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‘Thinking it Savors of the Miraculous’: The Manitoba Institute for the Deaf and Dumb and the Growth of Deaf Public Life in Manitoba, 1884-1909

by

Sandy Barron

A THESIS

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Abstract

This study analyzes the role of the Manitoba Institute of the Deaf and Dumb in the growth of deaf communities in Brandon and Winnipeg, Manitoba. It asserts, using Habermas's theoretical model of the growth of the public sphere, that while the school was built in response to an educational crisis for deaf school-age children in an emerging region of Canada, it also increasingly served to publicise and advocate for the concerns and politics of deaf people in Manitoba. Through an analysis of government correspondence, newspapers, and publications from the MIDD itself, this study argues that the school contributed to an increased political visibility of people with sensory disabilities in Western Canada between 1889 and 1909.

Acknowledgements

This project represents a culmination of research that began while I was undertaking undergraduate courses in Open Studies at the University of Calgary in 2013. It benefitted from the encouragement of Drs. David Marshall and Jewel Spangler, who, along with Drs. Frank Towers and R. Douglas Francis, encouraged me to enter historical studies at the graduate level. Since entering the MA program, the staff, faculty, and students at the University of Calgary have been a great community in which to find myself. My route to this thesis has been unconventional, but my travels from Mount Allison's Sociology/Anthropology and the University of Calgary's Anthropology Departments widened my theoretical horizons beyond those available to some Master's students who have had a straighter path. Dr. Robert Adlam in Sackville and Dr. Julia Murphy in Calgary placed a great deal of belief in my academic abilities, one that I feel I have now begun to live up to.

During the research and writing phase of this project, the support of my Supervisor, Dr. David Marshall, has been indispensable, as has the advice and counsel of members of my graduate cohort, especially Shawn Brackett and Kesia Kvill. This research enjoyed the support and blessing of two key Deaf faculty members of the Manitoba School for the Deaf in Winnipeg, Len Marshall and Jonathan Miller. Their willingness to allow me to view the archival materials in the Deaf Heritage Room at the school was key to the realization of this project. Chris Kotecki, at the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, helped this relative rookie to archival research find pertinent material that was often hiding beyond the reach of the Archives' digital search engine.

This project also benefitted from financial support from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, the Province of Alberta, the Luxton Family Foundation, and the Coutts Family in the form of scholarships. More importantly, it was made possible through the support of my partner, Sonia Okamoto, and her patient commitment to accommodating my personal and professional aspirations within our relationship. My family, specifically my mother Carol and brothers Matthew and Stephen, has been an important source of support and advice since my return to studies in 2012.

This project is dedicated to the memory of my father, Bill, a provincial civil servant whose ultimately successful but seemingly endless efforts to manage Nova Scotia's forest resources echoes the struggle of Duncan McDermid detailed here.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

On May 1, 1893, *Silent Echo*, a newspaper produced at the Manitoba Institute for the Deaf and Dumb, featured an editorial on student truancy, likely penned by the school's hearing Principal Duncan Wendell McDermid. "Very few people," it read, "have any proper conception of what teaching the deaf means. They are in the most part extremists, either thinking it savors of the miraculous, or on the other hand that there is no material difference from the methods employed in teaching hearing and speaking children. No teacher of common sense claims she has accomplished an extraordinary feat in educating a deaf mute…yet she will insist that her responsibility is greater and her burden heavier."[1] The 1890s was a time of extremism in deaf education indeed, as those whom McDermid called "pure oralists" and "pure manualists" battled over control of education methods.[2] The late Victorian sign debate cast such a shadow over contemporary rhetoric about people with hearing impairments that real material gains in the responsibilities of states and provinces were barely celebrated. Deaf people, even in emerging regions of the Western United States and Canada, were becoming accepted members of public life and individuals to whom the state owed the same educational attention as hearing students. Only nine years before, when Jane Elizabeth Groom brought several deaf settlers from England with the blessing of the Canadian government, the Winnipeg press almost uniformly rejected the Empire's attempt to unload "pauper charges" upon the young province.[3]

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[1] "Editorial," *Silent Echo*, May 1, 1893, p. 4. Deaf Heritage Room , Manitoba School for the Deaf, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

[2] Oralism was an educational movement that sought to dissuade deaf people from using sign language, as opposed to the lip reading and speech that some educators felt would help the deaf integrate more successfully. The MIDD was not an oralist school during the period under study, though by 1905 most schools in Canada, the United States, and Europe were. The concerted return of sign to deaf classrooms would not occur until the 1970s.

[3] Jane Elizabeth Groom and H.H., *A future for the deaf and dumb in the Canadian North-West: Being an account of a first attempt at colonisation in the Canadian North-West by Miss Jane Elizabeth Groom, and a plan of her future operations*. (London: Potter Bros, 1884), 17. Peel's Prairie Provinces, University of Alberta, (peel.library.ualberta.ca/bibliography/1240). Accessed July 12, 2015.

The extremism of commentators on deaf education that McDermid bemoaned has not abated. Disability scholars typically present four models for understanding the material and cultural conditions of people with disabilities: the eugenic model, the medical model, the charity model, and the rights model.[4] The first three present disability as an individual problem to be overcome, while the rights model stresses accommodation. The late nineteenth-century featured the first three understandings of disability: the eugenic and medical models were emerging, while the charitable model continued to wield considerable rhetorical and sympathetic power. The notion of 'rights,' while a twentieth-century construction, is discernable in the rhetoric of supporters of deaf education in Manitoba and deaf students and teachers themselves during the period under study, roughly 1884 to 1909. Yet these four models, so recognizable in the early twenty-first century, were not identifiable or so marked in the late nineteenth century. Rights to education for all Western Canadians were not considered paramount, or even imaginable, in the period. Many Manitobans, however, generally reached a consensus that the province had a collective responsibility to educate their deaf citizens, and that this responsibility was beyond the means of charity alone.

This study is about this very responsibility, and the efforts by deaf Manitobans and their hearing allies to foster and enforce it. The Manitoba Institute for the Deaf and Dumb, and the political dialogue around its adoption and improvement by the province, helped to propel deaf Manitobans of all ages into the public sphere as a community and individuals. I argue that the education that the school afforded deaf Manitobans was important for this process, but that the advocacy for deaf employment opportunities from within the school was likely more so, as no amount of training could ensure that deaf citizens could be accepted for employment in

[4] A good explication of these models and their contemporary applications is given in A.J. Withers, *Disability Politics and Theory* (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2012).

workplaces to which their auditory status barred them. Most importantly, through public meetings at the school and publications produced there, Winnipeg and Brandon's deaf communities could mobilize themselves socially and politically.

The legacy of Michel Foucault's ideas has shaped and helped forge the field of both Disability History and Deaf History. Jane Berger's work exemplifies this assertion, as she asserts that residential deaf schools were simultaneously sites of public grandeur and cultural repression in nineteenth-century America; that deaf people were taught "what it meant for them to be deaf."[5] Foucault argued that nineteenth-century institutions were the founding agents in the creation of scientific norms that defined the boundaries of "normality," in medical, economic, and sexual contexts.[6] This influential assertion has led to a central split between two camps of scholars of deaf education – those who stress that deaf schools were key sites of Deaf cultural formation, and the more numerous group of scholars who insist that deaf schools were oppressive, isolating institutions that sought to assimilate and marginalize deaf individuals. Both arguments follow defensible narratives, as those who stress the positive legacies of deaf schools focus on an earlier, sign era, and those who follow a Foucauldian pursuit of oppression focus on a later oralist period.[7] The approach adopted by this study approximates the former, but in a later, post 1880 Milan period.[8]

My primary theoretical underpinning will involve the bridging of social and political considerations: Jurgen Habermas's theory of the emergence of the public sphere in early modern

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[5] Berger, Jane. "Uncommon Schools: Institutionalizing Deafness in Early-Nineteenth-Century America." In *Foucault and the Government of Disability*, ed. Shelley Tremain. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 154.

[6] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Trans. by Alan Sheridan. (New York: Random House, 1977).

[7] R.A.R. Edwards, *Words Made Flesh: Nineteenth-Century Deaf Education and the Growth of Deaf Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2014), 3-5.

[8] The 1880 Milan Conference was a meeting of leading European educators of the deaf. The Conference resulted in these leaders committing themselves to oralism, though the immediate ramifications of Milan have often been overstated.

and modern societies.[9] Often used to link print culture to political movements and social history in the study of eighteenth and nineteenth-century Europe and the United States, Habermas's explanation also offers an indispensable way to understand the emergence of deaf people into public life and concern from the late eighteenth-century to the late nineteenth centuries. Habermas argues that pre-modern societies were primarily "performative", in that sovereigns controlled interactive space between rulers and subjects, and no possibility of reasoned dialogue existed between ruler and ruled.[10] With the transformation of court culture, the rise of Parliaments and Assemblies, as well as the expansion of print culture, a *public sphere* emerged in which the production of reasoned debate and counter-sovereign dialogue became possible. Scholars do not agree on the composition of this sphere – earlier understandings point to its material existence (salons, coffee houses) – but I will follow the example of Jeffrey McNairn and Carmen Neilson, who maintain that the public sphere is a process rather than a place.[11] The transformation of the public sphere, propelled by expanding print culture, drew more and more groups into public visibility and agency, though with important limitations. Neilson argues that while women in mid-nineteenth century Hamilton were drawn into this process, they were "admitted" on the terms of their limited citizenship.[12] Women could forge charitable links and movements, but only under the fiscal and supervisory auspices of middle and upper-class males. In the same way, deaf Manitobans became visible in the public sphere as objects of both pity and wonder, with real limitations to their abilities to affect change in their own lives. With the help of hearing allies, deaf Manitobans were able to establish a school, consolidate the small deaf

[9] Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989 [1962]).
[10] Habermas, *Public Sphere*, 7-8.
[11] Jeffrey McNairn, *The Capacity to Judge: Public Opinion and Deliberative Democracy in Upper Canada, 1791-1854.* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 436-437; Carmen Neilson, *Private Women and the Public Good: Charity and State Formation in Hamilton, Ontario 1846-93.* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2014), 7.
[12] Neilson, *Private Women*, 33.

communities in Brandon and Winnipeg, and maintain a linguistic minority within a growing public institution – even in the face of growing oralism in Europe and North America. The school and its forays into publicity served to further expand the visibility of Winnipeg and Brandon's deaf community, yet while the need for hearing allies diminished before 1900, it did not disappear.

The notion of "publicity" will be central to the narrative and argument presented in this study. Habermas saw publicity as a "screen" of sorts – the visible and verifiable act of engaging in reasoned public debate.[13] I will be using the term in much the same way. "Publicity" may be the act of emerging into reasoned public debate as an identifiable group, but it has little bearing on whether others took a marginalized group's claim to political status seriously. Black Canadians, women, people with disabilities, Indigenous peoples, the poor, and other marginalized groups were largely excluded from reasoned public debate in most of the nineteenth-century. The growth of the publicity of deaf people – not only the quantity but the quality of such publicity - is an important way to track the emergence of people with hearing impairments from charitable causes to a group of people demanding educational rights and occupational access. In the following chapters, I will use the concept of "publicity" in two ways. The first will be to suggest that people with hearing impairments became more publicly discussed and increasingly able to contribute to dialogue of import to both their own emerging cultural group and other reform causes. Secondly, the *quality* of publicity surrounding people with hearing impairments is important to recognize – for centuries, deaf people had been portrayed in a largely comic manner that served the didactic purposes that fictive writing held for early modern authors. Deaf and disabled people were portrayed as evil, stupid, and helpless – but

[13] John L. Brooke, "On the Edges of the Public Sphere." *William and Mary Quarterly* 62, no. 1 (Jan 2005): 97.

always locked in place.[14] I will briefly suggest differences in both the quantity and quality of publicity between Manitoba and the Northwest Territories in Chapters Three and Four, and suggest that the nature of publicity of deaf people – slight and always comic or tragic – in the NWT helps to explain why the government there took more than twenty years to deal with what Manitoba's leaders saw as an educational crisis. I do wish to caution the reader, however. I posit a primarily positive role for the school and provincial government in the advancement of educational and occupational rights for deaf Manitobans, but always with the knowledge that the publicity and power accrued between 1884 and 1920 began to crumble by the 1930s under the pressures of increasing oralism and the establishment of an all-hearing teaching staff. Upon the Manitoba School for the Deaf's reopening in 1965, twenty-five years after its closure to facilitate a radio operator school during the Second World War, it took nearly twenty more years to re-establish a sign language environment.

The provincial adoption of the Manitoba Institute for the Deaf and Dumb in 1889 set in motion a process by which sympathy for deaf Manitobans was transformed from pity for "unfortunates" to a recognition of the responsibility of the Province to educate students, regardless of auditory status. This transformation was incomplete and understandings of deaf Manitobans as malleable figures to be shaped by pity, burden, scientific fascination, and political reform all overlapped. Nancy Fraser has theorized about the difficulties of utilizing Habermas's theory to describe subaltern populations, which deaf people before and during the education period could surely be described as, depending upon class and other considerations.[15] Habermas,

[14] David Turner, "Disability Humor and the Meanings of Impairment in Early Modern England," in *Recovering Disability in Early Modern England*, eds. Alison P. Hobgood and David Houston Wood. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 58.
[15] Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Craig Calhoun. (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1992), 109-142.

Fraser argues, employed an overly liberal framework that assumed that the employment of "reasoned dialogue" was enough to ensure unfettered access to the public sphere. Fraser argues that African-Americans and women were largely barred from the public sphere, or limited greatly in their access to it. This is an important corrective to Habermas's theory, yet one not entirely applicable to deaf people. The MIDD, this study will argue, allowed a political and cultural platform from which the deaf community and their hearing allies could, imperfectly and slowly, increase their political visibility and access to reasoned debate. Yet beyond the rhetoric lies a real transformation of the prospects of deaf Manitobans: in an age of urban upheaval, many deaf Manitobans continued to live as farm labourers, but most made livings in semi-skilled trades in urban centres by 1905. Deaf people were employed by most major newspapers as typesetters, and as civil servants at the Post Office after 1905. Critics of residential deaf schools have pointed to the limited options of many graduates to working class professions because of their vocational training.[16] This view has merit, but is often considered outside of the context of the labour market and educational outcomes of hearing Manitobans. Vocational education changed within the school as the possibilities for the employment prospects of deaf Manitobans expanded along with their representation and participation in the public sphere.

Scholarly writing on the history of deafness is not limited to work by historians, as a growing body of literary studies has shone light on the meaning of deafness to both hearing and deaf writers. Christopher Krentz has explicated a "hearing line" that both separated hearing and deaf citizens in nineteenth century literature and inspired a form of terror and pity in hearing Americans.[17] Put in another way, Krentz argues that the contesting identity of "hearingness"

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[16] Fern Elgar, "A Comparative Study of Native Residential Schools and the Residential Schools or the Deaf in Canada." M.A. thesis, Carleton University, 1997; Edwards, *Words Made Flesh*, 120.
[17] Christopher Krentz, *Writing Deafness*: *The Hearing Line in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

arose with “deafness.” Krentz, however, partially challenges Owen Wrigley’s forceful assertion that deaf Americans were colonized by hearing leaders and allies in the nineteenth-century, and were forced to conform to hearing religious and linguistic norms and a subaltern status.[18] Wrigley’s work presents an uncomfortable binary opposition that is difficult to support with many nineteenth-century sources, either hearing or deaf-produced. Jennifer Esmail’s work has likewise argued that deafness inspired both pity and fear in Victorian Britain, and that this resulted in the growth of the eugenics and oralist movement, as Victorians sought to forge deaf Britons into a likeness of the hearing. Oralism sought to both include deaf Britons into the national community and keep the rise of a distinct deaf culture at bay.[19] Esmail’s discussion of the Elizabeth Groom expedition of deaf Londoners, from a British standpoint, is long overdue in the literature on Victorian deafness and of great value here.

Douglas Baynton’s landmark work has placed nineteenth-century deaf Americans in the emerging national dialogues of citizenship and nationalism.[20] Oralism, he argues, was a reaction to the growth of a distinct deaf culture in American deaf schools, and a fearful reaction to the emergence of a “deaf race” in that country. He outlines the growth of oralism through the prism of a fierce debate over the responsibility of deaf citizens to linguistically integrate and the declining attention of most hearing Americans to their own responsibilities to incorporate deaf people into the national community through attention to the manual alphabet and other linguistic “bridges” to cross-cultural communication. Lennard Davis and Baynton have also argued that sign language was often linked rhetorically to “natural language” by oralists, and was often seen as an inferior, iconographic language that was more of an animalistic communication than

[18] Owen Wrigley, *The Politics of Deafness* (Washington, D.C.: Gallaudet University Press, 1996).
[19] Jennifer Esmail, *Reading Victorian Deafness: Signs and Sounds in Victorian Literature and Culture* (Athens: University of Ohio Press, 2013).
[20] Douglas Baynton, *Forbidden Signs: American Culture and the Campaign Against Sign Language* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

human.[21] As Esmail's work has shown, however, there was profound resistance to this assertion, including from Queen Victoria herself, who was an able practitioner of the two-handed British manual alphabet.

