erode with the abolition of the Gaelic Brehon law that had ensured the native people’s equality.<sup>20</sup> The natives were treated as racially inferior. The 1649 warfare by Cromwellian soldiers culminated in acts of genocide against Irish Gaels

with the liquidation of the inhabitants of Drogheda and Dundalk, with Cromwell giving them the choice of “to hell or to Connacht.”<sup>21</sup>

The colonizer’s stance on the ethnic cleansing in Ireland can be understood from the message of King James I to Cromwell, “Plant Ireland with Puritans and root out the Papists and then secure it.”<sup>22</sup> When the Ulster planters were imposed, they saw the Gaelic populace as culturally, religiously, and socioeconomically inferior, and they developed a siege mentality in response. The 1641 and 1689 massacres of local Protestant settlers were led by the native Gaels trying to resist British imperialism.<sup>23</sup> The Ulster plantation itself is a narrative of violence, which led to the ascendancy and victory of the Orangemen after the 1690 Battle of the Boyne.<sup>24</sup> Theobald Wolfe Tone further strengthened Protestant domination through the British force of arms against the subsequent 1798 United Irishmen rebellion that he led.

The island became more segregated and divided, which continued through the creation of the Gaelic Athletic Association, the Irish language revival, and the Irish Volunteers led by Eoin MacNeil in response to the 1912 emergence of the Ulster Volunteer Force to resist home rule for Ireland. With the signing of the Ulster Solemn League and Covenant, in 1912 in Belfast,<sup>25</sup> the Protestant bourgeoisie were trying to prevent home rule and a class alliance between working class Protestants and Catholics.

Even today, both communities contest political and cultural issues as they live in enclaves under a sense of siege where the past and present have become fused into one.<sup>26</sup> The contemporary conflict between Protestant Unionist Loyalists (PUL) and Catholic Nationalist Republicans (CNR) in Northern Ireland inherits this colonial legacy from Britain’s divide and rule policy that sought to keep both ethnic groups separated.<sup>27</sup> The PUL community celebrates the marching season on 12 July and 12 August while the CNR community perceives the marches as triumphalism rather than as a PUL expression of culture.<sup>28</sup>

While the old English and the Anglo-Irish settlers intermarried with the natives before the onset of the 1603 Plantation of Ulster, from the seventeenth century onward, the impact of British colonizers in Ulster on the native Irish began to escalate.<sup>29</sup> The British sovereign’s force was felt as its legal, economic, and political systems; Protestantism substantially affected the development of Irish nationalism and Irish political, cultural, and economic systems.<sup>30</sup> British imperialism was more than having political

control on the island or extracting economic benefits; it was intended to change Irish beliefs, traditions, and practices to conform to English values and practices and bring the natives into line with Britain's way of thinking.<sup>31</sup> However, there was resistance to the 1800 British-Ireland Act of Union. Within the Irish people, Irish nationalism became fused with Catholicism as the Irish struggled to create a unified Ireland free from England.<sup>32</sup>

### *Religion*

The British colonial power also used its own fusion of political and religious leadership as a tool of oppression in Ireland.<sup>33</sup> The Gaelic tradition was under attack with the 1537 Protestant reformation and the arrival of new English settlers who became engaged in religious, political, and socio-economic developments in Ireland.<sup>34</sup> British policy outlawed all Catholic beliefs and practices and attempted to replace them with the Anglican Church of Ireland.<sup>35</sup> The Irish resisted by having outlawed priests give mass in the fields; Catholicism was a symbol of their identity and a means of political resistance to British policy.<sup>36</sup>

### *Apartheid Laws*

This Irish Catholic homogenous identity collectivized the Irish and was further strengthened in reaction to the Penal Laws, which discriminated against the native Irish, culturally, economically, politically, and religiously.<sup>37</sup> The English usurper to the crown, William of Orange, instituted Penal Laws from 1695-1829 to bar Catholics from practicing their religion, owning land, speaking the Gaelic language, bringing their children up as Catholics, running for government offices, and voting.<sup>38</sup> The 'Dissenting or apartheid Penal Laws' applied equally to Catholics, Methodists, and Presbyterians who were perceived as social outcasts by the established Anglican Church.<sup>39</sup> Sectarianism was used to keep the poor divided on religious lines.

