

Doctoral Seminar in Curriculum and Pedagogy: History and Theory

EDCP 601.031

University of British Columbia

Winter 1 2017 (W, 1.00-4.00)

Evidence or specifically **Historical Evidence** or most specifically **Indigenous Historical Evidence**

“Absence of evidence is not to be confused with evidence of absence”

— Mariott (1916, p. 70)

1. Working Problem

- a. How did indigenous parents or teachers instruct and children learn, prior to contact and colonization, pre-reservation, pre-boarding and pre-residential school? Or at least outside of settler, state systems? What curriculum did indigenous parents, teachers, and children create, follow, experience, etc.?
- b. By and large, the historiography or histories we’ve inherited romanticize and trivialize indigenous education prior to, or outside of, colonial systems.
- c. There is a range of evidence that can be sourced to address this problem but we’ll juxtapose just three for the purposes of an example:
 - i. Anthropologists’, geographers’, missionaries’, settlers’, and traders’ perceptions
 - ii. Captivity memoirs
 - iii. Indigenous parents’ or children’s experiences, observations, and perceptual encounters

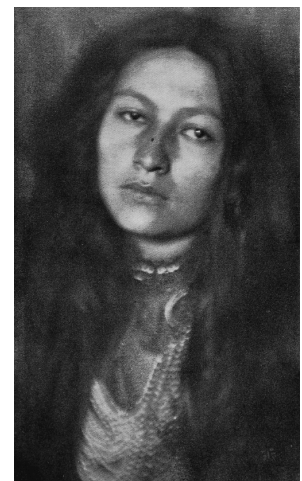
2. History of Indigenous Education

- a. Geographer’s perception— W. Colquhoun Grant, “Description of Vancouver Island” (1857, p. 298): an Indian baby is a most independent little fellow, and a happy individual withal, if we may judge by his scarcely ever being heard to cry or sob, or to express his grief in the many ways usually chosen by other mortal babies. Swathed in his covering of soft bark, and bound tightly up in an outer case or hammock of stronger bark; he is suspended by a hempen string to the extremity of one of the lower boughs of an overhanging fir or cedar tree; and there, while his mother strays to a short distance through the woods in quest of roots or berries, the gentle zephyr rocks him to sleep, and sings to him a sweet lullaby, as it murmurs through the leaves of his natural bower. He is soon able to trot about, and to accompany his heedless parent, either in her woodland rambles, or as she scrambles over the rocks, or wades through the shallow water, seeking for the shell-fish which form a principal article of their food. As soon as able to hold the fish-spear and paddle he has them in his hand, and anon the father becomes his instructor, and teaches him to provide himself with the simple necessaries of his life.
- b. Captive’s memoir— John D. Hunter, *Memoirs of a Captivity among the Indians* (1823, pp. 264-265, 267): They [mother and male child] are seldom long together without quarrelling, and pretty generally make a bold tight, though they are not permitted to continue it: should the case be otherwise, the disappointed mother soon returns to her lodge; and thence commences a very extraordinary discipline. She begins by placing a rod in his hand; assists him to beat and make flee the dog, or any thing else that may come in his way, and then encourages him to pursue. An adept in this, she teazes and vexes him, creates an irritable temper, submits to the rod, and flees before him with great apparent dread. When skilled in this branch, she strikes him with her hand, pulls his hair, &c., which her now hopeful boy retaliates in a spiteful and becoming manner. Some time having passed in this way, by which her pupil has learned to bear pain without dread, she takes him again on a visit, and I have

never known an instance of a second disappointment in these trials of courage. They are then permitted to play with the other children of the village, and to quarrel and make up as well as they can. After this conceived salutary course of discipline, the parents bring them back to their accustomed subjection, by a steady and determined course of government. There is nothing connected with the education of the female part of the children that requires to be noticed, except it be their early entrance with the boys into sports and amusements in imitation of the grown people....

The rest of the Indian's education, apart from what is acquired by experience, is obtained from the discourses of the aged warriors, who, from the services rendered their country, have high claims on its gratitude and respect. Such was Tshut-che-nau, as mentioned page 20; and similar to his are the doctrines they generally teach. The elderly women also, frequently perform these offices, more particularly as they relate to narratives and traditions, of which they are by the consent of custom the unerring and sacred depositories.

