

## St. Paul's: The History Of North Vancouver's Indigenous Repression

Repression. Noun: *The restraint, prevention, or inhibition of a feeling, quality, etc.* While the public perception of North Vancouver is serene, untroubled, and welcoming, the truth to North Vancouver's aspirational qualities is raw and real. The land that we now know as "Vancouver" was built on the backs of the intentional repression of multiple generations of indigenous people who have nurtured the land for centuries. The attempted assimilation of indigenous people in Canada throughout history can be easily seen in North Vancouver's tumultuous and oppressive history, particularly in the Sixties Scoop, and St. Paul's Residential School.

"Take the Indian out of the child". When John A. MacDonald established his views on indigenous people, they were recognized and acted upon, and those actions have caused significant impacts on indigenous people that are continuously effecting generation after generation. The first residential school was established in 1831, upon orders from then Prime Minister John A. MacDonald. The goal of residential schools was to destroy the soul and culture that indigenous children carried with them. By institutionalizing children who were used to living free, and connected to the land, residential schools fundamentally stripped indigenous children of who they were; environmentally, historically, and culturally. The blatant oppression of indigenous culture by the Canadian government, as well as its citizens, was put into practice many times, and in many different ways, throughout history.

The Lower Mainland is built on the territory of 12 indigenous groups, and the historical repression of indigenous people has been a consistent factor throughout time. Post World War Two, North Vancouver's popularity was on the rise. Mountains, ocean, and trees, paired with suburbia, malls, and cars, turned North Vancouver into a bustling corner of the Lower Mainland. With the new developments that occurred, came new challenges for indigenous people. St. Paul's Residential School was established in 1899, and was run by Roman Catholic Religious Teaching Order, the Sisters of Child Jesus.

St. Paul's was in operation for 60 years, and fully shut down in 1959. St. Paul's was Metro Vancouver's only residential 'school'. Over 2,000 children were institutionalized at St. Paul's, and the three story building would hold around 75 children at a time. Being that St. Paul's was located next to the Skwxwú7mesh community, its presence in North Vancouver was known.

A lesser known act of indigenous oppression is known as the Sixties Scoop. The Sixties Scoop refers to a period of time in the 1960s when indigenous children were forcibly removed from their homes and sent to live in foster care, as indigenous families were deemed unfit to raise children. North Vancouver, however, was decidedly a safe, clean, and white settlement, and it became a common place for indigenous children to be housed. Residential schools and the Sixties Scoop are both clear examples of how assimilation techniques have been applied to indigenous people, specifically children. By removing children from their homes, and therefore depriving them of growing up with celebratory ideals surrounding their culture, the government diminished the chance for indigenous culture to flourish alongside the new technologies that came with colonialism.

North Vancouver has a history of privilege and oppression, particularly in regards to indigenous people. Post-war, the population of the North Shore was booming, and became a popular tourist destination. The concern of locals was that the perception of North Vancouver would not be an idealistic "white picket fence" suburbia, but rather a wild and overgrown diaspora, where indigenous people and white settlers 'mixed'. Businesses offered an unwelcoming atmosphere for all but white clientele, indigenous owned properties were randomly boycotted or torn down, and racial prejudices were unspoken. Looking back, the judgments and assumptions that were made surrounding indigenous people were less about land rights, and more about the racial and colonial structures that determine how privilege as a whole is lived and exercised in Canada and beyond.

Furthermore, we can distinctively see this oppression in the form of land titles. Discriminatory covenants on old land titles based on race and nationality are common throughout the Lower Mainland and B.C. Although such laws are technically revoked as of 1978, a surprising lack of action has been taken to remove them. Several homes in the current British Properties are holding historic covenants that explicitly bar people of colour from living in the neighbourhood. The still existing land deed reads, “*No person of the African or Asiatic race, or of African or Asiatic descent, except servants of the occupier of the premises and residence ... shall reside or be allowed to remain on the premises.*” Although land deeds such as this are no longer enforceable, the continuation of their existence serve as a reminder that North Vancouver was not created with a multi-cultural society in mind. Segregated land covenants perpetuate the apparent classism that survives to this day.

Although significant developments in technology, infrastructure, and population occurred across North Vancouver, we can't ignore the substantial development of prejudice that transpired in the 1950's and 1960's. The continuous efforts of Indigenous assimilation in Canada has created a past established prejudice towards Indigenous people that North Vancouver continues to hold, whether that be consciously or unconsciously.