### *Control of the Land*

Religion, nationalism, and land issues fused together for Catholic peasants. Land is tied into the spiritual and economic welfare of ethnic groups and together these three issues became the centre of their identity.<sup>40</sup> Ireland witnessed a struggle between landlords and tenant farmers and eventually between Catholic and Protestant tenant farmers due to the sectarian behavior of the Protestant bourgeoisie in Ulster.<sup>41</sup>

British rule forced the Catholic peasants to replace their own subsistence farming with the potato cash crop to be sent to England, under penalty of criminal convictions. Catholic tenant farmers relied almost solely on the potato for subsistence. The mandatory use of the land for potatoes depleted nutrients from the previously rich soils in Ireland, leading to potato rot and eventual mass starvations of the Catholic poor.<sup>42</sup> The 1845-1852 Irish potato famine was a period of disease, hunger, and emigration as over one million people left Ireland's shore in order to survive certain death by starvation.<sup>43</sup>

The British absentee Protestant landlords kept the Irish tenant farmers dependent on the potato while the centralized government structures failed to address the potato famine and the population of Ireland decreased by half.<sup>44</sup> Some English politicians believed the suffering was the responsibility of the colonized people themselves rather than of those who governed them.<sup>45</sup> Catholic, Methodist, and Presbyterian tenant farmers were landless, hungry, and, needless to say, angry. In 1879, the land question became a central political issue. The Irish Land League and the Irish Parliamentary Party led by Charles Stuart Parnell mobilized the Irish peasant farmers to press for land reform as rural unrest spiked in Ireland.<sup>46</sup>

### *Localized Nationalism*

British policy sought to alter the Irish people's nationalism, yet the Irish people used their nationalist identity, intermingled with Catholicism, to resist the colonizer.<sup>47</sup> The British imposed British parliamentary democracy in Ireland with Irish M.P.s taking an oath of allegiance to the British monarch.<sup>48</sup>

During the nineteenth century, Irish nationalists refused to recognize the Monarch, further driving a political and religious wedge between the south and north of the island.<sup>49</sup> The Irish democratic tradition evolved into violent Irish Republicanism in the early twentieth century as Irish Republicans launched an all-out war against Britain.<sup>50</sup> Thus, the question of nationalism, and the relationship between Catholicism and Irishness, became salient in the nineteenth century with nonviolent and violent Irish resistance movements.<sup>51</sup>

The British Empire profited from exploitation and cruelty in its colonies, beginning with Ireland.<sup>52</sup> Irish dissenters against the British presence were arrested and prosecuted during the British colonization period. Sir Roger Casement is one such victim. During the 1916 Rising, Casement,

a diplomat and human rights activist involved in the Irish Republican Brotherhood, was tried and executed for treason. Casement's radical views resulted from his observation of the colonial oppression of workers on rubber plantations not only in Ireland but also in the Congo, Brazil, and Peru.<sup>53</sup> The leaders of the 1916 Rising were equally impacted by similar views.<sup>54</sup> With Ireland being the first British colony, it is evident that Britain developed its colonizing processes there and then continued with further developed methods in other locations. One such location is the land now called Canada.

### BRITISH COLONIALISM IN CANADA

In as early as the 1500s, when Europeans arrived to what is now Canada, there were multiple Indigenous nations living on the land. However, using *terra nullis*, Britain and France fought over the land as if it were empty and could become theirs; they competed over alliances with different Indigenous nations to support their efforts at colonization.<sup>55</sup> The Seven Years War between the British and the French, 1754-1763, led to Britain annexing French controlled Canada and installing its rule in North America through the 1763 *Royal Proclamation*.<sup>56</sup>

Despite the end of some aspects of formal British colonialism in Canada, at the time of Confederation in 1867 through the BNA Act, Canada remained part of the British Commonwealth as the Crown in Right of Canada (the Crown). Canada existed as a transplanted Britain, with little or no inclusion of Indigenous peoples in governance. The colonial government's policies remain to this day, primarily through the self-proclaimed 1876 *Indian Act*. Some of the other components of the Crown's control over non-Indigenous Canada have ended; however, Indigenous peoples in Canada remain colonized through the Crown.<sup>57</sup>

#### *Canada Is a Treaty Country with Colonial Laws*

With its reference to "Nations or Tribes of Indians," and even more importantly through its explicit recognition of Indigenous pre-existing and continued title to the lands, the British Crown initially recognized the sovereignty of Indian Nations in its 1763 *Royal Proclamation*. It decreed that all Indigenous land would remain as such until ceded by treaty with the Crown; only the Crown could buy land from First Nations or negotiate treaties.<sup>58</sup> The newly formed Dominion of Canada, which at the time

consisted of Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick, honored the Crown's Proclamation by initiating a series of formal treaties across the western areas of the land so that these Indian lands could become part of the new Dominion rather than be absorbed into the United States through Manifest Destiny.<sup>59</sup>