J.J. Murray likewise argues that oralism and its emphasis on the national community ran headlong into the pan-national reality of deaf culture in the nineteenth-century, and the recognition of this "supra-national" deaf culture will be explored through the MIDD in this study.[22] Most scholarship has focussed on the limits that hearing North Americans placed on the proliferation of sign language after the 1880s. This study will engage with those efforts, while exploring the very real gains that the MIDD allowed sign language and the manual alphabet in Manitoba. The MIDD, during the period under study, does present a powerful counter narrative to Murray and Baynton's studies, as it also represents an island of "combined" deaf education within a period in which oralism gained real traction and ultimately dominance in North America. Even when, as Jason Ellis's work has shown, Ontario deaf schools became dominated by oralism, Manitoba's provincial school did not.[23] The present study suggests that there were real limits to the expansion of pure oralism, and much organized resistance to the movement in the North American deaf community and among some hearing allies. The nineteenth-century "methods debate" is only one thread in this study, as I focus more on the material conditions and

[21] Lennard J. Davis, "Universalizing Marginality: How Europe Became Deaf in the Eighteenth Century," in *Genealogy and Literature*, ed. Lee Quimby. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 110-127; Baynton, *Forbidden Signs*, 108-131.

[22] J.J. Murray, "'One Touch of Nature Makes the While World Kin': the Transnational Lives of Deaf Americans, 1870-1924." PhD diss., University of Iowa, 2007.

[23] Ellis, Jason A. "'All Methods – and Wedded to None': The Deaf Education Methods Debate and Progressive Educational Reform in Toronto, Canada, 1922-1945." *Paedagogica Historica: International Journal of the History of Education* 50, no. 3 (2014): 371-389. Also see James Roots, "Deaf Education and Advocacy: A Short History of the Canadian Association of the Deaf," in *Making Equality: History of Advocacy and Persons with Disabilities in Canada*, eds. Deborah Stienstra, and Aileen Wight-Felske, (Concord, ON: Captus Press, 2003", 73-86. "Combined" education meant that students with residual hearing were educated orally and profoundly deaf students were educated in sign, but it also meant that a bi-lingual environment was kept at schools, as acquisition of written English was central to combined programs.

limited publicity that deaf Manitobans accrued until 1909, in increasingly stark opposition to (signing) deaf Ontarians, Nova Scotians, and Americans. Resistance to oralism within the MIDD was, however, evidence of how the school helped to thrust deaf Manitobans into the public sphere with their linguistic concerns intact, which was no small achievement for a North American deaf school in the early twentieth-century.

Historical writing on deaf education and culture in the nineteenth-century is dominated by examinations of the role of oralism in both denying deaf people a shared, distinct linguistic status and aiding the rise of eugenics. This is a welcome fact, not only because the sign debate was so important to deaf individuals and groups at the time. Baynton has shown how a monograph about the sign debate can open up a whole new way of considering the consolidation of American nationhood in the post-Civil War period; that writing about a minority and its interactions with the majority can paint a compelling and clarifying picture of the majority. Yet the historiography of deaf people in the nineteenth-century is at a key moment – the turn from a singular advocacy and "liberation" lens to one that recognizes the importance of increased political visibility and vocational opportunity to contemporary deaf people. The Manichean dynamic of oralism against manualism is an oversimplification as flawed as the "great man" works about hearing allies that Owen Wrigley and Harlan Lane railed against.[24] The present study is overtly political in concern, but understands political developments and decisions as informed and forced by public concern, as traceable in print culture.

Scholars who have studied deaf education have often accepted that the movement was a "double-edged sword," in that it codified and partially segregated a disabled community, while introducing deaf children to other deaf people for often the first time. R.A.R. Edwards takes this assertion further, and remarked that "deaf people understood the power of education in their

[24] Harlan Lane, *When the Mind Hears: A History of the Deaf.* (New York: Random House, 1984).

lives."[25] For deaf Americans, after the foundation of the first deaf schools in the antebellum period, one of the greatest sources of this power was the increased publicity of deaf concerns and an increased access to hearing allies.[26] This allowed for deaf people to first be advocated *for* then advocate for themselves, often through publications aligned with or originating in deaf schools. Few historians of deaf North Americans have explored this public legacy of deaf education in serious detail, as Ylva Soderfeldt has done for the emergence of the German Deaf community in the Imperial period (1871-1918).[27] Soderfeldt's use of a Habermasian perspective has also provided a model and inspiration for the present study. This study will invert the usual equation, and problematize the Foucauldian picture of one nineteenth-century institution while taking seriously the positive legacy of education in deaf individuals' lives and their communities. It will also offer an historical portrait of a provincial institution within its larger hearing and deaf communities in order to do this, which has only been done in the Canadian context by Stephane-D Perrault and Sylvie Pelletier about the Raymond-Dewar institution in Quebec, and Alessandra Iozzo about the Ontario Institute for the Deaf.[28] In this vein, it follows in the footsteps of Michael Reis's work on the Indiana School for the Deaf, which highlights the importance of machine politics to American public institutions in the nineteenth century.[29] Reis uses both public sources and internal correspondence to argue that the triumph of the Democrats, and the

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[25] Edwards, *Words Made Flesh*, 81.
[26] Edwards, *Words Made Flesh*, 157.
[27] Ylva Soderfeldt, *From Pathology to Public Sphere: The German Deaf Movement 1848-1914.* (Aachen: Transcript, 2013).
[28] Perrault, Stephane-D and Sylvie Pelletier. *L'Institute Raymond-Dewar et Ses Institutions D'Origine: 160 Ans D'Histoire Avec les Personnes Sourdes*. (Quebec: Septentrion. 2010); Alessandra Iozzo, "'Silent Citizens': Citizenship Education, Disability and d/Deafness at the Ontario Institution for the Education of the Deaf, 1870-1914." PhEd. diss., University of Ottawa, 2015.
[29] Michael Reis, "A Tale of Two Schools: The Indiana Institution and the Evansville Day School, 1879-1912," in *The Deaf History Reader*, ed. John Vickrey Van Cleve. (Washington: Gallaudet University Press, 2009), 85-115.

subsequent purge of the School's Republican appointees, greatly weakened sign language use at the school – but not necessarily for reasons that align to the dialogue of the sign debate.

Studying the movement that led to and sustained the MIDD throughout an era of parsimonious public budgets necessitates a study of Manitoba's leaders. Deaf Manitobans needed hearing allies to successfully push for the school's adoption, though at least one of those who lobbied the Province were deaf. Individual MPs, parents, clergymen, and cabinet members all played integral parts in the school's establishment, and all had different motivations for doing so. This study will engage with the sparse literature on the government of Thomas Greenway, Manitoba's third premier. Writing on Greenway has focussed, with justification, on the Manitoba Schools Question and railway disallowance, two issues of principal importance to Greenway's cabinet. James Mochoruk and Christopher Adams have argued that while Greenway has been written off as a "shrewd mediocrity" by most Canadian historians, he did leave his personal stamp on Manitoban political culture in the establishment of a modern party system, patronage networks, and the transition from a brokerage system of political leadership to a bifurcated Legislature.[30] Joseph Hilt's biographical sketch of Greenway deals with these topics in depth, but also argues that Premier Greenway was more influenced than previously thought by James Smart, his first Minister of Public Works. Hilts offers a view into the workings of the Greenway Cabinet, especially into the power struggles around the Premier. The establishment of a school for the deaf held wide appeal in the Brandon and Winnipeg areas, meaning that the Provincial Cabinet is only one location in which to study the decision to adopt the school.[31] The political

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[30] James Mochoruk, "Thomas Greenway, 1888-1900," in *Manitoba Premiers of the 19th and 20th Centuries*, eds. Barry Ferguson and Robert Wardhough. (Regina, University of Regina Press, 2010), 79-106; Christopher Adams, *Politics in Manitoba: Parties, Leaders, and Voters.* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2008), Chapter Three. "Shrewd mediocrity" is W.L. Morton's phrase in *Manitoba: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1957), 278.

[31] Joseph Hilts, "The Political Career of Thomas Greenway." PhD diss., University of Manitoba, 1974.

movement to establish and adopt the school, however, is a virtually unstudied aspect of the Greenway government's record, despite Clifton Carbin's impressive and important research into the establishment.[32]

Ultimately, a study of the private and public workings of the Manitoba Institute for the Deaf and Dumb is a study of the emergence of a moral reform movement in Canada. Korneski argues that there were two impulses for reform – either to perfect an emerging industrial society, or to fix a broken emerged one – and this study leans toward where he does, with the former.[33] Moral reform was, as Freeberg and Korneski point out, both a public movement and an individual vocation.[34] With this in mind, this study will deal extensively with Principal McDermid's public and private efforts to improve the school and use the school's cultural capital in the service of other reform activities. McDermid was a public figure - interviewed by newspapers after travels, President of the Manitoba Club for years, and a sought after sign interpreter for Winnipeg's deaf community and leading clergymen. His efforts will be treated as both emblematic of moral reform, but also the outgrowth of a professional educator who raised his family within the confines of the school and committed extensive personal time to aid the career prospects of older students and graduates. There is, in short, both an altruism and inertia to the biographies of professional reformers, and McDermid is a strong example of this. He worked his entire life in deaf education, starting as a twelve-year-old clerk at the deaf school in Belleville, Ontario. He established and maintained clear links to reform because he was committed to causes like deaf education, kindergarten, and temperance. He also maintained these

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[32] Clifton Carbin, *Deaf Heritage in Canada: A Distinctive, Diverse, and Enduring Culture.* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1996).
[33] Kurt Korneski, *Race, Nation, and Reform Ideology in Winnipeg, 1880s to 1920s*. (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2015).
[34] Ernest Freeberg, *The Education of Laura Bridgman: First Deaf and Blind Person to Learn Language*. (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2001).

links because it was his job, a calling that allowed him to display a certain amount of conspicuous middle class wealth. As Freeberg argues, it is time for historians to pay less attention to the idealism of reform and pay more to the professional inertia of individual reformers.[35]

It was not only Principals Watson and McDermid who fought to establish and improve the school from 1888 to 1900. Several scholars of American freeholding farmers and the politics of the U.S. Midwest and West have argued that farm communities often sought to use their leverage over local governments to allow elected power to serve their interests. Ariel Ron calls this process "summoning the state," and argues that farmers sought to use the federal and state government's scientific and bureaucratic reach to benefit farmers's yields and access to institutions.[36] Ron's argument is certainly analogous with a later Western Canadian experience of agricultural research into hardier and more productive wheat strains as well as an earlier spread of benevolent institutions in the closing decades of Upper Canada before Confederation. Gregory Downs also argues that while American freeholders, including former enslaved people in North Carolina, sought to influence the state's exercise of power, they also became entangled in a web of dependence that offered some modicum of influence over local government.[37] Farmers increasingly controlled the state making power of government, and used that control to both build benevolent institutions and demand that the state or provincial government had a responsibility to the children of freeholders. Theoretical models of nation-building in the

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[35] Freeberg, *Education of Laura Bridgman*, 23.

[36] Ariel Ron, "Developing the Country: 'Scientific Agriculture' and the Roots of the Republican Party." PhD. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2012.

[37] Gregory P. Downs, *Declarations of Dependence: The Long Reconstruction of Popular Politics in the South, 1861-1908.* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011). For a similar argument about Canadian rural populism in a later period, see David Laycock, *Populism and Democratic Thought in the Canadian Prairies, 1910-1945.* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990).

Canadian and American Wests that highlight top-down, state power rarely reflect the formation narratives of benevolent institutions, which emerged from pressure on governments, not pressure from governments. Constructive liberalism, an economic explanation for institution building in laissez-faire liberal societies, is a helpful way to understand the goals of farmer settlers in "summoning the state." It describes a process, first outlined by A.P. Usher and Milton Sydney Heath, in which states built institutions to uphold the very ideals of liberalism that an unfettered, unregulated economy could endanger – that by building bureaucracies, infrastructure, and benevolent institutions the liberal state taxed and spent increasing amounts in order to ensure a measure of equal opportunity to settlers.[38] As the reader will see, the founding of the Manitoba Institute for the Deaf and Dumb is an important example of this power wielded by farmers and settlers.

This is not only a study of the hearing allies of deaf Manitobans. Largely because of the school's existence, deaf students and teachers were publicly involved in advocating for both the school's health and the well-being of Winnipeg and Brandon's deaf communities. Therefore the present work is also a study of increasing forays into the public sphere by deaf Manitobans, a process helped greatly by sustained interest from newspapers and the founding of *Silent Echo*, the school's own paper. Works in the burgeoning field of Disability History certainly inform this area of study. As Catherine Kudlick argues, Disability History's project is to establish and explicate the construction of disability, and to explore the "meaning we make of variations."[39] Variations in auditory status became both less damning in the public sphere and more scientifically and bureaucratically codified between 1889 and 1909 in Manitoba. Disability

[38] Usher, Abbott Payson. "A Liberal Theory of Constructive Statecraft," *The American Economic Review* 24, no. 1 (March 1934): 2-10; Heath, Milton Sydney. *Constructive Liberalism: The Role of the State in Economic Development in Georgia to 1860.* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1954).
[39] Catherine J. Kudlick, "Disability History: Why We Need Another 'Other'." *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 108, No. 3 (June 2003): 764.

History offers the theoretical tools to reorganize the *meaning* of changes in how variations of auditory status were understood. For example, the allowance of the federal Civil Service to hire deaf employees as postal employees in 1905 represented the culmination of both the deaf community and their allies's publicity efforts, and also distinct changes in the public's attitudes toward deaf people. In order to understand both the political and intellectual change behind such a decision, Disability History itself is often an incomplete theoretical framework.

Disability History, as proposed by Kudlick and employed by Baynton and others, shares one limitation with other intellectual perspectives – it does not account for or trace the dissemination of powerful ideas about deaf people. Habermas's public sphere model is an ideal complement, because it can bridge the gap between political and social history.[40] What the approach may offer is a way to understand the sudden emergence of the deaf as a political concern in the early nineteenth-century. While Davis and Baynton are convincing in pointing out that scientific and religious discourse propelled a public interest in the deaf, Disability History seems to lack a way to account for the public dissemination of concern for and interest in the deaf, as well as the political will to intervene in their lives in positive and negative ways. With increased attention to *what was done* rather than simply *what was said*, a very powerful politics of sympathy becomes visible. Deaf children in Manitoba, while housed in a residential school for months at a time, had by the end of 1890 been assured the right to a free compulsory education that included targeted job training in fields that maximized the chances of subsequent employment. As Janet Miron has shown in her study of nineteenth-century institutional visiting in North America, sustained attention to both the actions and rationalizations of the public and government's interactions with the MIDD can help to more deeply historicise the motivations of

[40] For an impressive example of how American political historians have expanded that field's scope through the use of a Habermasian perspective, see John L. Brooke, *Columbia Rising: Civil Life on the Upper Hudson from the Revolution to the Age of Jackson.* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2010).

those who supported institutions, even those as abhorrent to twenty-first century sentiment as the late nineteenth-century insane asylum.[41] The politics of sympathy were, indeed, more than just words, and far more dense than simply charitable pity.

This study is based on a variety of print and archival sources produced within the MIDD, about the MIDD in the public sphere, and within the provincial department responsible for the school's operation, the Ministry of Public Works. At the Provincial Archives of Manitoba (PAM), the Minister of Public Works Correspondence gives a detailed picture of the MIDD's founding, adoption, and improvement from 1888-1900. Ministers Smart and Watson, as well as Provincial Inspector of Institutions J.W. Sifton, dealt with requests from Principals Watson and McDermid to address the school's linguistic, structural, and professional shortcomings. Correspondence Inward to the Ministers of Public Works also pushed for a more aggressive legislative agenda in 1890, when the issue of compulsory attendance for deaf students was forefront in both Principals's mind during the year of Watson's departure and McDermid's arrival. These sources reveal McDermid's commitment to the school, the primacy of sign language there, and the health of students housed in an often overcrowded institution. The Correspondence Inward does have one clear drawback – responses were not saved until the T.C. Norris Administration during the First World War, and major changes and responses need to be inferred from financial records and subsequent correspondence. The Unpublished Sessional Papers at the PAM were also central to this study, as they provide more detail to the presentation of the 1889 and 1890 legislations concerning the MIDD than were on offer from the published provincial Legislative Journal, which is accessible at the Legislative Library of Manitoba.

[41] Janet Miron, *Prisons, Asylums, and the Public: Institutional Visiting in the Nineteenth Century.* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011).

The Deaf Heritage Room at the Manitoba School for the Deaf was also a site of key published and archival material produced at the MIDD itself. Of especial value are deaf printing instructor J.R. Cook's original proofs of the school's bi-weekly newspaper *Silent Echo*, which cover the period from 1892 to 1909. The newspaper includes important information about student life, professional development, visitations to the school by political and power figures, as well as the school's editorial stances on matters of importance to Manitoba's deaf community. *Silent Echo* also featured a column on "city mutes," a site of interaction with and reporting on deaf people in Winnipeg, on whom sources are scant for the period under study. Finally, *Silent Echo* was a site of interaction and exchange between the MIDD and deaf schools and communities throughout North America and to a lesser extent, Britain. The school's forays into the public sphere are also reflected in the Deaf Heritage Room's collection of annual calendars and pamphlets produced for parents and the general public.