- c. Indigenous youth's memory— Zitkala-Sa, "Impressions of an Indian Childhood" (1900, pp. 40, 45, 46): Close beside my mother I sat on a rug, with a scrap of buckskin in one hand and an awl in the other. This was the beginning of my practical observation lessons in the art of beadwork. From a skein of finely twisted threads of silvery sinews my mother pulled out a single one. With an awl she pierced the buckskin, and skillfully threaded it with the white sinew. Picking up the tiny beads one by one, she strung them with the point of her thread, always twisting it carefully after every stitch. It took many trials before I learned how to knot my sinew thread on the point of my finger, as I saw her do. Then the next difficulty was in keeping my thread stiffly twisted, so that I could easily string my beads upon it. My mother required of me original designs for my lessons in beading. At first I frequently ensnared many a sunny hour into working a long design. Soon I learned from self-inflicted punishment to refrain from drawing complex patterns, for I had to finish whatever I began. After some experience I usually drew easy and simple crosses and squares. These were some of the set forms. My original designs were not always symmetrical nor sufficiently characteristic, two faults with which my mother had little patience. The quietness of her oversight made me feel strongly responsible and dependent upon my own judgment. She treated me as a dignified little individual as long as I was on my good behavior.... At this age [8 years] I knew but one language, and that was my mother's native tongue. From some of my playmates I heard that two paleface missionaries were in our village.... There was a solemn silence in our home that night. Before I went to bed I begged the Great Spirit to make my mother willing I should go with the missionaries....
- d. Zitkala-Sa, "An Indian Teacher among Indians" (1900, p. 386): For the white man's papers I had given up my faith in the Great Spirit. For these same papers I had forgotten the healing in trees and brooks. On account of my mother's simple view of life, and my lack of any, I gave her up, also. I made no friends among the race of people I loathed. Like a slender tree, I had been uprooted from my mother, nature, and God. I was shorn of my branches, which had waved in sympathy and love for home and friends. The natural coat of bark which had protected my oversensitive nature was scraped off to the very quick. Now a cold bare pole I seemed to be, planted in a strange earth.



Zitkala-Sa (1901, p. 174).
Photo by Joseph T. Keiley

3. Historical Evidence / Sources / Records

- a. Collingwood (1946, pp. 202, 203): It follows that the subject-matter of history is not the past as such, but the past for which we possess historical evidence. Much of the past has perished, in the sense that we have no documents for reconstructing it... History is based on a synthesis of two things which only exist in that synthesis: evidence and criticism. Evidence is only evidence so far as it is used as evidence, that is to say, interpreted on critical principles; and principles are only principles so far as they are put into practice in the work of interpreting evidence.
 - b. Collingwood (1946, p. 281): Question and evidence, in history, are correlative. Anything is evidence which enables you to answer your question— the question you are asking now.
 - c. Archibald (1991, p. 22): historical evidence is defined to include written documents, artistic renderings, the landscape with associated flora and fauna, archaeological remains, household and industrial objects, music, literature, oral and folk traditions, buildings, and tools and more [intangibles, metaphysical & mystical beings, spirits, etc.].
 - d. Fixico (1979, p. 278): Metahistory [metaphysics + history] involves a host of intangibles, including such beings and things as Coyote and other cultural heroes, spirituality, ghosts, sacred power in action at sacred places, and the divine intervention of the Creator. Metahistory is best presented via the oral tradition, in which all tribes have "stories" about the things just mentioned. This is a part of being Indian, and historians should take this into consideration in writing Indian history. This dimension of life in Native communities affects decision making and influences Native ethos for how Indian people understand the world and the universe. And they are recorded in stories.
 - e. Kidson (1994, p. 770): historical evidence is defined not by its place in a linear narrative or a causal explanation, but by a kinship with other meta- cultural phenomena which can be recognised only from the perspective of the present.
 - f. Evidence, at once historical, legal, and scientific
 - i. Alliston (1996, p. 238): Judging "evidence of things" or "internal evidence" (experience) and judging "evidence of testimony" or "external evidence" often come down to the same thing in practical terms, because the judging public has only someone else's testimony for the evidence of many things and most experiences. Thus, the process of judging historical truth shifts from one in which an authoritative witness asserts the facts to one in which an interpreter passes judgment on the reliability of the witness or narrator. As Simon Schaffer [1992, p. 327] observes, "there seems to be an important historical connexion between changes in the concept of evidence and that of the person capable of giving evidence."
 - ii.
 - g. Dialogue among context & self, self & other historians, primary & secondary sources
- ### 4. Indigenous Historical Evidence, ca. 1500s
- a. Codex Mendoza (ca. 1542) <https://publicdomainreview.org/collections/codex-mendoza-1542/>
 - b. Florentine Codex (ca. 1545) <https://www.wdl.org/en/search/?contributors=Sahagún%2C%20Bernardino%20de%2C%201499-1590#10096>