As the land is the key factor, the Crown envisioned the treaties as land cession treaties, which arguably removed Aboriginal title from the First Nations' ancestral lands in Canada.<sup>60</sup> Early treaties were concerned with military or economic relationships between Britain and its colonies. In the process of colonialism in North America, the settler state secured the territories by dispossessing the Aboriginal peoples from their ancestral lands.<sup>61</sup>

However, for reasons that are still open to a wide range of debate, the new Dominion also began a simultaneous process of exerting complete control over every aspect of Indians' lives and lands through its 1876 *Indian Act*.<sup>62</sup> Even with the use of modern "nation-to-nation" treaties through Comprehensive Land Claims, the people are still "Indian" people, meaning wards of the Canadian government under the confines of the Indian Act; their relationships with Canada fall under Canada's Constitution (1982).<sup>63</sup> This calls the legitimacy of "nation-to-nation" relationships into question. With a few exceptions through modern agreements, such as Sechelt and Tswwassen First Nations who have debatable forms of self-governance over their lands, the majority of First Nations in Canada fall wholly within the paternalistic Indian Act.<sup>64</sup>

Warfare, spatial displacement, and the assimilation of Indigenous peoples into the colonized society were evident in Canada.<sup>65</sup> In colonialism, "settlers carry sovereignty with them and found new political orders in the spaces they colonialize."<sup>66</sup> Before the late twentieth century, many British colonized countries, including the Western democracies of Canada, the United States Australia, and New Zealand, undertook assimilating and marginalizing policies to deal with Indigenous peoples.<sup>67</sup> The governments and colonizers resorted to policies including, "stripping Indigenous peoples of their lands, restricting the practice of their traditional cultures, languages, and religions, and undermining their institutions of self-government" to assimilate Indigenous peoples so that they do not sustain themselves as distinct cultures.<sup>68</sup>



*Removal of Indigenous People from Their Land, Livelihoods, and Sustenance*

Colonization transferred 99.64 percent of the land from Indigenous peoples to the colonizers' hands.<sup>69</sup> Clearly, the British takeover of Indigenous lands led to a loss of livelihood for the Indigenous nations.

Particularly in Western Canada, starvation and mass infestations reduced the numbers of Indigenous people significantly, arguably for easier access for the settlers to the land and its resources.<sup>70</sup> British political colonization and its child, the Dominion of Canada, took Indigenous land and exploited resources such as minerals and timber for their own economic interests.<sup>71</sup> In Western Canada, British colonization initially occurred economically through the world's first multinational company: the Hudson Bay Company (HBC).<sup>72</sup> Through the 1670 Charter between the Crown of England and the Company, Britain assumed control and ownership of what it called Rupertsland, which included, "almost a million and a half square miles of western and northern Canada, more than 40 percent of the modern nation."<sup>73</sup>

Because the HBC was dependent on Indigenous people to supply the profit-making furs, Indigenous groups like the Homeguard Indians around York Factory were initially treated as economic partners. The Cree Homeguard's and others acted as brokers with more-inland Indigenous people and controlled who could do business with the Company.<sup>74</sup>

The various Indigenous groups in what is now Canada had a very different understanding of and relationships with the land than the British. Within the Indigenous worldview, everything is related and to be held in balance, particularly the environment.<sup>75</sup> For Indigenous peoples, the land was attached to many aspects of life, and not just used for material gains.<sup>76</sup> The Cree attached their Indigenous system of healing and medicine to the land. The Ininew's forest spirituality is reflected in their view of hunting practices as holy and involving spiritual relationships, not as technical practices as imposed by the HBC regarding their caribou hunting.<sup>77</sup>

As the HBC and other colonizing forces grew, this balance was no longer maintained. As Europeans, primarily British, expanded across the land, Indigenous numbers decreased through the mass epidemics, resultant and forced starvation, and the loss of their food sources.<sup>78</sup> Indigenous people became reliant on British governing and economic forces for their survival. It is for these reasons that the Numbered Treaties in the Prairie part of Western Canada were signed.<sup>79</sup>