This study seeks to explain the emergence of deaf Manitobans into the public sphere, and will do so by studying the efforts and impressions of both hearing and deaf Manitobans of varying political engagement. Studying deaf Manitobans before the founding of the school is difficult but not impossible. Pamphlets produced for Elizabeth Groom's deaf colonist scheme that sent unemployed deaf Londoners to the Canadian West from 1882-1884 offers some of the best source information on deaf farmers, farm labourers, and urban artisans that are available. Sources produced at the school were largely composed by hearing administrators, though this is not entirely the case. It is difficult and inadvisable to draw distinct lines around sources produced by hearing and deaf persons as serving different interests, as McDermid often advocated forcefully both in public and in private correspondence to Ministers Smart and Watson to expand the level of involvement of deaf employees at the school. Michel Foucault's assertion that

residential institutionalization only served to separate and marginalize people has been challenged by Miron with respect to insane asylums, and it is even less defensible with reference to the MIDD.[42]

The formation, improvement, and survival of the MIDD from 1889-1909 was not an inevitable accomplishment. Each addition to the typesetting machine, expansion of student living areas and legislative achievement came after sometimes extensive periods of lobbying by the Principals which are recoverable through the Minister of Public Works's correspondence. Education for blind children, which will be considered in contrast to deaf education, was not guaranteed for Manitobans until 1916, though individual children were at times sent to the Brantford School for the Blind at provincial expense if enough pressure was placed on Manitoba's ministers. The improvement of the MIDD was not uniform over the decades, either. Great improvements in health care and student accommodation were made in 1890-93, but had become obsolete by later in the decade. Overcrowding problems led to the building of several additions to the MIDD building and finally to its movement to a larger building in 1914. Improvements in student employment prospects were rendered less important than their potential because deaf people were only admitted to the civil service in 1905, after a long campaign from the school and national deaf communities. The school also closed during World War II and did not reopen until 1965. The school's expansion programme, improvement, upkeep, political influence and public image were kept in the public and governmental eye through an exhausting amount of effort and lobbying from hearing and deaf school employees, graduates, and allies. As the currently uneasy Manitoba School for the Deaf's status can show us, nineteenth-century benevolent institutions and twentieth-century entitlements alike have faced and often overcome challenges to their legitimacy and value.

[42] Miron, *Prisons, Asylums, and the Public*, 13.

Throughout this study, I will hesitate to use the term 'disability' in reference to deafness, both acquired and prelingual.[43] The principal reason for this is the twentieth-century nature of the term as an umbrella that encapsulates concerns of pity, demographic problem, and liberation for both disabled and "able-bodied people." The constructed nature of disability also presents problems, as scholars have argued since the 1970s that disability itself is a historically and culturally-bound concept. That disability is a term that needs to be historicized is quickly apparent to researchers in the field, and historicizing the term necessitates some choices, which should be an ongoing concern. The four models of disability outlined by current scholarship, forged in the late twentieth-century, are simply not intelligible in late Victorian Canadian society. For this reason, I strive to avoid the term as an umbrella concept, except when taking a comparative approach, like when contrasting the employment and educational prospects of blind and deaf students in Western Canada. More importantly, Deaf individuals often reject the term "disabled" for themselves, and prefer to understand Deaf Culture as a linguistic entity.[44] While this distinction is a late twentieth-century one, borne of a long period of linguistic oppression in oralist deaf schools in the twentieth century, it is fairly representative of how many deaf Manitobans saw themselves during the late-Victorian period, as we will see.

The organization of this study into chapters and themes is largely narrative. It is organized into three substantial chapters that cover three important stages in the school's history, and the province of Manitoba's interaction with and accommodation of its deaf communities before 1910. The second chapter will outline the political and social outcry that led to the

[43] Prelingual deafness refers to profound deafness that is either congenital or occurs before spoken language is acquired. In the nineteenth-century, childhood diseases like scarlet fever were behind higher rates of deafness than have been experienced since the mid-twentieth century.

[44] Members of Deaf Culture capitalize "Deaf" when referring to Deaf Culture and leave the "d" in lower case when referring to the physiological fact of deafness. This study will not use this late-twentieth century convention, as it was not in use in the late Victorian period.

foundation of the MIDD as a private school in 1888 by James Watson, and its adoption the following year by the Province. This chapter relies largely upon mainstream newspapers and Thomas Greenway's correspondence as sources. The third chapter will argue that the province, under pressure from Principal McDermid and others, slowly improved and invested in the school as a matter of provincial responsibility and pride between 1890 and 1900, and will use correspondence between the MIDD and the Manitoba government as an important source. Finally, the fourth chapter will argue that the school both helped solidify Winnipeg and Brandon's deaf communities and argued for the responsibility of the province to ensure employment opportunities for deaf Manitobans, and it will roughly consider the ten years between 1899 and 1909. This final chapter will rely extensively upon the school's paper *Silent Echo* and some correspondence between the MIDD and the Manitoba government.

Chapter Two: "Our Local Deaf Mute": The Founding of the Manitoba Institute for the Deaf and Dumb

Introduction

By the time Manitoba adopted the fledgling Manitoba Institute for the Deaf and Dumb in 1889, many commentators in newspapers and in correspondence with the provincial government agreed that this development was past due. Deaf people had settled in or were born in Manitoba before 1884, but only with the settlement of deaf immigrants by Jane Elizabeth Groom in 1884 did print sources begin to publicize their presence in earnest. Deaf settlers from Groom's expedition, as well as parents of deaf children, some clergymen, and provincial MPPs began to lobby the Province after 1884, culminating in a furious exchange of correspondence in the late summer of 1888. Deaf Manitobans thrust themselves, with help from their hearing allies, into the public sphere in order to assert the responsibility of the Province to provide a free education to deaf Manitobans of school age. This development had already taken place in the Maritimes, Quebec, and Ontario, making the MIDD the seventh deaf school in the Dominion and only the second to be completely free of cost to students' families. The rhetoric of provincial responsibility offered by the coalition reflected the political project of the incoming government of Thomas Greenway, whose Liberal platform stressed provincial rights and self-sustainability. By the spring of 1889, Manitoba had adopted the private school established by J.C. Watson months before, but it would take more effort on the part of deaf Manitobans and their hearing allies, through public print and private correspondence to the government, to bring the school up to a North American standard both as an educational institution and a residential school.

Deaf Education in Historical Perspective

Scholars have generally placed the origins of the education of deaf people in two primary streams of thought: the influence of the Enlightenment and the educational and religious legacy of the Benedictine Order. Both stood in opposition to the dominant Aristotelian belief that "deaf and dumb" individuals were incapable of acquiring intelligence because of the limitation placed on their ability to participate in an intellectual world built on auditory participation.[1] Locating the beginnings of deaf education in Europe is difficult, however, due to a paucity of sources.

Under English Common Law, prelingually deaf people were not allowed to inherit land or testify in court as they were seen as *non compos mentis* or "not of sound mind."[2] Despite Biblical teachings about charity and disability[3], prejudice against prelingually deaf people in the Middle Ages and the early modern period in Europe was widespread, and Margret Winzer argues that disabled people in general were subjected to abandonment, persecution, and exploitation for the purposes of the entertainment of others.[4] As David Turner argues, most early modern depictions of disabled people rested upon the humorous exploitation of their affected faculties.[5] Disability historians have struggled to make concrete assertions about disability in the period before institutional special education, however, due to a lack of sources beyond scant literary

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[1] Marilyn Daniels, *Benedictine Roots in the Development of Deaf Education: Listening with the Heart.* (Westport: Bergin and Garvey, 1997), 1-2.

[2]Michael Dalton, *The Countrey Justice: Containing the Practice of the Justices of the Peace As Well In As Well As Out of Their Sessions.* London, 1666 (1619), 271 (https://archive.org/stream/countryjusticeco00dalt#page/270/mode/2up). These legal prescriptions were not uniformly enforced, and Emily Cockayne has persuasively argued that one's legal status as a deaf person in early modern England depended heavily on one's social status. See Emily Cockayne, "Experiences of the Deaf in Early Modern England." *The Historical Journal* 46, no. 3 (2003): 493-510.

[3] Exodus 4:11: "Who has made Man's mouth? Or who makes him mute or deaf, or seeing or blind? Is it not I, the Lord?" King James, (Cleveland, World Publishing Company, 1960).

[4] Winzer, *The History of Special Education: From Isolation to Integration* (Washington, D.C.: Gallaudet University Press, 1993), 8-9.

[5]David M. Turner, "Disability Humor."

references and the efforts of individuals and some Church efforts to accommodate disability.[6] While some researchers choose to portray a positive period of community and familial responsibility, and others a period of "dread and despair,"[7] most deaf people likely found a place as agricultural laborers or artisans during the feudal and early modern era. Lennard Davis argues that deafness only became a "problem" to communities with the expansion of urbanity and demographic stresses on rural areas. Indeed, while deafness as an affliction was understood before the modern era, the competing notion of "normalcy" was incomplete, and human abilities were understood to fall along a spectrum of human faults.[8]

Prelingual deafness, or the acquisition of deafness at birth or before the acquisition of language, was much more common before the proper use of antibiotics.[9] Most prelingually deaf people before the twentieth-century became deaf due to communicable childhood illnesses like scarlet fever or rubella, while a minority were born deaf due to heredity or in utero infection. The students attending the Manitoba Institute for the Deaf and Dumb, whose parents were required to provide a "reason for deafness" upon application to the school, bear out this assertion. In the Annual Report for 1892, fourteen of thirty-nine students were reportedly born deaf, while the rest were deafened by disease in childhood.[10] Joseph Seiss estimated, in his 1887 book on deafness, a

[6] Geoffrey Reaume. "Disability History in Canada: Present Work in the Field and Future Prospects." *Canadian Journal of Disability Studies* 1 no. 1 (2012): 61-62.
[7] Winzer, *History of Special Education*, 6.
[8] Lennard J. Davis, "Introduction: Normality, Power, and Culture," in *The Disability Studies Reader*, ed. Lennard J. Davis. (London, Routledge, 2013), 1-14.
[9] Overdoses of antibiotics were a common cause of deafness in children before the 1970s as well. On the island of Okinawa, Japan, overdoses during a 1964 rubella outbreak led to a whole generation of deaf children, who by 1970 had forced the Japanese Government to build a temporary deaf school there. Members of this cohort thrilled the nation in 1982 by coming one win away from the *Koshien*, a national high school baseball tournament that is analogous in popularity to US college football. See Karen Nakamura, *Deaf in Japan: Signing and the Politics of Identity.* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 66-67.
[10] D.W. McDermid, "Second Annual Report of the Manitoba Deaf and Dumb Institute." *Journals of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba* 23 (1891): 55.

rate of one congenitally deaf child in 938 for Canada, though this would not include those deafened in infancy.[11]

Benedictine monks, argues Marilyn Daniels, were among the first identifiable educators of deaf children for two principal reasons. The first was that their vows of silence allowed them to develop and appreciate a signed language, and thereby foster an understanding of the development of ideas without the use of the human voice. Indeed, monasteries had long been a refuge for deaf and blind people from the early medieval period in Europe.[12] The Benedictines, especially the Spanish monk Pedro Ponce de Leon, more importantly shared a belief in a whole human character that united individuals of differing physical status.[13] Prelingually deaf people, Benedictines thought, could learn to liberate and convey their natural abilities and ideas through the acquisition of language.[14] Most deaf people in Europe, however, continued to live in a way that in practice looked much like the lives of their hearing family members – tied to community networks and agricultural labour. The rhetoric of spiritual and mental "darkness" that was used so effectively by early educators in Europe and North America was certainly an overstatement. Many deaf people lived in isolation and remained lightning rods for the fear and pity of hearing people, but their lack of formal education hardly distinguished them from most people before the nineteenth-century movement toward public education.

Most deaf people's lives did not primarily change despite a philosophical shift away from Aristotelian doctrine, though a review of published primary literature, which often focusses on urban and institutional sources, does seem to suggest this. Court records of the Old Bailey in London suggest a more satisfying picture of pre-institutional education in the urban working

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[11] Joseph Seiss, *The Children of Silence or The Story of the Deaf.* (Philadelphia: Porter and Coates, 1887), 31.
[12] Winzer, *History of Special Education*, 20-21.
[13] Daniels, *Benedictine Roots*, 98.
[14] Daniels, *Benedictine Roots,* 98-99.

class. Deaf people are detailed in these records as individuals who are often employed in working class occupations, and have hearing family members or co-workers through which they could convey a defense to the court. Woll and Stone have located the use and acceptance of sign language in the London court from the 1740s,[15] and my own research into the Old Bailey records shows a conflicting story – the legal definition of prelingually deaf defendants as *non compos mentis* was rarely honoured after the 1780s, which led to both increasing conviction rates and the decline in the use of discretion on the part of judges and juries.[16] The 1725 case of George Armstrong for grand larceny is instructive. The paraphrased exchange between a defense witness, a fellow rope-maker, and the judge makes it clear that communication through "natural signs" was a common mode of communication that allowed him to function in a workplace.[17] Armstrong's coworker could "understand him well enough in Rope-making, but could not pretend to be certain of his meaning in such a case as this."[18]

Margret Winzer has argued that the Enlightenment in France, through the impulse of *philosophes* to attack and resist dogmas based on religious teaching alone, provided an important spark that led to the beginnings of special education in France.[19] Early Enlightenment figures who became interested in educating deaf people as a way of widening the understanding of the role of language in human development, like Etienne Bonnot de Condillard, looked back to the

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[15] Bencie Woll and Christopher Stone, "Dumb O Jemmy and Others: Deaf People, Interpreters, and the London Courts in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries." *Sign Language Studies* 8, no. 3 (2008): 226-240.

[16] Sandy Barron, "'Through Obstinacy or the Act of God': Emerging Accommodation of Deaf Defendants at the Old Bailey, London 1725-1817." Conference Paper. New Frontiers Conference, York University, Toronto, February 2015.

[17] Natural signs referred to a "universal" sign language that both deaf and hearing scholars referred to. It was considered to be a shared human language that predated verbal speech, and intelligible to those who were willing to communicate with a natural signer. Of course, sign language scholars have cast grave doubt upon the notion of a universal proto-sign language, as does Pierre Desloges's 1779 essay *L'Observations d'un sourd et muet*, which provides strong evidence for the existence of Old French Sign Language. See *Observations d'un sourds et muet, sur un cours elémentaire d'education des sourds et muèts*. (Paris, B. Morin, 1779). (http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/39363), accessed September 10, 2014.

[18] Old Bailey Proceedings Online (oldbaileyonline.org), 7 April 1725, George Armstrong (t17250407-70).

[19] Margret Winzer, *History of Special Education,* 39-41.

seventeenth-century work of Ponce de Leon as a model of what could be achieved for deaf people through concerted, informed effort. The Paris School for the Deaf was started by the Abbé de l'Epée in his home in 1760 and further developed by his protégé, Roch Amroise Cucurron Sicard after the school's adoption by the Revolutionary Government in 1791.[20] This was a national school that only educated the most promising deaf individuals and was continued by the newly restored French monarchy after 1814. The Paris School has attained a special status in American deaf historiography because of its link to Laurent de Clerc, who was brought to the United States in 1816-17 to found the first American deaf school in Hartford.

The Paris Institution, under Sicard, practiced a curriculum based on the use of sign language and what Aicardi describes as a misunderstanding of Condillac's "sensationism."[21] L'Epée focused on a theological program in the school's early years, and saw students as *enfant sauvages* who were in need of, but clearly capable of, both spiritual and intellectual uplift. Sicard later portrayed students as "living automatons" who were incapable of organized thought or reason until educated.[22] The key difference here was between de L'Epée's emphasis on spiritual development and Sicard's emphasis on linguistic development, and their differing answers to the question of what separated humans from animals - Sicard would have answered "language," while L'Epée would have likely answered "the possession of a soul."[23] Through de Clerc, a student of Sicard's, the American strain of deaf education became closer to L'Epée's intentions, as it heightened religious and philanthropic motivations and did not engage with the scientific

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[20] Christine Aicardi, "The Analytic Spirit and the Paris Institution for the Deaf-Mutes, 1760-1830." *History of Science* 47 (2009): 189-190.
[21] Aicardi, "Analytic Spirit," 190.
[22] Aicardi, "Analytic Spirit," 192. "Sensationism" was the argument that all knowledge, including moral knowledge, came from the senses and was therefore not innate. Sicard took sensationism to an extreme, claiming that a lack of faculty in one sense threatened all, whereas L'Epée saw vision as more than compensatory for a loss of hearing.
[23] A similar divide is outlined by Baynton with reference to oralists and manualists one hundred years later. Baynton, *Forbidden Signs*, 50. Baynton's hypothetical oralist, however, would answer "speech" as opposed to language.

motivation that Sicard emphasized. That de Clerc was a deaf man himself was undoubtedly a key reason for his differing emphasis, on philanthropy and community responsibility rather than scientific endeavor, after the founding of the American School in Hartford.[24]

While the Braidwood Schools in Edinburgh and London were of primary importance to deaf education in Great Britain, it was the Franco-American stream that was most important to Canadian deaf schools. American Sign Language (ASL) is still used in Canada, with minor dialectic differences, and is markedly different than BSL in the United Kingdom. Late nineteenth-century students at the Manitoba Institute for the Deaf and Dumb reported being annoyed at the need for them to learn to use the more unwieldy two-handed British manual alphabet in order to communicate with deaf British immigrants, and preferred to use the simpler one-handed American manual alphabet.[25] A later edition of *Silent Echo*, the MIDD school paper, reporting on a gathering of members of Winnipeg's deaf community, relayed that "the English and Canadian members find it difficult to understand each other, their systems of the sign language being so different."[26] British deaf education was also heavily oralist in orientation, in stark contrast to the American educational legacy, which was entirely sign-based in the antebellum U.S. and largely "combined" before the 1890s.[27] For this reason, this study will not discuss the British stream of deaf education in detail.