*The Treaties Between Nations Morphed into The 1876 Indian Act*

While the stated intent of the numbered treaties in the Prairies was to come to an agreement to share the land, it quickly became apparent that there were dichotomously opposing interpretations of the treaties. While Indigenous nations understood them to mean that the land was now being peacefully shared, the Crown decided that it now had ownership of the lands and could unilaterally decide its uses, which included making it available for mass immigration from many areas of the world.<sup>80</sup>

This led to ever increasing needs for the lands that had been set aside for Indian reserves. One response was to enact the 1876 *Indian Act*, which gave unilateral control over Indians to the Crown. This included determining who was and who was not recognized as status Indians, non-status, and Metis or Halfbreeds; deciding for Indigenous people who they could be and where they could and could not live on reserves was similar to the evolution of the Bantu of apartheid in South Africa where local people were forced to live by the Afrikaner government.<sup>81</sup> The Crown determined that the answer to the Indian Problem lay in assimilating them into Canada.

British forms of government were based on individual leaders with political authority. All Indian forms of government, such as the highly revered Haudenosaunee, were outlawed through the *Indian Act*, which replaced them with a generic chief and band council system that was uniformly imposed across the land.<sup>82</sup>

*Discriminatory Laws*

The British and French colonizers profiled Indians in North America as savages or inferior races; the myth of the “noble savage” was used as a tool to deny them equality and human rights while genocide served to eradicate them.<sup>83</sup> Discriminatory laws like the *Indian Act* (1876) gave the Canadian government authority to try to assimilate Indians into mainstream British-formed Canada. Indigenous peoples were considered far too inferior in their traditional ways to be accepted into British-determined Canadian society.<sup>84</sup>

In an effort to repress Indigenous peoples and prevent resistance, status Indians were only first allowed to vote in federal or provincial elections in 1961. Until 1951, they were not allowed to retain their identity as status Indians if they attended university or fought for Canada’s Armed Forces. Indians were not allowed to gather in groups of more than three or four to prevent political discussions or hire a lawyer to represent their political

interests. In the prairies, some Indian agents illegitimately invoked the Indian Act to prevent Indians from leaving their communities for any reason without a signed pass.<sup>85</sup>

### *Residential Schools*

Residential schools were used to colonize and destroy the culture of Aboriginal children from the late 1800s until the 1990s. This system was designed to produce English-speaking Indians who adopted the white men's Canadian-British culture. To accomplish assimilation, the goal was to have them think, act, and live like Canadian British subjects. This was most evident within the Indian Residential Schools (IRSs) where the stated purpose was to "get the Indian out of the child." Attempts at education through day schools had proved to be lacking since the children went home at night and continued to speak with their families in their own languages and live by their own ways.<sup>86</sup>

Children were removed from their families by force and by laying criminal charges against parents if required. In 1920, the Deputy Minister of Indian Affairs, Dr. Duncan Campbell Scott, wanted to 'get rid of the Indian problem': "Our object is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic."<sup>87</sup> At the peak of the residential school system, the government funded eighty-three schools to educate twenty to thirty percent of the native population in Canada and the last of these institutions was closed in 1996 in Regina, Saskatchewan.<sup>88</sup> The proportions in western Canada were most probably higher, and the exact numbers are still not actually known due to poor record keeping.

In 1906, the Canadian Tuberculosis Association determined that almost seventy-five percent of IRS students died before they reached the age of eighteen due to insufficient health services; all were subjected to British colonization indoctrination.<sup>89</sup> Half of the Indian children received no higher than grade six education at most through the residential schools<sup>90</sup> and First Nations students currently on reserve receive three to six thousand dollars less funding each year than all other students.<sup>91</sup> Statistics still reflect a grossly disproportionate high school graduation rate for First Nations people: forty-five percent compared to sixty-five percent for non-Indigenous.<sup>92</sup>

With the vast majority of the students physically, sexually and emotionally abused, improperly fed, and often forced to labour throughout their childhoods, the schools run by the Christian churches are now considered to

be imprisonment centers for severely traumatized children. The IRS system was linked to poverty, poor health, mental illness, language loss, spiritual loss, rape and sexual abuse, and cultural destruction that together was damaging to Indigenous communities in Canada with lasting impacts today.<sup>93</sup> Due to these residential schools, Indigenous people across Canada have witnessed an escalation in sexual abuse, alcoholism, depression, and the murder and disappearance of young Aboriginal women.<sup>94</sup> Culture shock, disorientation, and confusion surrounded the survivors of the residential schools and made them feel hopeless as well as resilient through their cultures.<sup>95</sup>