The founding of the American School for the Deaf in Hartford was not strictly the dawn of deaf education in the United States. Like in Europe, individuals instructed deaf children in homes or in small classrooms, and one's access to education depended upon class and

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[24] R.A.R. Edwards, *Words Made Flesh*, 24-25.
[25] "Pupils' Page," *Silent Echo* vol. 2, no. 6 (November 15, 1893), 3. Deaf Heritage Room (DHR), Manitoba School for the Deaf (MSD).
[26] *Silent Echo*, vol. 3, no. 15 (March 15, 1895), 5. DHR, MSD.
[27] The MIDD practiced this method into the early twentieth-century, but emphasis slowly shifted away from manualism and toward oralism over time, especially after the death of D.W. McDermid in 1909.

geographical considerations.[28] Most deaf people remained agricultural labourers, or became employed along Atlantic sea routes working in cloth manufacture and print communication, as Mary Eyring has inventively argued.[29] On Martha's Vineyard, the prevalence of the rare gene that causes hereditary deafness led to a population that not only greatly exceeded the norm for congenital deafness, but also embraced sign language as the island's *lingua franca*.[30] Institutional deaf education, however, was a break with the past and a characteristic of the larger American impulse toward institution building in the antebellum period.

Reformers who lobbied state and provincial legislatures to support deaf schools in the antebellum United States and pre-Confederation Canada often did not talk of educational rights, but of the responsibility of communities to end the intellectual and moral "darkness" that deaf children, in particular, lived in.[31] The religious education of deaf children was continually reported on and appealed to in deaf school Annual Reports, and this "missionary impulse" became reified by the mid nineteenth-century across the Atlantic World in the activities of missionaries acting among indigent and working class deaf communities. [32] In the United States and Canada, this evangelical burst of energy propelled and informed deaf education through the 1870s. Joanna Pearce locates this rhetoric in the fund-raising efforts of Charles Fraser during the establishment of the Halifax School for the Blind in the 1870s, but also sees Fraser's efforts as

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[28] Harry G. Lang, "Genesis of a Community: The American Deaf Experience in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," in *The Deaf History Reader*, ed. John Vickrey Van Cleve, 1-23. (Washington, D.C., Gallaudet University Press, 2007).
[29] Mary Eyring, "The Benevolent Education of Maritime Laborers at America's First Schools for the Deaf." *Legacy* 30, no.1 (2013): 18-39.
[30] Groce, Nora Ellen. *Everyone Here Spoke Sign Language: Hereditary Deafness on Martha's Vineyard.* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1985).
[31] Sandy Barron, "'An Excuse For Being So Bold': D.W. McDermid and the Early Development of the Manitoba Institute for the Deaf and Dumb." *Manitoba History* 77 (Winter 2015): 2-12.
[32] Neil Pemberton, "Deafness and Holiness: Home Missions, Deaf Congregations and Natural Language 1860-1890." *Victorian Review* 35, no. 2 (Fall 2009): 65-82.

being modelled on the successful campaign to found the Halifax School for the Deaf in 1856.[33] The Christian roots of deaf education were not solely Protestant and evangelical, however. The first deaf schools in Canada were located in Quebec and were operated by the Catholic Church, gender-segregated, and founded to provide practical work experience to students.[34] Still, in a province where compulsory education to the age of 16 was not instituted until 1943, student attendance was scattered, brief, and far from universal.

By the summer of 1888, combined-method state residential deaf schools and mostly oralist day schools had proliferated throughout the United States, including in developing states like Iowa. By 1880 there were more than fifty-five deaf schools in the United States, and by 1888 there were six schools in Canada.[35] Supporting a deaf school had become a symbol of prestige for states and provinces – evidence of a thriving political, educational, and institutional culture. Jane Berger argues that deaf schools were not only prestigious in a political sense, but were also seen as scientifically advanced in antebellum America, though by the 1880s the sense of miracle around deaf education was being replaced with a sense of state responsibility.[36]

The Groom Expedition

Jane Elizabeth Groom was a former teacher of deaf children at the Wilmot Day School in London who had been fired because of her deafness in the wake of the Milan Conference of 1880. She became a religious leader in the neighbourhood of Hackney and was shocked by the poverty of deaf residents there. She raised funds for an expedition of poor deaf Londoners to

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[33] Joanna Pearce, "Not for Alms but Help: Fund-raising and Free Education for the Blind." *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 23, no. 1 (2012): 131-155.
[34] Stephane-D Perrault, "Intersecting Discourses: Deaf Institutions and Communities in Montreal, 1850-1920." PhD diss., McGill University, 2003.
[35] Winzer, *Special Education*, 102.
[36] Jane Berger "Uncommon Schools," 163-164; Amanda Bergen, "The Public Examination of Deaf and Blind Children in Yorkshire, 1829-1890." *Northern History* 41, no. 1 (March 2004): 162.

Western Canada, and went to Winnipeg with the blessing of the Canadian Government in 1884.[37] She brought with her ten adult men and two boys, with the goal of establishing a small community of deaf farmers in Manitoba. Groom attributed the poverty of deaf inhabitants of Hackney to the unwillingness of urban employers to hire deaf workers, and saw the re-integration of these settlers into an idealized rural community as the best chance for them to prove their worth as workers and citizens.[38]

In her pamphlet published in England between this first trip and a subsequent one that involved 24 settlers, Groom reflected upon the ire that the expedition caused in Manitoba newspapers. "On our arrival in Winnipeg…" she wrote, "and for some time during our stay, we were much abused by a certain section of the Winnipeg press, which naturally caused me and my party very great pain and annoyance. Some of the remarks even went as far as to suggest that Her Majesty's Government had sent the deaf and dumb out to Manitoba to be a burden on the community there."[39] Groom assured her London readers, however, that the *Winnipeg Daily News* had noted the example of John Parker, a prosperous deaf farmer and teamster in Brandon, and cheered the prospects of these new settlers. Groom described Parker as a successful farmer, a member of several local associations, and an employer of local farm hands. Several of the new immigrants went to Parker's farm to obtain the skills that were necessary to successfully clear and farm land on the prairies.[40] Most of the settlers remained in Manitoba, but ended up in the town of Brandon and the city of Winnipeg, taking jobs in artisanal occupations and the print industry. These settlers, especially Francis George Jefferson of Brandon, formed a nucleus of a

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[37] Doreen Woodford, A. Boyce, "Jane Elizabeth Groom." In *Deaf Lives: Deaf People in History*, eds. P. Jackson and R. Lee. (Middlesex: British Deaf Historical Society, 2001), 84-85.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Groom, *A future for the deaf and dumb*, 17.
[40] Groom, *A future for the deaf and dumb*, 18.

burgeoning deaf community that lobbied local MPPs with the parents of deaf children to establish a deaf school in the province before 1888.

Jennifer Esmail, who considers the Groom Expedition from a British perspective, argues that scholars have largely ignored Groom because her effort represented an attempt to have deaf Britons adhere to a scale of lowered expectations, rather than a fight for employment equality at home and a pure "deaf colony" in Western Canada.[41] Disability scholars have focused more fully on American John Jacob Flournoy's "Deafmutia" scheme, through which deaf Americans would have established a deaf state in the American West in order to escape the prejudice of the hearing.[42] Flournoy's scheme, however, was rejected by most deaf Americans as too radical. In a cultural context of low expectations for deaf people in North America, Groom's expedition represents a middle ground approach, a progressive movement that nonetheless may seem regressive to modern sensibilities.

The figure of John Parker seems central to the largely successful integration of these deaf settlers into the Brandon and Winnipeg areas. The 1891 Census recorded his age as 47, that he was a Scottish immigrant, and that he lived with two other deaf men, one of whom was a farm labourer and another who worked as a hotel porter in Brandon.[43] The *Brandon Sun Weekly* mentioned in 1885 that John Parker, "the deaf mute, well known in the city…has returned from the west, and is full of his experiences."[44] Parker was reported to have answered many questions from Brandonites, but frustratingly, the paper does not report on how he did this. While Parker seems to have been important to the successful settlement of Groom's Londoners, her portrayal

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[41] Esmail, *Reading Victorian Deafness*, 150-162.
[42] Esmail, *Reading Victorian Deafness*, 152-153; Margret Winzer, "Deafmutia: Responses to Alienation" by the Deaf in the Mid-Nineteenth Century." *American Annals of the Deaf* 142, no. 5 (1997): 363-367.
[43] *1891 Census.* Manitoba, District 9, page 48. (http://data2.collectionscanada.gc.ca/1891/jpg/30953_148097-00078.jpg)
[44] *Brandon Weekly Sun,* July 2, 1885, 5.

of Parker seems to have been optimistic. The 1901 Census did not mention his occupation, while in 1891 he was listed simply as "deaf man" in the occupation column. Despite Groom's characterization of Parker as a farmer, it seems more likely that he was primarily a teamster with connections to local farmers who could arrange employment for the English deaf settlers.

Local and national media did weigh in about the press's majority criticism of the immigration scheme. The *Quebec Chronicle* chided the *Manitoba Free Press* on its opinion piece that described "deaf mutes" as being "dumped into the Immigrant Sheds," and appealed to the *Free Press* to supply evidence for its assertions. "The story is given with great circumstantiality, and it may be true" the *Chronicle* argued, "We ought to have an authoritative denial from some official source, if such a denial can be made. The matter is of vital importance to the community."[45] While Groom certainly had an interest in focusing on supportive newspaper pieces, as she was soliciting funds for a subsequent expedition, the outpouring of support for the MIDD's establishment four years later in the press suggests that the press's derision was not universal. Indeed the *Brandon Mail*, the Conservative organ in the city, also chided the *Free Press* for being overly partisan in its denunciation of the expedition, stating "How readily the Free Press lays hands on anything, even a broken straw, to have a shy at the (Macdonald) Government!...At once it accused the Dominion Government of bringing these out as a further care upon the people of this country."[46] The *Mail* also cheerfully referred to Parker as "our local deaf mute" in the same piece.

Though the eventual deaf settlement colony itself, situated in what is now Wolseley, Saskatchewan, was not successful, Groom's pamphlet shows that the successful example of Parker likely served as a corrective to the view that deaf settlers could not succeed. The failure of

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[45] Groom, *A future for the deaf and dumb*, 18.
[46] *Brandon Mail*, July 10, 1884, p.8.

this colony, unlike the individual failures of so many Western homesteaders during the period, was cited in the *Brandon Weekly Sun* in January 1889 in that paper's call for the establishment of a provincial school.[47] Supporters of school establishment appealed both to the positive example of Parker and other successful deaf people in Manitoba, as well as the failure of the Wolseley colony as a reason for pity – evidence that deaf people and especially deaf children were "unfortunates" who deserved and required state support. Both of these conflicting narratives contributed to the increased visibility of and concern for deaf people in Manitoba in the intervening four years.

The Establishment of the Manitoba Institute for the Deaf and Dumb

Frederick Henhurst Francis, a new member of the Legislature for the St. Francis Xavier riding in 1888, advocated that the Liberal government undertake a study to find out how many deaf children of school age lived in Manitoba. Two of his neighbours, the Lonsdales and the Camerons, had deaf children who were not being educated, which likely drew his attention to the issue, and Francis sponsored a motion to establish a provincial deaf school in the Legislature.[48] He found that there were 75-80 deaf school age children, and through the summer of 1888 Francis, Jefferson, and Sarah McPhee visited Members of Parliament, inspired newspaper articles (especially in the Liberal organ *The Brandon Weekly Sun*) and enlisted the help of Brandon's Mayor Daly.

Sarah McPhee and Frederick Jefferson were two especially key figures in the push to establish a deaf school in the province. McPhee was the mother of a deaf child named Gertrude, who had briefly attended the Ontario Institute for the Deaf and Dumb and subsequently attended

[47] *Brandon Daily Sun*, January 16, 1889, 4.
[48] Carbin, *Deaf Heritage*, 137.

the MIDD. McPhee and her husband struggled to afford this, as their transportation costs and tuition were not covered by the Ontario or Manitoba governments.[49] McPhee first lobbied the City of Winnipeg to establish a school, without success. Together with the publicity generated by Jefferson's letter writing campaign to the region's papers, she enlisted the help of Liberal MPPs Thomas Gelley and James Prendergast while allying herself with MPP Francis to lobby the new Liberal Premier of Manitoba, Thomas Greenway. Greenway's correspondence, along with that of Public Works Minister James Smart, shows a number of meeting notices and several letters from Brandon's first mayor, Thomas Mayne Daly, and Winnipeg clergymen requesting meetings to discuss the matter.[50] Daly wrote on behalf of McPhee, and cited Francis's figure that "there are from 75 to 80 deaf mutes in the Province" and that Mrs. McPhee had asked him to write a letter to Greenway, having "naturally, a very great interest in the welfare of these unfortunates."[51] Like so many of the correspondence files before the T.C. Norris premiership during the First World War, Greenway's written response is not included, unfortunately.

A flurry of letters and meetings in August 1888 was set off by an offer from James C. Watson, a Canadian who was teaching at the Washington School for Defective Youth. In a letter dated August 8, 1888, Watson wrote to Minister Smart and inquired about the province's plan for a deaf school and contact information for MPP Francis. Watson's attention was drawn to the issue when he met a Winnipeg resident in Victoria shortly before the August letter campaign. "I had intended beginning a school, in a small way, for the education and training of this unfortunate class at some central point," Watson wrote, "But hearing as I did, I have deferred till

[49] Carbin, *Deaf Heritage*, 137.
[50] Thomas Mayne Daly to Thomas Greenway. Letter, August 2, 1888. PAM, Premier's Correspondence Files. EC 0016 GR 1662, Box MG 13 E1.
[51] Ibid.

I can find out just what has been done concerning this."[52] Watson's uncertainty about the government's intentions suggests that he felt that his offer to found a school may be redundant, and that the government was openly considering founding a school itself. Indeed, James Smart had been receiving letters and requests for meetings during August that pleaded for the government to found a school without direct reference to Watson's offer.[53]

Francis invited Watson to speak to the Legislature in the fall of 1888, and Watson was introduced to the Winnipeg Ministerial Association shortly after. After the Liberal government decided to put off a decision on forming a school until the January Session of the Legislature, the WMA offered to support a small temporary school at the Fortune Block in Winnipeg with an initial enrollment of eight students.[54] Watson furnished much of the school's cost out of his own pocket, as the WMA offered only $100 to cover the institution's rent. By January 1889 it was likely faltering financially, and the Provincial Legislature took up the issue of founding a new residential school. Thomas Greenway's personal sponsorship of the Bill only highlights the degree to which the legislation's passage was nearly unanimous and quickly achieved. Unpublished Sessional Papers, however, belie some concern on Greenway and James Smart's part. An unsigned and undated memo, likely written by Smart, tallies the costs of the new school and concludes with a question: "What part of this would be paid by parents (?)"[55] By the time of the Bill's passage, the government would conclude that attendance at the school would be free of charge, though this did not come into effect until the school's second year of public operation.

[52] J.C. Watson to James Smart, Letter, August 8, 1888. Ministry of Public Works Correspondence files, PAM, GS 0123 GR 1607.
[53] See, for example, "Meeting Memo." Office of the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, August 30, 1888. Premier's Correspondence Files, PAM, EC 0016 GR 1662.
[54] Clifton Carbin, *Deaf Heritage*, 137.
[55] Memo, Premier's Correspondence Files, PAM, EC 0016 GR 1662 MG 13E1. Undated, likely from January 1889.

Manitoba became the second Province that offered free education for its deaf citizens, and the following year it became the first to make school attendance for deaf children compulsory.

Clifton Carbin's 1996 book *Deaf Heritage in Canada* reports the school's establishment as resulting from the work of several connected and determined individuals – a view that certainly provides an important part of the story. Despite Carbin's impressive research efforts and skill, the framing of the circumstances leading up to the MIDD's establishment of a provincial school is difficult to recover simply from the types of documents that Carbin relied on. While it may be trite to appeal to the axiom of "something was in the air," the near unanimity shown by the Legislature in early 1889 suggests that the issue was developing public momentum, and that deaf people in the province were increasingly appearing as an identifiable and visible group in the public sphere. Habermas's characterization of the public sphere has been debated in earnest by North American historians since the 1989 translation of his formative work *The Transformation of the Public Sphere*, but most historians who use a Habermasian perspective see the public sphere as a *process* rather than a place or print artifacts themselves. In order to explain the rather quick shift from press derision in 1884 to the supportive press coverage in 1888-1889, it is necessary to expand the search for primary sources beyond the correspondence of government officials and individual advocates.

In January 1889, the *Brandon Weekly Sun* argued for the school's adoption by the Province, and broadcast that the provincial school's founding was well past due.[56] From early editions of *Silent Echo*, it is discernible that MPP Francis, even after resigning due to Greenway and Smart's school language legislation in 1890, returned to the school regularly and continued to organize trips by Brandon and Winnipeg business leaders to the school.[57] Grand Jury

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[56] *Brandon Weekly Sun*, January 16, 1889, 4.
[57] *Silent Echo* Vol 2, no. 10 (January 15, 1894), 6. DHR, MSD.

inspections, an early feature of the government's regime of monitoring Watson and then Principal D.W. McDermid's activities, were reported in the *Silent Echo* as visits by old allies of the school, characterized by friendly visits to the Lonsdale and Cameron children by those who had helped their parents to lobby the government in 1888-9.[58] WMA President and Congregationalist Minister Hugh Pedley continued his association with the school, corresponding with Minister Smart into the early 1890s on the school's behalf, and contributing to the MIDD's written history for the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago.[59]

Carbin's narrative portrays a pliable and semi-interested Liberal Party who were eventually won over by the pleas of deaf settlers, the parents of deaf children, MPPs, and the WMA, especially Rev. Pedley. There is a central problem here, however. The Liberal Party won the 1888 election on a two-pronged platform: the pursuit of railway disallowance and greater control of provincial expenditures through the centralization of the province's educational infrastructure. A tightening of the purse strings would seem to render the founding of an expensive new educational institution, in an era of nearly miserly levels of public expenditure outlined by Alan Artibise, a contradiction.[60] However Greenway's government was, over all, concerned with both the assertion of provincial rights and the consolidation of the province's political culture by the now numerically dominant Ontario settlers who had flooded into the province as early as the 1870s.[61] Gerald Friesen argues that in this movement lay the foundations for what he calls Manitoba's culture of political moderation and governing by consensus.[62]

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[58] *Silent Echo* Vol 2, no. 14 (March 15, 1894): 3. DHR, MSD.
[59] Duncan McDermid and Hugh Pedley, "Manitoba Institution for the Education of the Deaf and Dumb." *Histories of American Schools for the Deaf, 1817-93.* (Washington, D.C., Volta Bureau, 1893), 1.
[60] Alan F.J. Artibise. *Winnipeg: A Social History of Urban Growth 1874-1914.* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 1975).
[61] Christopher Adams, *Politics in Manitoba: Parties, Leaders, and Voters.* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2008), 65-68.
[62] Gerald Friesen, "The Manitoba Political Tradition." In *Manitoba Politics and Government: Issues, Institutions, Traditions*, ed. Paul Thomas and Curtis Brown. (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2010), 4.

Greenway's government was concerned with establishing a distinctly provincial educational system, and the province's move to found a deaf school was likely most informed by Sarah McPhee's argument that sending students like her daughter to the Belleville Institution was unattainable for most settler families. During Greenway's re-election campaign in 1892, the *Brandon Sun Weekly* praised the Liberals in several editions. "Vote for a government that has saved money and erected and maintains an institute for the deaf and dumb," the paper trumpeted, alongside other of Greenway's achievements as Premier, many of which were collected under the blanket statement "Vote for a government that has provided us with needed philanthropic institutions."[63] Despite the cost of the 1889 Bill, which initially included $5,000 to "locate a suitable building" but soon was amended to allocate $25,000 toward a new building's construction, the school was seen as both a benevolent institution and the responsibility of an emerging province that was taking control of its own affairs.[64] While Manitoba's boom had slowed after an 1883 collapse in land value, Manitobans still looked to the near future as a period of growth and increased immigration. The fact that this population boom would largely wait until 1896 remains immaterial to the contemporary aspirations of Manitobans and the Greenway government.

1892 campaign documents show that the Greenway government had invested political capital in the MIDD's establishment, and cited Public Works improvements between 1888 and 1892 in the language of both morality and provincial rights. "Prior to the erection of this institution," one campaign document read, "there was no place in Manitoba in which children who were deaf and dumb could be educated….The consequence was that children thus afflicted were growing up in entire ignorance, unable to read, write, hear or speak; some of them reaching

[63] *Brandon Sun Weekly,* July 21, 1892, 8.
[64] Sandy Barron, "An Excuse for Being So Bold," 10; Clifton Carbin, *Deaf Heritage*, 139.

the age of maturity almost without the consciousness that they were human beings."[65] Hyperbole about the impact of deafness on children aside, Greenway campaign material painted the school's establishment as both a necessary moral achievement and a pursuance of its 1888 campaign goal "to develop the educational system, and to increase facilities for education."[66]

Deaf Manitobans and the Public Sphere

Nancy Fraser convincingly argues that the use of "reasoned debate" was not sufficient to ensure access to the public sphere for marginalized groups, especially for women and African-Americans, in the nineteenth-century.[67] Barbara Welke and Douglas Baynton likewise argue that disabled people were often considered outside of the boundaries of citizenship and equal rights, and Baynton asserts that deaf people considered themselves as equal citizens, but they also increasingly "claimed equality in difference" as a distinct cultural and language community.[68] The example of not only the MIDD's founding, but its improvement and maintenance offer a qualified counterpoint to this view. The province, by establishing the school and making attendance free and compulsory by 1891, was expanding the responsibility of Manitoba to educate all citizens, regardless of auditory status.[69] Stephane-D Perrault has persuasively argued that the development of Deaf Culture and deaf communities in Canada was a phenomenon that took longer than in many American states, but by the 1880s, the presence of six deaf schools in the country was beginning to ensure the development of organized deaf publicity.[70] Deaf people,

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[65] Government of Manitoba, "Record of the Greenway Government, 1888-1892." Peel's Prairie Provinces, (http://peel.library.ualberta.ca/bibliography/1974/3.html?qid=peelbib|greenway||score). Accessed August 15, 2015.
[66] Manitoba, "Record of the Greenway Government," 4.
[67] Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere."
[68] Barbara Young Welke, *Law and the Borders of Belonging in the Long Nineteenth-Century United States.* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 7-8; Douglas Baynton, *Forbidden Signs: American Culture and the Campaign Against Sign Language*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 147-148.
[69] As we will see, this responsibility did not extend to visually impaired and blind students until the First World War.
[70] Perrault, "Intersecting Discourses," 117.

and especially deaf children, were rendered publicly visible and acted in the public sphere to advocate for educational access, though initially this took the form of appeals in print by hearing allies. The heightened publicity of deaf Manitobans as individuals, rather than simply the responsibility of family and community, emerged after the Groom Expedition and gathered force through the lobbying of allies and deaf settlers themselves. While the early years of the MIDD may not satisfy modern sensibilities of what constitutes individual "rights," the period from 1888-1889 represented the success of a dedicated coalition that not only enshrined provincial responsibility for deaf education in law, but invested real power and responsibility in the Principal's chair, especially after D.W. McDermid's changes to the school's Constitution upon his arrival from Iowa in 1890. C.J. Howe, in his 1888 survey of the state of "deaf mutes in Canada," commented that "it is the duty of society to provide for his (the prelingually deaf child) instruction at the proper age, and it is criminal on the part of parents and guardians who neglect to secure for their unfortunate child the benefits within their reach. To the deaf mute education means everything."[71]

The school's founding did not only represent a qualified victory for deaf Manitobans and their committed allies. Settlers and residents of the province's growing urban centers found a willing ally in the new Liberal government in the project of building provincial benevolent institutions like the Home for Incurables at Portage le Prairie and the Selkirk Insane Asylum, whose purpose was to unburden families who found themselves supporting mentally ill, intellectually disabled, and tubercular family members. Veronica Strong-Boag is correct to point out that many of these institutions were poorly funded and contributed to the social

[71] C.J. Howe, *The Deaf Mutes of Canada: A History of Their Education, With an Account of the Deaf Mute Institutions of the Dominion.* (Toronto: Charles Howe, 1888), 46. Howe advocated oralism and referred to sign language as "no more like words than ….the grimaces of a monkey," (26) which conflicted with Ontario's stance on the methods debate under Superintendent Robert Mathison. His rhetoric regarding sign language also stands in stark contrast to McDermid's in Manitoba.

marginalization of many citizens in need of provincial support, but settlers who "summoned the state," in Ariel Ron's words, could not foresee this eventuality.[72] Earlier social methods of coping with deafness, blindness, mental illness and other conditions defined as problematic before the nineteenth-century left little to be desired as well. Strong-Boag's assertion that the movement from familial response to state response was a negative one rests upon the acceptance of the inherent favourability of domestic accommodations – an assertion that will be contested in a subsequent chapter that deals in part with the plight of blind children in Western Canada whose families could not afford to send them to the Brantford School for the Blind in Ontario. We should not, this study will argue, whole-heartedly lump the MIDD with these other institutions that have earned the deserved derision and dismissal of those who study nineteenth-century insane asylums, penitentiaries, and tuberculosis sanitariums.

Conclusion

The *Brandon Sun Weekly* reported on a tug-of-war match between a hearing team and a team of five "deaf mute" workers in 1892. "To the satisfaction of all, the prize was awarded to the sons of silence," the *Sun* conveyed.[73] This encounter, while perhaps a curiosity to some present at the Brandon Annual Picnic, was indicative of larger trends in the province's two largest settlements. In both Winnipeg and Brandon, deaf people who had lived in the two communities for a generation were becoming not only more visible, but employable. The *Silent Echo*'s pages followed the employment prospects of deaf Winnipeggers in the printing trades, as well as the efforts of deaf printing employees to train students in working class trades, contest usurious insurance rates for deaf citizens, ensure the availability of sign language interpretation

[72] Veronica Strong-Boag, "Children of Adversity: Disabilities and Child Welfare from the Nineteenth to the Twenty First Century," *Journal of Family History* 32, no. 4 (October 2007): 423.
[73] *Brandon Sun Weekly*, July 21, 1892, 1.

throughout the city's religious and legal institutions, as well as to successfully fight the Province's ban on the employment of deaf citizens as civil servants.

These achievements, quite real and meaningful in the late nineteenth-century if slight and incomplete to postmodern eyes, became possible only after D.W. McDermid pressured the government to consolidate the school's development through financial and human investment. This improvement was not entirely uniform, but the school's consolidation from the years 1889 to 1898 form the focus of the following chapter. McDermid's efforts to resist the oralist wave sweeping throughout North America in the late nineteenth-century made the MIDD somewhat unique for the period, while ensuring a continued connection to Winnipeg's deaf community into the twentieth-century. Before examining the school's contributions to deaf life in Manitoba, and in particular its efforts to thrust deafness into the public sphere, we must consider how the MIDD became a stable institution that was in a position to do more than merely survive.

Chapter 3 "An Excuse for Being So Bold": Consolidating and Improving Deaf Education in Manitoba

Introduction

From the adoption of the Manitoba Institute for the Deaf and Dumb by the province to the turn of the twentieth-century, the school's two principals sought to attract investment in financial, human, and residential resources from the Ministry of Public Works. J.C. Watson, principal until September 1890, and Duncan McDermid, who served from 1890 until his death at 1909, argued for expanded residential capacity, compulsory attendance laws, the preservation of sign language, and improved healthcare at the school. The MIDD was transformed from the small, fiscally unstable private school of 1888 to an expanded and fully funded deaf school that offered accommodation to students from throughout Western Canada. While the school's institutional and professional development was not of a uniform and steady nature but achieved in fits and starts, the improvements and expansions over the final decade of the nineteenth-century allowed the MIDD to position itself as a centre from which the educational and occupational rights of members of Manitoba's deaf community could entrench themselves in provincial law and practice in the early twentieth.

The Push for Compulsory Deaf Education

One of Watson's first letters to James Smart concerned his frustration over the small number of deaf school age children who attended the school. "I need not here dwell on the universally acknowledged value of a Compulsory education of the hearing and speaking portion of the community, from social, politic, or moral standpoints," Watson wrote, echoing the similar

call for widespread compulsory education that was reflected in Liberal politics.[1] Watson argued that the lack of compulsory schooling legislation meant that deaf children would either not attend school at all, or for insignificant periods of time. Indeed, the problem of rural truancy remained well into Duncan McDermid's tenure. Watson linked the project of deaf education to the insurance of future productivity for a group of people who for so long had been reliant on charity and public support in his eyes. "The hearing child neglected by his natural guardians…" Watson continued, "has the means of communication with his fellow beings and by association may make a useful and honorable member of the community. But this is not the case with the deaf mute child. His state in comparison is deplorable and his mind as blank as a person who has ever met with an uneducated one of this class can readily understand."[2] Deaf children, in particular danger of beggary and poverty in Watson's eyes, needed to be protected by an educational system that could provide them with a means of escaping these negative outcomes.

Watson blamed parents for their unwillingness to send their children to the MIDD. In particular, he accused them of heartlessly utilizing their children's labour while ignoring their educational needs. While Watson's above rhetoric about deaf children seems purely ableist and paternalistic, in his criticism of parents, it seems clear that Watson's overall concern was the insuring of potential for deaf children. "More than one (deaf person) having reached adult age, have to myself bemoaned the fact that there existed no compulsory law to force them to attend school from homes where they were detained for mercenary or sentimental reasons by their parents, during the most impressionable years of their lives," he wrote to Smart, introducing a

[1] J.C. Watson to James Smart, November 23, 1889, 1. Letter. Ministry of Public Works Correspondence files, PAM, GS 0123 GR 1607. The 1890 School Act was intended to make compulsory education general, but the Greenway government walked back from that policy, fearing that the outcry over elimination of separate schools would be exacerbated by French children being forced to attend English, nondenominational schools. Compulsory schooling did not become law in Manitoba until the T.C. Norris government in 1916.
[2] Ibid.

rhetorical tone of blame toward parents that McDermid would also use to great effect in the first year of his principalship.[3] Neil Sutherland describes the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as a period of change "from economic production to the nurture of children" in urban Canada.[4] Watson's rhetoric echoed this shift, and his frustration with rural parents for not sending their children reflects Prentice and Houston's assertion that a distinction between "schooling" and "education" remained in rural areas of Canada even after the two had been fused in urban Canada.[5] Rural parents likely saw their children as inheriting or acquiring farmland in the future, and saw little need for them to receive a formal education that would not serve them in their future rural occupations. Watson's use of the word "mercenary" broadcasts that he likely felt that these children's personal choice of future occupation was being violated by parents who were simply molding their children in their own image.

Duncan McDermid also pressed the need for compulsory schooling for deaf school age children, and he took a hard line in his first Annual Report against parents who kept their children out of school.[6] In 1891, after the amendment to the Deaf Education Bill was passed, he explained in a letter to Smart that in order for a compulsory law to work, the Province would have to help defray some of the transportation costs for rural families. "Taking into consideration the difficulties that are presented to the teacher in instructing adult deafmutes and the chances against these children ever having the advantages of an education," he wrote, "I respectfully recommend that an appropriation be made to defray the railroad expenses and if need be the

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[3] Watson to Smart, November 23, 1889, 2.
[4] Neil Sutherland, *Children in English Canadian Society: Framing the Twentieth Century Consensus.* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976), 27.
[5] Alison Prentice and Susan B. Houston, eds., *Family, School and Society in Nineteenth-Century Canada.*(Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1975), 6.
[6] Duncan McDermid, "Second Annual Report of the Deaf and Dumb Institute." *Journals of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba,* 23 (1891): 80.

clothing expenses of indigent and orphan children."[7] The CPR did agree to reduce rates for deaf students that year, and the amendment that brought a compulsory law to deaf children in the province received assent on March 31, 1891. The statutory education law provided for a penalty of twenty-five dollars or less than thirty days' imprisonment for violators.[8] There is, however, no evidence that legal measures were ever brought to bear upon the parents and guardians of truant students.

The compulsory education law for deaf school age children allowed the school's supporters to spend time and financial resources to advocate for the school's physical and pedagogical improvement. Only the second school in Canada to be publicly supported, after the Ontario Institute, and the first to be compulsory, Manitoba had to spend far less time fundraising and making the school attractive to potential students's guardians. Recognizing this, Principal McDermid set out to improve the school and its accommodation through a vigorous written correspondence and meetings with provincial officials from 1891 to 1900.

D.W. McDermid and Institutional Development

J.C. Watson sent notice in mid-August, 1890, to Minister Smart that he had been hospitalized for inflammation in Washington State during his summer visit there. He offered to take leave on account of his health, resulting in a temporary leave of absence for the upcoming fall semester.[9] Watson would not return as principal as Duncan McDermid, formerly of the Iowa

[7] Duncan McDermid to James Smart, March 9, 1891. Ministry of Public Works Correspondence Files, PAM GS 0123 GR 1607.
[8] American Annals of the Deaf 35, no. 2 (April 1890), 165.
[9] J.C. Watson to James Smart, August 18, 1890. Letter. Ministry of Public Works Correspondence Files, PAM GS 0123 GR 1607.

School for the Deaf and the Belleville School in Ontario, took over in September of 1890 as Principal. McDermid would only accept if he was offered a permanent position.[10]

The Ministry of Public Works Correspondence Files suggest, however, that the government was displeased with Watson as principal and had begun to look elsewhere as early as May, 1890. Smart received an application letter from McDermid dated May 22 1890, that opened, "I have just learned from an authority that seems reliable that it is the intention of the Government of Manitoba to reorganize the management of the Institution of the Deaf and Dumb."[11] McDermid was a current teacher at the Iowa Institution at Council Bluffs, and touted his fourteen years of experience in deaf education at every level as well as the abilities of his wife, Mary, who was a graduate of the Belleville Institute and could act as a "matron or teacher."[12] Correspondence that points to James Smart's or Thomas Greenway's dissatisfaction with Watson's performance is not extant in the Premier's Files or the Public Works Files, unfortunately.