The transgenerational transmission of trauma to future generations is inevitable from the Canadian Aboriginal peoples' colonized past.<sup>96</sup> Parents' role in teaching their children about their culture and community is denigrated and their language, as well as cultural pride, is lost. Ultimately, intergenerational communications are also affected by this traumatic past. As the schools closed, the children were literally transferred into the child welfare system. This led to losses of children into non-Indigenous adoptions and foster placements. Currently, there are more Indigenous children in the care of child welfare than at the height of the IRSs.<sup>97</sup>

After IRS survivors began to file lawsuits against the Canadian government and the churches that ran the schools, the Supreme Court of Canada opted to respond collectively with a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). For several years, the Commission heard testimony from survivors and their families who were affected by the schools as well as some former staff. The volumes of grief, despair, anger, and resiliency within the testimonies led to the 94 Calls to Action, which specify in detail how the Canadian government and society can begin work for reconciliation<sup>98</sup>.

### *Spiritual Colonization*

Spiritual colonization permeated the society and was arguably the most destructive colonial force. The efforts at assimilation were targeted against all aspects of Indigenous peoples' lives, including their languages, stories, and spiritual practices. Prior to the governing forces of either Britain or France, Christian missionaries of all denominations arrived with the explorers and they traveled into the communities in the first wave of settlers. They also provided information about whether Indians were actually human or not and if they were deserving of being converted to Christianity.<sup>99</sup> In the end, they were deemed worthy of conversion, including forced conversion, but

were not human enough to warrant full recognition of their rights to their own lands and sovereign nations.<sup>100</sup>

In Canada, the British colonizers imposed Christianity through the Indian Act's outlawing of traditional practices under threat of imprisonment; they also used genocidal means such as the residential schools where children were reprogrammed.<sup>101</sup> This resulted in many spiritual practices being kept underground, taking place at night and far from the communities and the watchful eyes of the Indian agents and the local churches. While these covert practices have ensured the continuation of the original spiritualities, the impact of the colonization of spirituality is still very evident today. Within communities and even nuclear families, there are rifts between those who practice Christianity and those who practice traditional forms of spirituality, with some practicing both.

Spiritual colonization has also affected the transmission of knowledge. Indigenous people state that their knowledge is found indivisibly within their languages and their lands. While the transmission of knowledge through language and stories was severely attacked, there were enough covert exchanges of information and practice of ceremonies to keep the knowledge and ways alive and lead to the contemporary process of renaissance.<sup>102</sup>

The colonization process in Canada has had destabilizing effects on Canadian Indigenous peoples.<sup>103</sup> The British colonial model sought to destroy people's relationship and connectivity to the land that is the basis of every Indigenous person's spirituality in Canada.<sup>104</sup> For example, the Sayisi Dene and the Cree approach to caribou hunting was radically altered due to colonization, despite their maintenance of spiritual human-animal relationships and practices of "respect" to animals.<sup>105</sup> The actual destruction of the land, environment, and food sources in the past continues today through ongoing oil and gas, mineral, and timber exploitation. Communities near these resources are ecologically and socially affected, under-funded with little to no resources, and facing great loss of life through resulting suicide.<sup>106</sup>

## COMPARISONS: IRISH AND CANADIAN COLONIZATION PROCESSES

There are obvious commonalities and also key distinctions within the British colonization processes that unfolded in Ireland and Canada. The British colonial model includes the common elements of divide and rule, control of land, religious suppression, ethnocentrism, depoliticization, and use of

force. The underlying principles of the different terms or constructs used for Ireland and Canada are based on the same logic: a divide and rule strategy through creation of apartheid laws that suppress and treat local people as inferior. Some contend that divide and rule continues in Ireland with the partition of the six counties in Northern Ireland. It continues in Canada most obviously in Canada's continuing determination of Indigenous identities—status versus non-status versus Metis—which then determines which Indigenous rights the individual may or may not have, even dividing families with these distinctions.