McDermid quickly acted to put his own stamp on the Institution's character. One of his first acts was to offer changes to the Province's legislation and the school's constitution. Most strikingly, he suggested that one rule be changed to read, "All male and female servants shall be under the general direction of the Superintendent," reflecting a job title change he suggested in the line above.[13] McDermid also suggested that he himself become the sole conduit for employee and parent complaints, and that complaints "shall be made to the Principal and if not addressed

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[10] Duncan McDermid to James Smart. Telegram, September 3, 1890. Ministry of Public Works Correspondence Files, PAM GS 0123 GR 1607.
[11] Duncan McDermid to James Smart, May 22, 1890, 1. Letter. Ministry of Public Works Correspondence Files, PAM GS 0123 GR 1607.
[12] McDermid to Smart, May 22, 1890, 2.
[13] Duncan McDermid to James Smart, October 2, 1890.Letter. Ministry of Public Works Correspondence Files. PAM GS 0123 GR 1607, 1.

application in writing shall be made to the Minister through the Principal."[14] These changes, McDermid argued, were about bringing the MIDD up to the operational and bureaucratic standard of longer-standing deaf schools throughout North America. While it seems clear that not all of his amendments to the Regulations were not acceded to, he did enter his new position with a measure of control that allowed him to steer school policy in a way that Watson was unlikely to have been able to enjoy.

This greater measure of institutional control by a principal was a feature of the schools at which McDermid had worked in the past. Principals and Superintendents exacted a great deal of control over teaching methods, staffing, and student intake procedures at deaf schools throughout North America. Michael Reis has detailed the political implications of this in late nineteenth-century Indiana – which led to the replacement of a manualist Republican principal with an oralist Democratic one after the 1878 election.[15] McDermid would later use this measure of control to continue the operation of a combined method of teaching well into the era of twentieth-century oralism in the United States and Canada, and to integrate his charitable and societal involvements with the school's political and educational advocacy work, as we will see in this study's final chapter.

Calls for school improvement came from parents as well. In March of 1891, James Wilkie wrote a letter to McDermid with fifty-eight dollars enclosed, in lieu of his son's tuition, which was covered by the province. "This remittance at least," Wilkie wrote, should "…be applied toward forming a nucleus for a suitable Library for the D&D Institute. I have been informed that the Institute has not been supplied with a suitable Library which is to be regretted,

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[14] McDermid to Smart, October 2, 1890, 4.
[15] Reis, "A Tale of Two Schools."

and which furnishes me with an excuse for being so bold."[16] McDermid followed Wilkie's letter with a request to James Smart that the Department use Wilkie's contribution for a library, and further invest in one, as "seconded….by Mr. Findlay Young, MPP."[17] In 1891, the MIDD had more pressing issues than the procurement of a library, however.

McDermid immediately turned his attention to two primary problems in the way of the school's growth and operation – the infrastructural demands of a residential school and the unique methods development of a school for children who were profoundly deaf or hard of hearing. Throughout the 1890s, McDermid corresponded with Public Works Ministers James Smart (1890-1892) and Robert Watson (1892-1900), explaining the structural, fiscal, and professional deficits that he felt stood in the way of bringing the MIDD up to a larger North American standard.

The issue that occupied McDermid's correspondence more than any other was that of student accommodation. Throughout 1892, he argued that the school was becoming overcrowded and that the lack of permanent medical attendance made this a health hazard for students and staff alike. "No matter in what way you consider the question," McDermid wrote Smart in 1891, likely responding to fiscal concerns from the Ministry, "the expenses can not be reduced without seriously crippling our work."[18] The school did receive permanent medical attendance in 1891, as well as an infirmary room, which likely helped McDermid and the teachers to deal with a small scarlet fever outbreak that year that killed one student. By 1894, provincial funds had been appropriated for an addition to the new building on Portage and Sherbrooke that had housed the

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[16] James Wilkie to Duncan McDermid, March 2, 1891. Letter. Ministry of Public Works Correspondence Files, PAM GS 0123 GR 1607.
[17] Duncan McDermid to James Smart, March 8, 1891. Letter. Ministry of Public Works Correspondence Files, PAM GS 0123 GR 1607.
[18] Duncan McDermid to James Smart, March 23, 1891. Letter. Ministry of Public Works Correspondence Files, PAM GS 0123 GR 1607.

school since 1891, but would not be completed until 1901.[19] By 1898, a *Daily Nor'Wester* report of a grand jury inspection of the school stated that "We would suggest, however, that a new wing be added to the building, as at present five of the children have to lodge outside of the institution."[20] Overcrowding was an ongoing problem at the school until it moved to the Agricultural College site at the University of Manitoba in 1914, then to a new permanent building in Tuxedo Park in 1922.

By late 1893, McDermid had clearly lost his patience with the government on the accommodation issue. In his December 7th, 1893, letter to Robert Watson, he vented at length over the health risks to both him and his own family that overcrowding caused. "I feel keenly upon the subject," he wrote, "I have two children of my own at tender ages – the time when they are most susceptible to such diseases as diphtheria, scarlet fever etc., and I fully realize the danger there is and has been to them in an outbreak."[21] McDermid's comments about parents's reactions to health scares in the past two years do also convey a sense of guilt over having to sell a cleaner bill of institutional health and safety to more distant parents than he thought the MIDD warranted at the time:

> It (speaking of his children earlier) will perhaps be some excuse for my speaking so directly upon this subject but I do not in any sense offer it as an argument in favor of something being done but more for the purposes of impressing upon you and other members of the government as parents the feelings which would naturally arise in the breasts of the parents of our pupils if they fully understood how we are situated. The Camerons and Lonsdales of Headingly have made requests that they are to be notified at once if any infections or contagious disease breaks out so they may take their children home….while this favor has been granted to these people, I fully recognize the injustice that is committed against other parents who would undoubtedly make the same request if they were in a position to know as much as the Lonsdales, Camerons, etc.[22]

[19] *SE* 2, no. 14 (March 15, 1894), 5. DHR, MSD.
[20] *Daily Nor'Wester*, March 10, 1898, 2.
[21] Duncan McDermid to Robert Watson, December 7, 1893. Letter. Ministry of Public Works Correspondence Files, PAM GS 0123 GR 1607, 4.
[22] McDermid to Watson, December 7, 1893, 4-6.

Direct correspondence from the principal to the Minister of Public Works did have a very different tone than McDermid's more hopeful words on health and overcrowding in the 1893 Annual Report.[23] While Robert Watson's reaction to the letter is not discernable, as return correspondence is not extant, the Minister got the message. Expansion plans and improved medical attendance began nearly immediately, and by the early twentieth-century, the rapidly expanding student population had more and more individual space, notwithstanding the Grand Jury's concern five years after McDermid's angry 1893 letter.

Beginning in 1890, Principal McDermid also pressured the government to hire more teachers to bring down the school's student to teacher ratio, and to hire teachers and school employees who were fluent in sign language. In late 1891, McDermid argued to James Smart that the school's student to teacher ratio was very high, and that "it is absolutely necessary to have a much larger percentage of instructors in schools for the deaf than in speaking and hearing schools, and the relative number of teachers to be employed cannot be decided by a comparison with the methods adopted in hearing schools."[24] McDermid revealed that he had already settled on an ex-assistant teacher at the Ontario Institute named Augusta Spaight, a hearing woman who was fluent in sign language and whose "services could be secured for $400 per annum with board and lodging."[25] While Spaight lacked experience, he rationalized his decision by admitting

[23] Duncan McDermid, "Fifth Annual Report." (Winnipeg, Manitoba Institute for the Deaf and Dumb, 1894), 16. DHR MSD. McDermid, on the above cited page, writes that "Improved sanitation has also contributed much toward reducing to a minimum our liability to epidemics which so often break out where faulty sanitary arrangements exist."
[24] Duncan McDermid to James Smart, October 1, 1891. Letter. Ministry of Public Works Correspondence Files, PAM GS 0123 GR 1607, 1.
[25] Ibid.

that this amount was below market value for instructors of the deaf, and that Spaight was “an expert signmaker and thoroughly understands the ways of the deaf.”[26]

The MIDD, throughout the 1890s, emulated the practice, increasingly common in North American deaf schools, of hiring female teachers and deaf assistant and vocational teachers. Douglas Baynton argues that the rise of a female workforce in deaf schools mirrored the rise of oralism in American schools, but also that this trend echoed earlier developments in hearing schools in the 1830s and 40s.[27] In oralist schools, the frequent one-to-one style of articulation teaching necessitated a much lower student-to-teacher ratio, forcing many schools to hire teachers who could be paid less to keep the school’s books balanced. Oralist schools also accepted younger students, and female teachers were often seen as more appropriate choices for teaching younger students because they were considered to be more nurturing.[28] Manitoba was not an oralist school, however, and lacked articulation classes for a minority of students with residual hearing until 1895. The Manitoba experience provides some evidence for the assertion that the increased hiring of female instructors was due to a large extent to the lower wages that female teachers demanded. A number of hearing female teachers were hired at the school from 1891 to 1895, all of whom but one were fluent in sign language. Lily Turriff, the one teacher who did not know sign upon her hiring, quickly worked to become proficient in sign language, and her progress was routinely remarked upon by the school’s students in *Silent Echo* after her hiring in 1893.[29]

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[26] Ibid.
[27] Baynton, *Forbidden Signs*, 56-82.
[28] Annemieke van Drenth, “’Tender Sympathy and Scrupulous Fidelity’: Gender and Professionalism in the History of Deaf Education in the United States.” *International Journal of Disability, Development and Education*. 50, vol. 4 (December 2003): 367-383.
[29] *SE* 2, no. 14 (March 15, 1894), 6. DHR MSD. Turriff had become deafened at the age of 21, and was in her late twenties at the time of her hire.

In December of 1890, McDermid wrote to Minister Smart about the resignation of the institution's caretaker, Archibald Ferguson. Ferguson had been acting as both caretaker and supervisor, and McDermid's first request was that those positions be distinct. Most importantly, he described Ferguson as "useless on account of other demands upon his time and partially on account of his ignorance of the sign language."[30] A series of hires for supervisory and assistant teacher positions suggest that ensuring the continued use of sign language as the school's *lingua franca* was important to McDermid. John Byrne and Angus McIntosh, both members of Winnipeg's deaf community, were hired as supervisor and assistant teacher, respectively, beginning in 1891. McIntosh was a printer for the *Manitoba Free Press* by day and trekked to the school each night to teach printing to students on the new printing equipment purchased in 1892. Hiring hearing employees and teachers who were fluent in sign language and methods of teaching deaf students was expensive, and while many of the school's support staff were deaf, they seem to have been hired as underpaid, part-time employees, though several, including J.R. Cook, became fulltime by 1900.

North American schools had also established a pattern of offering vocational education to deaf students, especially in the printing trades for boys and in domestic service for girls. McDermid called for the establishment of a printing program in his first Annual Report for 1890.[31] By early 1892, he had succeeded in securing funding from the province for printmaking equipment and hired Agnes McIntosh as a part time printing instructor. In 1892, the students and staff began to contribute to *Silent Echo*, a newspaper that was produced monthly at first and then bi-weekly after 1893. The addition of J.R. Cook in 1893 as a printing instructor allowed the school to publish more frequently, begin printing documents for the Manitoba government, then

[30] Duncan McDermid to James Smart, December 9, 1890. Letter. Ministry of Public Works Correspondence Files, PAM GS 0123 GR 1607, 1.
[31] Duncan McDermid, "Second Annual Report," Journals of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, 23 (1891), 54.

prepare male students for positions at the *Free Press, Tribune,* and other local papers. Print training was not solely reserved for male students, however, as a student named Mary Cameron, in a contribution to the *Echo*, reported in 1893 that she had spent more time in the printing room than in domestic service classes. "Miss Forster teaches the girls how to make drawn-work, fancy-work, and to crochet every afternoon, but I do not because I set type every other afternoon and evening."[32]

Joseph Reginald Cook was a central figure for the school's printing program and as *Silent Echo's* editor from 1893-1918. Born in Ontario in 1869, Cook became deaf at seven years old, and attended the Ontario Institute for the Deaf.[33] In his late twenties, he moved to Winnipeg and began to work as a printer at the *Manitoba Free Press*, but accepted the dual position of Supervisor of Boys and printing instructor at the MIDD in 1893. By 1896 he was a full-time teacher at the school as Printing Instructor, and had also become *Silent Echo*'s editor and co-editorialist with McDermid. Cook married a fellow deaf teacher at the MIDD and remained with the school until his death in 1918, and had likely become the *Silent Echo*'s main editorial voice by the early twentieth-century, as Duncan McDermid's health declined in the years preceding his death.

Printing was the predominant urban occupation for deaf males in the mid-to-late nineteenth-century in North America.[34] Mary Eyring argues that settlement patterns of deaf people in the United States, and therefore the location of Atlantic deaf schools, followed the lines of print communication along Atlantic and interior waterways in the early to-mid nineteenth

[32] "Pupils' Page," *SE* 1, no. 8 (March 1, 1893), 3. DHR, MSD.
[33] 1901 Census of Canada. District No. 12, Ward 5, Winnipeg, page 3. (http://automatedgenealogy.com/census/ProofFrame.jsp?id=20791).
[34] Winzer, *Special Education*, 173.

century.[35] The hiring of both McIntosh and Cook at the MIDD in the early 1890s makes clear that there were deaf printers in Winnipeg during this period, and the *Silent Echo* reported on the employment prospects and experiences of deaf printers in the city well into the twentieth-century. McDermid argued, in his Second Annual Report for 1891, that printing allowed the school to work toward practical employment goals for students, and linked his idea to the growing vocational movement in all schools during the late nineteenth-century. A vocational printing program, he wrote, would allow the "means of more perfectly educating our children and enabling them to become self-supporting members of society. The authorities of boarding schools and colleges are fully recognizing the benefits of manual training…but how much more important is such an education to those that are deprived of hearing and speech."[36] The MIDD's printing program helped to increase the publicity of the school and Winnipeg's deaf community – a process that will be more fully examined in the following chapter.

Between 1892 and 1900, the school's publications, including *Silent Echo*, Annual Reports, and calendars, increased the publicity of the school in a way that is difficult to determine. North American residential schools - including deaf residential schools, Industrial schools, and Indian Residential Schools – exchanged papers frequently. *Silent Echo*'s reprinted "telegraphic" reach was mostly limited to other deaf schools, however, but this reach was incredibly important in the transference of emerging deaf culture and expanding the reach of deaf communities beyond local phenomenon.[37] Deaf residential school papers were also important sites of political engagement with issues of deaf education and deaf rights – in the case of *Silent Echo* the most frequently assailed enemies were oralists and the Federal Civil Service, who

[35] Eyring, "The Benevolent Education."
[36] Duncan McDermid, "Second Annual Report," 80.
[37] Beth Haller, "The Little Papers: Newspapers at Nineteenth-Century Schools for Deaf Persons." *Journalism History* 19 (1993): 43-50.

would bar the entrance of deaf employees until 1905, after a concerted effort by McDermid, Cook, and other members of Canadian deaf school staff and deaf communities.