The primary goal has been the same: access to Indigenous lands for their economic potential. The peoples of Indigenous lands are either used as a means to access the land's potential—tenant farmers in Ireland and guides and brokers in the fur trade in Canada—or removed to clear access to more lands, as seen in (for example) forced emigration from Ireland in the coffin ships and forced containment onto small reserves in Canada and forced relocation to urban centres. Attempts to access Indigenous lands and resources continue particularly in Canada, as evidenced by the modern treaty processes, as well as efforts at colonized-based resource extractions.<sup>107</sup>

Britain damaged the relationships between the Indigenous peoples and the land, nature, and spirit world, as well as hampering the resiliency potential of the local populations.<sup>108</sup> Biological and psychological damage was so severe that historical intergenerational trauma affects the survivors and their children's children. Healing and reconciliation have become a challenge in the postcolonial Irish and Canadian contexts.<sup>109</sup> In Ireland, the 1998 Good Friday Agreement has decreased political and direct violence; however, the social and economic stressors continue between the two groups in a liminal type of negative peace.<sup>110</sup> In Canada, there are still multiple outstanding land claims as well as conflict over resource development. First Nations children are still severely underfunded, to the point of loss of life, and lacking both basic and special needs services on reserve.<sup>111</sup>

Through economic and political control and cultural subjugation with respect to the native peoples' languages, education, religious beliefs, and practices, British colonialism has been destructive in both Ireland and Canada. According to the Canadian TRC, the Indian residential school system has served as an element of Canada's century-long Aboriginal policy that was, "devised to destroy Aboriginal government, to deny Aboriginal rights, to terminate Treaties, and to assimilate Aboriginal people by damaging their

existence as a distinct socio-cultural entity.”<sup>112</sup>

The TRC termed this process as cultural genocide: “the destruction of those structures and practices that allow the group to continue as a group.”<sup>113</sup> The state’s cultural genocidal activities were the destruction of the social and political institutions of the Aboriginal peoples, including the forbiddance of spiritual practices, seizure of land, forced displacement, restriction of movement, banning of languages, persecution of spiritual leaders, and prevention of the intergenerational transmission of cultural values and identity through disrupting families.<sup>114</sup>

Canada’s former Prime Minister Stephen Harper issued an apology in June 2008 that confirmed the intent of destruction of Indigenous culture: “These objectives were based on the assumption Aboriginal cultures and spiritual beliefs were inferior and unequal. Indeed, some sought, as it was infamously said, ‘to kill the Indian in the child.’ Today, we recognize that this policy of assimilation was wrong, has caused great harm, and has no place in our country.”<sup>115</sup>

In 1997, one hundred and fifty years after the Famine, Britain also issued an apology: “remorse for Britain’s failure to offer greater assistance.”<sup>116</sup> Former British Prime Minister Tony Blair’s 1997 apology went a long way in the healing process of the Irish nation and was critical to the success of the 1998 Good Friday Agreement that ended thirty years of political strife and violence in Northern Ireland.<sup>117</sup>

According to the Canadian TRC’s Calls to Action, reconciliation through objective actions can heal and repair many social injustices faced by the Aboriginal peoples in Canada and can address the lack of the mainstream settler society’s education and awareness regarding Indigenous peoples, history, and Treaties. The TRC makes it clear that reconciliation and healing must address the religious, linguistic, and cultural consequences of residential schools and the humiliation endured by Indigenous peoples. Indigenous knowledge based relational justice and healing practices can restore the independence of the Indigenous communities so that they can again have a life of purpose.<sup>118</sup>

While there were official apologies to Irish people and Indigenous peoples in Canada, it is apparent that colonization continues and is not limited to history. It has remained resilient and in existence.

## CONCLUSION? OR CONTINUING RESILIENCE AND RESISTANCE?

Even with apologies and some acts towards reconciliation in both Ireland and Canada, there is clearly unfinished business required in order to move beyond British colonization. Colonization in both places is not yet over, which is why there is not an actual conclusion. The resistance and resilience continues to this day.

In Ireland, the resistance has morphed from violent conflict in Northern Ireland to peaceful resistance within the governing structures of the Good Friday Agreement. Irish language and culture is gaining strength and prominence.<sup>119</sup> In Canada, Indigenous people continue resistance through mostly victorious court action for land claims and through cultural renewal with increasing use of Indigenous languages and cultural practices.<sup>120</sup>

British colonization has left its indelible mark on both Ireland and Canada. Nonetheless, the Irish and Indigenous peoples of Canada's cultures are revitalizing to the credit of their lasting connections with their unique identities. British colonization has been devastating but it has not succeeded in overpowering the Irish or Canadian Indigenous peoples.

## ENDNOTES

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