The Methods Debate and the MIDD

The late nineteenth and early twentieth century was a period of increasing emphasis on teaching deaf people to speak and read lips. Douglas Baynton, in his landmark work on oralism in the United States, asserts that the growth of oralism was linked to the gathering of American nationalism in the post-Civil War period.[38] Much of Europe, even before the 1880 Milan Conference, had adopted oralism or "the German method." Oralists in the United States used the language of nationalism obliquely, yet couched it in the terms of allowing deaf people to enter the national community through an attempt to "unmake" the deaf community that had emerged within the deaf schools of the antebellum period.[39] Oralism expanded in the United States during a period in which "normality" emerged as a bound and quantitative concept.[40] Oralists were ultimately part of a social reform movement that aimed to include "disabled" and deaf people into the national community by working against a distinct deaf cultural movement, and perhaps the leading spokesperson for the movement remained Alexander Graham Bell, who also couched this reform movement in nascently eugenic ways – in advocating, for example, a ban on marriages between deaf people as a means of limiting the numerical growth of deaf adults in future generations.[41] Perhaps most importantly, hearing parents of deaf children often supported oral education because they saw hope in the oralists's promises to allow them to communicate

[38] Baynton, *Forbidden Signs*, 9.
[39] Baynton, *Forbidden Signs,* 109.
[40] Lennard Davis, "Normality, Power, Culture"; Robert Osgood, *For 'Children Who Vary From the Normal Type': Special Education in Boston 1838-1930*. (Washington, D.C., Gallaudet University Press, 2000).
[41] See, especially, Bell's 1884 speech "Memoir Upon the Formation of a Deaf Variety of the Human Race." I have chosen the cumbersome qualifier "nascently eugenic" because Bell's speech and Francis Galton's coining of the term "eugenics" happened nearly simultaneously.

with their children without use of writing, signs, or the manual alphabet. Some hearing parents also made allies of "pure oralists" who advocated for day schools and not residential ones, because day schools allowed their children to live at home.[42]

In practice, the oralist movement sought to banish sign language from deaf schools in an attempt to end its use in adulthood. While the motivations of oralists were squarely reformist and inclusive in intention, deaf Americans and a shrinking minority of American deaf educators opposed its expansion, while advocating the use of the "combined method" or "manualism" in schools. Deaf Americans and some educators criticized oralist principles as placing emphasis on skills – lip-reading and speech - that were very difficult for pre-lingually deaf students to master without neglecting academic subject matter in their educational development.[43] The increase in oral education also resulted in the dismissal of an entire generation of deaf teachers in the U.S., ostensibly because they could not teach in an oralist environment, but also, as Baynton and others have argued, because they were a relic of a manualist, sub-cultural past that needed to be eliminated to allow deaf people to "pass" as hearing people, and thus eliminate deaf culture as a distinct social force in American society.[44] In late-nineteenth century America, and increasingly in late-Victorian and Edwardian Canada, deaf culture was seen as a burdensome threat to both a coherent cultural community and the inclusion of deaf people themselves into that community, and beliefs about sign language were increasingly influenced by Darwinism, as it was equated with earlier, more primitive forms of simian communication.[45]

Duncan McDermid was an advocate of the combined method, and the MIDD only incorporated a small articulation night class into its activities in 1895, and an expanded program

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[42] Baynton, *Forbidden Signs,* 58-59.
[43] Jason Ellis, "All Methods," 385.
[44] Baynton, *Forbidden Signs*, 149.
[45] Davis, "Universalizing Marginality," 125.

in 1911 after his death. The MIDD sought to offer some articulation training to students with residual hearing during this period, but sign language was not banned from the dormitories or the classroom under McDermid's principalship. McDermid, throughout the 1890s and the 1900s, travelled to deaf education conferences in the United States to argue against both strict manualism and oralism, seeing both as unhelpfully extremist positions that ignored the individual needs of students. By the twentieth century, he was in the minority of deaf school officials in Canada, as by 1906 the Belleville Institute and the three deaf schools in Quebec had begun practicing a purely oralist curriculum.[46] As we will see in the following chapter, students and staff used *Silent Echo* as a means to resist strict oralism, as they frequently pointed out the educational drawbacks of the method, celebrated American schools that continued with the combined method, argued against oralist church services, and wrote editorials that hailed the combined education movement's efforts at deaf education conferences.

It is difficult to fully account for McDermid's success in maintaining combined education at the MIDD until his death in 1909. The school's public visibility was increasing over the 1890s, and the Winnipeg press did increasingly cover McDermid's side of the debate. The most important reason is somewhat paradoxical at first glance. The school, and Manitoba's deaf community, were still emerging in Manitoba's public sphere. It was broadly supported by the public, and an established institution that served the responsibility of the province to provide deaf citizens with an education, but still relatively left to McDermid and his staff's direct leadership. The provincial leadership, parents, and the public seemed largely to leave decision making to McDermid, the expert in the field, and the province did not directly advocate for a switch to an oralist curriculum as had happened in other states and provinces. An 1898 article in *The Morning Telegram* illustrates this point well.

[46] James Roots, "Deaf Education and Advocacy," 73-86.

Upon his return from Columbus, Ohio, and the Triennial Convention of Teachers, McDermid was interviewed by a *Telegram* journalist about his trip. He talked at length about the "question of method," which had "occupied a great deal of attention, the manual, oral and auricular being the principal ones in vogue, all having their ardent adherents."[47] McDermid stated that "another object" of the conference was to develop a "uniformity in method in teaching the sign language."[48] While it is likely that McDermid is here speaking of "the sign language" as a uniform, universal language of the deaf, not about the methods debate per se, Baynton points out that both oralists and manualists failed to recognize the differences in the nationally-bound sign languages that became American Sign Language (ASL), British Sign Language (BSL), Langue des signe du Quebec (LSQ), Langue des signe française (LSF), and others by the mid twentieth-century.[49] McDermid's reference to the debate over a single sign language is important, however, as it points to two likely motivations in his public efforts – to downplay the methods debate and to highlight as central the primacy of sign language to deaf education. McDermid was speaking as a long-standing professional in a specialized field of education, and the *Telegram* gave him an unopposed opportunity to advocate, indirectly, for his attitude of moderation and pragmatism in solving the methods debate. The principal of the MIDD was still the undisputed master of the province's deaf education efforts, even if not of Manitoba's fiscal efforts to ensure its success. With the expansion of the school's profile in the public sphere, this undisputed mastery of the technicalities and methods of deaf education would become more difficult, and the school would have to engage with the methods debate in its publications more

[47] "Deaf and Dumb: Fourteenth Triennial Convention of Teachers," *Morning Telegram*, August 15, 1898, 6. "Auricular" education used hearing implements, such as ear trumpets, to allow sound to be amplified for those children with residual hearing.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Baynton, *Forbidden Signs*, 108-109.

and more frequently to keep sign language in its classrooms. As we will see in the next chapter, the school's efforts were successful for a long time.

Silent Echo's editorial page gave McDermid, and at times J.R. Cook, the ability to publicly assert their arguments against strict oralism and in favour of publicizing issues important to deaf Manitobans. While the circulation and reach of the MIDD's paper is difficult to determine, the "telegraphic" nature of deaf school newspapers in the late nineteenth-century meant that several of these editorials would be reprinted across North America. His late 1894 caricature series of leading members of the methods debate resulted in published kudos from a number of American deaf school papers, and plenty of criticism from oralist schools. "The Silent Echo, comes with a unique picture gallery, a la Puck under Mac's skillful but fractious pen," the Iowa *Hawkeye* diplomatically remarked, taking especial glee in McDermid's humorous characterization of both pure oralists and pure manualists as on their knees in rapturous prayer.[50] The Nebraska *Mute Journal* commended "Mac" on his depiction of "Supt. Rothert's signing the Lord's Prayer."[51] Most directly, the *Palmetto Leaf* seemed most delighted by his backgrounding of a leading American oralist Superintendent in his engraving of leading deaf educators, as "the deaf have seen enough and the public heard enough of this worthy who thinks he knows it all."[52] McDermid and Cook called for moderation in the methods debate during their tenures at the school, highlighting the fact that the best method for a deaf or hard of hearing child to learn by should be determined by the child's needs, not the wishes of parents or the political arguments of legislators and hearing educators.

[50] *SE* 3, no. 12 (January 15, 1895), 5.
[51] Ibid. The commendation was for his use of irony. Supr. Rothert was a strident oralist, and could *only* sign the Lord's Prayer.
[52] Ibid.

McDermid's engravings in the mid-1890s did not merely attack the strict logic of oralism, but they criticized oralists for compromising *unity* in a movement that (both oralist and manualist) educators saw as necessary for the successful integration of deaf adults into social life. As the combined method allowed educators to use the full tool kit available to them and apply methods to suit individuals, McDermid thought that it posed the best chance of unifying a fractured and polarised deaf educational community. His February 15, 1895 engraving entitled "To Be or Not To Be" exemplifies his work to push for moderation in the methods debate, coming as it did a few months before the National Convention at Flint, Michigan, that year. Set inside a larger parable that mourned division in deaf education, "To Be or Not to Be" showed the splitting of a route, unified in the foreground, toward a large group of individuals at the top of a series of hills. On these different routes, named for the present factions in North American deaf education, opponents place roadblocks in each other's paths so that all roads are blocked. On the once unified path in the foreground, McDermid had engraved "R.I.P. Unity."[53] McDermid also has placed prominent debate participants in his image, most notably A.G. Bell and Edward Minor Gallaudet, an act which served to distribute the blame for division in deaf education across all sides of the methods debate. McDermid was not only an advocate for one side, he often saw himself as above the debate, and therefore gathered respect and prominence in the continental Congress for the Education of the Deaf from oralists, manualists, combinists, and auralists.

Alessandra Iozzo's study of the Ontario Institute for the Education of the Deaf posits a similar conclusion about the role of a Superintendent or Principal in maintaining the combined method against the rising tide of oralist education during the period under study. Ontario, like Manitoba, employed sign language in the residential setting but placed emphasis upon the

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[53] *SE* 3 vol. 14 (February 15, 1895), 4. DHR, MSD.

student's classroom use of the manual alphabet and finger spelling as a way to create a future "bridge" to hearing neighbor, co-workers, and friends. Robert Mathison, Superintendent at the Ontario School until 1906, used his public profile and professional expertise to lend credence to the argument that sign language should not be banned from deaf residential schools. Sign language, Iozzo argues, "seeped into all aspects of the day particularly because d/Deaf teachers, monitors and other staff interacted with the children daily."[54] Ontario's deaf community demanded, and received, the movement of the OID from Public Works to the Department of Education in 1905. In 1906, however, Mathison was forced out after a Provincial Department of Education Report expressed concern over the lack of oral instruction at the school.[55] Shortly after Mathison's departure, Ontario hired a medical doctor named Dr. Coughlin who quickly began to transform the Ontario Institution into an oralist school at the onset of his tenure.[56] The replacement of Duncan McDermid with his son Howard, also a medical doctor, in 1909 had a less profound impact upon the Manitoba School because of Howard's upbringing in the school, command of sign language, and connections to the deaf community as an interpreter.

Another reason that the MIDD was able to maintain a combined method in an increasingly oralist age was McDermid's position in Winnipeg's reform and charitable movements. He was the President of the Manitoba Club from 1905 to 1909, and likely used this opportunity to curry favour for his vision of the school's future and to rally political support for his principalship. He was involved in several reform organizations, and even lent the students of the school toward a public fundraiser for compulsory kindergarten at the Winnipeg Operatic

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[54] Iozzo, "'Silent Citizens'," 94.
[55] Carbin, *Deaf Heritage,* 98. The circumstances of Mathison's departure are not entirely clear, however. Margret Winzer states that Mathison resigned in protest after the Department of Education made the decision to implement an oralist programme. See Margret Winzer, "Education, Urbanization, and the Deaf Community: A Case Study of Toronto, 1870-1900," in *Deaf History Unveiled: Interpretations From the New Scholarship,* ed. John Vickrey Van Cleve. (Washington, D.C., Gallaudet University Press, 1993), 127-145.
[56] Iozzo, "Silent Citizens," Chapter Three.

Society in 1895, after a smaller such event at First Baptist Church in 1893. The students solicited funds for the kindergarten movement by giving a public sign singing performance and in exhibiting sign language interpretation.[57] This was a rare occurrence for the MIDD, as by the late nineteenth-century the use of public examinations for fundraising purposes was equated with an undesirable and outdated charitable model of funding, and was in steady decline in Britain and North America.[58] Howard McDermid, Duncan's hearing son, also gave a magic lantern show with MIDD students in 1894 which raised a small amount of funds for the Winnipeg Children's Home.[59] The school, its funding ensured by provincial law, often used the public's increasing interest in deafness and the school itself to advocate for underserved and represented charitable causes. Duncan McDermid used his membership in organizations with charitable and political influence, like the Manitoba Club and the Children's Aid Society, to organize and coordinate these efforts that originated within the school and with its students. The MIDD also continued to fall under the Department of Public Works, which showed no interest in interfering with linguistic methods at the school, in contrast to Ontario's experience after 1905.[60]

Churches and Manitoba's Emerging Deaf Community

Hearing educators and supporters of deaf education were consumed throughout the early nineteenth-century with the notion that "deaf mutes" could not obtain knowledge of God, and did not have a natural moral compass. In 1880, after more than sixty years of public education of deaf children in North America, the *American Annals of the Deaf* published a debate between

[57] Duncan McDermid, "Eighth Annual Report of the Manitoba Institute for the Deaf and Dumb." December 31, 1896. PAM G 7982 RG 18 A2; *SE* 2, no. 6 (November 15 1893), 5. DHR MSD.
[58] Bergen, "Public Examination of Deaf and Blind Children," 162.
[59] *SE* 3, no. 6 (October 15, 1894), 5.
[60] My conclusion that the MPW showed 'no interest' is borne in the complete lack of correspondence between the Ministry and McDermid about the methods debate question from 1890 to 1920.

Paul Denys of the Ontario Institute for the Deaf and Warring Wilkinson of *Popular Science*. Deny's piece was a prepared rebuttal to Wilkinson's article that dealt only in part with deaf children, but used prelingually deaf people as evidence that conscience was entirely acquired rather than innate. Denys argued that this viewpoint, shared by Sicard in Paris, had been "thrown out a hundred years ago – when deaf-mute education was in its infancy."[61] The notion that deaf children had no innate conscience had been peddled by early deaf educators, Denys argued, in order to drum up financial support of a "miraculous" effort that was often supported charitably. As many deaf schools in the U.S., and one in Canada (Ontario), were publicly supported, this hyperbolic rhetoric needed to be consigned to the past.[62] Yet the appeal to "save" deaf children, so important to the raising of funds (for charitable schools), and political will (for publicly-funded ones), remained a key rhetorical frame of reference through which deaf education was discussed.

As Iozzo has argued in the Ontario context, churches were an important site for the increased publicity of deaf Manitobans. Religious services, largely non-denominational but decidedly Protestant in character, were a defining feature of the MIDD as soon as it became a residential school. Initially, ministers from the Winnipeg Ministerial Association would deliver services that would be interpreted for students by Principal Watson. McDermid continued this after the summer of 1890, but also began to deliver his own sermons and Bible lessons himself. The ability to perform religious services was also a stated skill in McDermid's initial application letter, and Robert Mathison's letter of reference from August 1890.[63] In its first years, religious

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[61] Paul Denys, "Primitive Conscience Among Deaf Mutes." *American Annals of the Deaf* 25, no. 1 (January 1880): 39.
[62] Denys, "Primitive Conscience," 39-40.
[63] Robert Mathison to James Smart, August 30, 1890, 3. Letter. Ministry of Public Works Correspondence. PAM GS 0123 GR 1607.

services were largely features of student life *within* the school, and sojourns to church services for students seem to have been rare.

By 1893, students began to attend church services outside of the school on Sundays, and McDermid served as an interpreter for students and some members of Winnipeg's deaf community. One of the first outings was an exhibition given at Central Congregational Church in May, 1892. Hugh Pedley, CCC's Minister, had been instrumental in securing Ministerial Association support for J.C. Watson's school in 1888, and maintained a close interest in the school during the period before he moved to Montreal. The McDermids and several students gave sign language performances and the principal discussed how deaf children were educated. He also discussed the importance of religious instruction within a residential school.[64] As mentioned above, these exhibitions were not geared toward financial gain for the school but for other causes to which the school could lend its increasing publicity in support. Church services and functions at which students were publicly present, therefore, were very different than earlier exhibitions in support of charitable schools – they sought the accretion of the school's *publicity* rather than its financial resources.

By 1897, the school regularly attended Sunday services at Central Congregational Church and at St. Stephen's Presbyterian, where Charles W. Gordon ministered and McDermid interpreted for students and members of Winnipeg's deaf community. After the 1896 death of student Everett Platt, Rev. Gordon came to the school to preside at his funeral.[65] Originally, the potentially explosive issue of religious instruction at a residential school was defused through "non-denominational" services delivered by him in the school itself. By the mid-1890s, McDermid often took the students to a rotating queue of Protestant and Catholic churches for

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[64] *SE* 1 vol. 2 (June 1, 1892), 11. DHR MSD.
[65] Duncan McDermid, "Eighth Annual Report." Ministry of Public Works Correspondence Files, PAM. GS 0123 GR 1607, 5.

special services. Excursions to church services outside of the school became routine by the twentieth-century, though the majority of services were likely still delivered within the institution.

The North West Deaf Issue and Limited Publicity

The MIDD quickly became the focal point for the issue of deaf education in Western Canada as a whole. The Manitoba and British Columbian governments came to an agreement in the early 1890s to allow B.C. students to attend for a fixed rate to be paid to Manitoba. The Northwest Territories, or the current provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan, negotiated with both the Federal Department of the Interior and the Manitoba government to allow deaf NWT students to attend. Frederick Haultain, the leader of the NW Assembly that had been established in 1888, saw no way for the territory to pay for students to attend as it operated largely under a small federal grant. McDermid, the *Silent Echo*, and Manitoba newspapers often remarked upon the issue of deaf (and blind) children who were unable to attend the Manitoba school or such an institution in the NWT. In February 1894, *Silent Echo* ran a story about a young deaf woman from the NWT who had been found at the train station with a note attached to her by a Brandon man who was not her relative, leading to speculation that she had been abandoned by her family further West. The young woman appeared to be 25 years old, and did not understand either signs or the manual alphabet. McDermid was able to make her understand that the pupils of the school were deaf, and she commented, through “natural sign,” that she would like to learn to read. “As this girl appears to come from the Northwest Territories,” the paper editorialized, “her cause brings up the case of her unfortunate class in the Territories for whose education nothing so far has been done…In the meantime the girl in question remains at the Manitoba institution, though

the province has not made provision for such cases and cannot do so until the Dominion government also does its share."[66] In 1897, J. Gainor of Edmonton wrote to Minister Watson about his son's potential attendance at the school. "We have been led to believe that the Institution is overcrowded but find it is not as my whif took advantage of the cheap excursion to Winnipeg and had an interview with Mr. McDermid and he sed there was room for a few Boys would be glad if the necessary ade was provided for him," Gainor wrote.[67] In response to a series of requests from the NWT and Manitoba governments, James Smart, now the Federal Deputy Minister of the Interior, replied that payment was to be taken care of by the NWT out of its present appropriation.[68] The issue of educating deaf and blind children from the NWT, and indeed blind children from Manitoba, would not be fully solved until a 1916 agreement between the Prairie Provinces and the federal government. As Duncan McDermid exasperatingly wrote in his Annual Report for 1897, "It is said that large bodies move slowly. I quite agree with the statement as far as it refers to the deaf of the Northwest Territories."[69]

The formation of the MIDD, and its role in slowly expanding the visibility and publicity of deaf people in Manitoba, conferred educational and political advantages to deaf Manitobans which were not available to other deaf North Westerners. NWT newspapers, as late as the early twentieth century, rarely commented upon the educational rights or aspirations of deaf Northwesterners, and seldomly mentioned the hearing-impaired beyond humorous telegraphic pieces from American or British papers or notices about deaf pedestrians being struck by

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[66] *SE* 2, no. 11 (February 1, 1894): 5.
[67] "J. Gainor to Robert Watson," July 29, 1897. Ministry of Public Works Correspondence Files GS 0123 GR 1607. All misspellings in original.
[68] James Smart to John W. Sifton, Inspector of Institutions. September 14, 1897. Letter. Ministry of Public Works Correspondence Files, PAM. GS 0123 GR 1607.
[69] Duncan McDermid, "Eighth Annual Report." Ministry of Public Works Correspondence Files, PAM. GS 0123 GR 1607, 4. McDermid appears to have made an error in the title of this report. Both the 1896 and 1897 Annual Reports are titled "Eighth Annual Report" in these prepublication drafts to the Minister.

streetcars in NWT cities.[70] Jokes in which deafness supplied the punchline were still common in small Alberta papers as late as 1918, and were virtually the only mention of the phenomenon.[71] Deaf education was still referred to as "miraculous" when it was mentioned at all. A report on a deaf school in Chicago, originally published elsewhere, was sub-headed with "Training of Deaf Children is Little Short of Miraculous."[72] Deputy Attorney General Robson of the NWT, in correspondence with Manitoba officials, referred to potential students as "patients," and education as "maintenance," which no Manitoba official did in extant documents during the period.[73] This likely reflects the lack of familiarity with the issue on the part of NWT officials, though the issue was treated as a serious matter by Haultain's government, at least rhetorically. The NWT government, and after 1905 Alberta's and Saskatchewan's, knew through census reports that there were comparable numbers of deaf children within their borders, when compared to Manitoba. While fiscal pressure and federal unwillingness to increase the NWT's appropriation was a stumbling block to developing a deaf school there, the lack of publicity and opportunity for direct advocacy was likely more important in explaining why the NWT took so long to contribute significant public funds and political will to the issue of the education of deaf children.

The Growth of Fiscal and Institutional Stability 1892-1900

[70] "Injuries Kill Deaf Mute." *Edmonton Capital*, December 29, 1913, 4. Unfortunately, there are many examples of stories like this one in Calgary, Edmonton, Regina, and Saskatoon papers before the First World War.
[71] *Irma Times*, May 10, 1918, 7. "John – 'So that's your new tie, eh? Why on Earth did you select such a loud pattern?' Jos- 'I didn't select it. My brother did, and he's slightly deaf.'"; *Crossfield Chronicle*, January 28, 1909, 2. "'There goes a man who has never spoken an unkind word to his wife,' said Willoughby. 'Fine! Who is he?' asked Dorrington. "He's a deaf and dumb old bachelor,' said Willoughby."
[72] "Hear with their Eyes." *Irma Times,* November 2, 1917, 2.
[73] H.R. Robson to Robert Watson, August 2, 1899. Ministry of Public Works Correspondence Files. PAM GS 0123 GR 1607; "Maintenance of D&D Patients." Frederick Haultain to Robert Watson, July 10, 1899. Ministry of Public Works Correspondence Files. PAM GS 0123 GR 1607 G 7989.

Government publications directed toward advertising Manitoba as a place for immigrants from Britain to settle quickly incorporated the MIDD. In 1892, *Manitoba: A Handbook* celebrated the establishment of the MIDD alongside larger educational and institutional improvements, as well as the agricultural potential of the province. "There has been erected and fully equipped," the pamphlet asserts, "a Deaf and Dumb Institute at Winnipeg, which has now been in successful operation for some three years, and is doing very efficient work. The number of Deaf and Dumb in the Province is not large, but there was a general demand that their misfortunes should be mitigated as far as possible."[74] The 1892 publication places the school, however, in a subsection called "Public Institutions," in which the courts, Selkirk Insane Asylum, and the Home for Incurables are discussed. This inclusion under public institutions frames the MIDD with other "benevolent" institutions and Agricultural Institutes as a support institution that is maintained at public cost to ensure the successful settlement of the province through the amelioration of the "calamity" of childhood deafness. In 1892, the Manitoba Government chose to highlight the collective *responsibility* of the state to support families with deaf children, rather than to highlight the educational *rights* of deaf citizens. While this portrayal of the purpose of the MIDD would continue to colour official government advertisements through the twentieth-century, documents produced within the school – like *Silent Echo*, and McDermid's correspondence with Ministers Smart, Watson and Inspector of Public Institutions J.W. Sifton – would increasingly focus upon the right of deaf children to an education and to an equal opportunity to access to public jobs. As we have seen with McDermid's efforts to improve the school's capacity, teaching staff, and vocational programs, this rhetoric was largely couched in the terms of the public's responsibility to deaf children. Yet in much of Watson and McDermid's rhetoric about compulsory education for deaf children, we have also seen that they

[74] "Education," *Manitoba: A Handbook.* (Winnipeg: Government of Manitoba, 1892): 11.

envisioned and demanded a system in which each deaf child had access to education, subject to penalties levelled at their guardians for failure to comply.

Silent Echo was not the only school publication that discussed life at the school, advocated for the educational opportunity for deaf children, and attempted to increase public awareness of the school's importance and aims. Annual Reports and Calendars were also key documents in which McDermid and J.R. Cook attempted to publicize the school as something more than a purely ameliorative institution. All school publications featured instructions on how to use the one-handed manual alphabet as a way for hearing individuals to communicate with deaf citizens. A 1903 pamphlet produced at the school argued that, speaking of *Silent Echo*, "Every friend of the school should take a copy of this paper and learn what the school is doing."[75] The calendar was aimed at a broad public audience, with a special focus on parents of deaf children. "Do not regard the presence of a deaf child in the family as the greatest calamity in the world," the Calendar asserts on its first page. "In instances not a few the deaf child has been the flower of the family."[76] While this rhetoric is a far cry from that of the Deaf Culture movement of the later twentieth-century, it shows that the school was actively attempting to change public imagination about the social and vocational possibilities of deaf children in the province.

The MIDD's road to fiscal solvency and increased publicity stands in contrast to those of the three deaf schools in Montreal studied by Stephane-D. Perrault. Two of these schools were Catholic, a boys school founded in 1848 and a girls school founded in 1851, while a Protestant school that catered to both boys and girls was founded in 1869. All of these schools, Perrault argues, needed to use public examinations and fundraising up until the 1880s in order to achieve

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[75] *1903 Calendar*, *Manitoba Institute for the Deaf and Dumb.* (Winnipeg: Manitoba Institute for the Deaf and Dumb, 1903), 2.
[76] Ibid., 1.

the sustainable establishment of “structures for educating the deaf in Montreal.”[77] These schools were largely fiscally supported by student tuition and charitable giving, and had to resort to examinations and coordinated their fund-raising activities toward the “constant efforts of the educators to prove the usefulness of educating the deaf."[78] Perrault draws a link between this emphasis on the message that “the deaf could fully participate in the world,” an appeal to charity more than collective responsibility, and to the rise of oralism in Quebec in the 1880s.[79] Manitoba’s school, from its adoption by the province, was publicly supported and could set its sights on advocating more fully for the province’s deaf community, rather than simply on surviving a precarious economic situation. McDermid, who consistently touted the benefit of public ownership of the MIDD, was not as dependent upon the claims of parents of deaf children and public intellectuals that deaf people needed to be incorporated into a national *speaking* community. In his Third Annual Report, he outlined the benefits of state support over private contributions:

> Experience has proven that when the State undertakes the responsibility of providing institutions for the care and education of its defective wards, that the most liberal and generous support has been supplied and every effort put forth to foster and promote the well being [sic] of those for whom the institution has been established. The need of an improvement or change has only to be stated and if proven to be a real and urgent necessity it is usually granted, thus permitting no backward step in the general progress of the work, as is the case where schools are supported by private contributions. The history of the Manitoba Institution is no exception to this rule.[80]

Public support of the MIDD allowed McDermid and the school’s hearing and deaf staff to spend their efforts on first consolidating the school’s institutional health, then increasingly to advocate

[77] Perrault, “Intersecting Discourses,” 108.
[78] Ibid., 109.
[79] Ibid., 110.
[80] McDermid, “Third Annual Report,” 49-50.

for the deaf community outside of the institution. This emerging advocacy outside of the Portage and Sherbrooke building's walls forms the focus of the next chapter of this study.

Conclusion

The first eleven years of the MIDD's history, from 1889-1900, were years of increasing public interest in, and accountability for, the school. Student accommodation was expanded, inspection reports were published, and a vocational program for (primarily) male students was established. These represent real gains for the school, and were attainable principally for two reasons – the state support for the school was enshrined in law and therefore its funding guaranteed, and the increasingly public profile of the school in newspapers, the school's efforts to use public examinations to support charitable causes for hearing populations, and through *Silent Echo.* Deaf education was far from assured a secure future in 1888, when Watson's private school struggled financially and only served a small urban minority of Manitoba's school age deaf children. By the 1901-02 school year, the MIDD had enrolled 58 students from Manitoba, the Northwest Territories, and British Columbia. Duncan McDermid had managed to ensure the continuation of the combined method in the school's teaching, meaning that students retained linguistic and social contact with deaf Winnipeggers into the twentieth-century. Deaf Manitobans had become visible and were increasingly seen as something more than a group of "unfortunates", they were seen as an educable group that were present in Winnipeg's churches, printing offices, and burgeoning manufacturing sector.

Yet the school, even by 1900, represented little more than a prophylactic measure against deaf poverty and marginalization. The MIDD had by 1889 gained a recognition of the need for a deaf school and by 1900 had gained a stable compulsory school in the province that allowed

training in employable skills. Even so, the MIDD, by its very mandate, was concerned with dealing with the educational and social problems faced by deaf *children* in Western Canada. Adult deaf Manitobans still faced institutional barriers to employment choice, especially in the public sector. During the next twenty years, the school and its deaf and hearing allies would turn their attention toward these problems faced by the deaf community as a whole, and would have a prominent role to play as a site for the formation of Deaf Culture in the region. These gains would be partial and measured, and be put under strain by the rise of oralism in the school by the 1920s

Chapter Four – "What the Deaf Can Do": The MIDD Looks Outward.

Introduction

The Manitoba Institute for the Deaf and Dumb turned its public efforts toward the concerns and issues facing Winnipeg and Brandon's deaf community in the early twentieth century.[1] After the efforts of D.W. McDermid had consolidated the school's fiscal and professional health, *Silent Echo* offered an opportunity for the school to publicise the employment and social concerns of deaf Manitobans, in addition to the continuation of public advocacy in favour of the founding of a deaf school in the new provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan and the defence of sign language instruction in schools. Manitoba's deaf community had grown greatly since the 1884 Groom Expedition, and the visibility of deaf Manitobans had been increased by the school's advocacy and the presence of deaf printers in Winnipeg and Brandon. *Silent Echo* celebrated successful deaf workers, advocated for those who either could not find work or were barred from public service due to their deafness, as the Manitoba School itself strove to publicise itself as a *school* first and foremost, not an asylum where deficient children are sent to be fixed. During a period of oralist ascendancy in North America, D.W. McDermid and J.R. Cook, and (after 1909) Duncan's son Howard, sought a different way to "restore the deaf to society" than that advocated by Alexander Graham Bell and other oralists. They argued that while spoken English remained a difficult medium through which pre-lingually deaf Manitobans could interact with their hearing neighbours, written English and the manual alphabet made this communication between profoundly deaf people and hearing people possible, and had for generations. The school successfully articulated and publicised the concerns of Western Canada's deaf communities, and worked toward improving

[1] The MIDD changed its name to The Manitoba School for the Deaf (MSD) in 1912, so this chapter will use different titles for the school depending on the year of reference.

the material lives of these communities' members. In this the school's efforts were not uniformly successful, but they did help to forge a deaf community in Winnipeg and Brandon that both looked inward and struggled to solidify existing links to hearing Manitobans.

Winnipeg's Deaf Community and the MIDD

J.J. Murray, in his study of transnational deaf communities, argues that "Deaf people were not outside – whether seeking to enter or hoping to further escape – larger society but were already active participants in their national dialogues, reshaping national discourses for their own particular needs."[2] For much of the nineteenth-century, the relationship between deaf communities and individuals with hearing majorities had been forged as a charitable link – many of the rhetorical efforts to forge stable charitable, and later public, efforts to integrate deaf individuals had relied on the assertion of the moral and intellectual darkness of uneducated deaf people, and that education would give them the opportunity to protect and provide for themselves. Throughout much of North America, and certainly in Manitoba, by the early-twentieth century the notions of teaching deaf people to read and write English, use the manual alphabet, and even speak were no longer seen as miraculous goals but easily and justifiably attainable. Many deaf people were now able to, in McNairn's words, use the already established "vocabulary and mechanisms by which they would demand and gain inclusion."[3] Winnipeg and Brandon's deaf communities, like so many in North America, looked to do something more with this education, now that the province's responsibility to offer it had been enshrined. In short, once the educational opportunities of deaf children had been assured, the economic and employment security of deaf adults became the goal that the MSD strove to work toward. The

[2] Murray, "One Touch of Nature," 18-19.
[3] McNairn, *The Capacity to Judge,* 6.

school was both an ally of the deaf community and a place where members of the deaf community, especially printing instructor J.R. Cook, could use as a base from which to advocate for themselves. In later decades, organizations like the Canadian Association of the Deaf and the Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf would form this type of platform, but before 1920 deaf educational institutions were practically the only option. The MIDD, in addition, was a peculiarity in Canada as it was the singular residential deaf school that supported sign language and sustained interaction with urban adult deaf communities after 1906.

Establishing the size of Manitoba's deaf community before 1906 is surprisingly difficult.[4] The *Manitoba Free Press* reported in 1893 that "Principal McDermid is in possession of the Dominion Census returns…the returns show the number of deaf and dumb in Manitoba to have been 102; of these 62 being single, 26 married and 4 widowed."[5] An accurate picture of the size of Winnipeg's deaf community becomes possible to generate after 1906, as in March of that year *Silent Echo* reported that "the number of deaf residents in Winnipeg exclusive of those who are attending school is thirty-four."[6] Winnipeg and Brandon's deaf communities, however, were fairly fluid, and the paper frequently reported deaf visitors from Ontario, so at any point the number of deaf people in the city was likely higher than a number of "residents."

Connections with Winnipeg's deaf community became increasingly important to the school's staff and students once it became clear that the pressing internal infrastructural problems of the MIDD in the 1890s were mostly relieved by increased Ministry of Public Works investment. Thanksgiving gatherings and non-student involvement in the school's "Pharnorth Lit Society" were not uncommon during the 1890s, but were rare occurrences that were reported on

[4] Though the 1891 and 1901 censuses did record "deaf mutes," this data was not included in the Canadian Government's subsequent digitization efforts. This info is attainable through the original scans, but not searchable.
[5] *Manitoba Free Press*, June 12, 1893.
[6] *SE* 14, no. 11 (March 1, 1906), 3. LL, PAM.

with great fanfare in the *Echo*.[7] Yet connections between school and deaf society, if measured by the frequency of school events that featured adult members of Winnipeg's deaf community, increased during the first decade of the twentieth-century. *Silent Echo* began to publish a regular full-page column called "Our City Mutes" in 1895 that reported on the employment prospects and social lives of deaf men and women, as well as the arrival and departures of deaf Manitobans from Brandon and Winnipeg. In November 1905, the *Echo* reported that deaf visitors were made "heartily welcome by the principal, who is always pleased to have any and all the deaf present at their social gatherings, and also at the Sunday morning services in the school chapel."[8] While such an assertion may seem perfectly reasonable and unremarkable to those of us in the post-oralist era, in 1905 it was not reflective of most North American schools. Many oralist schools had banned connection between the students and deaf outsiders, who were likely to teach the children sign language and set back their "restoration."[9] *Silent Echo* itself chided schools in Montreal for doing just that, remarking that "pupils are not allowed to use signs or *mix with others who use them*."[10]

Death notices and reports of outings in the *Echo* and other papers also suggest a close relationship between the MIDD's students and staff and Winnipeg's deaf community. When Charles Pickering, a deaf porter who had lived with John Parker in Brandon at the time of the 1891 and 1901 censuses, died at the St. Boniface Hospital from choking, his funeral was attended by many members of the school community. "The senior boys went to the funeral," the

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[7] The Pharnorth Lit was a debating society which was initially restricted to students but eventually began to involve members of Winnipeg's deaf community. In at least one case, that of Lily Turriff, it was used to hone and sharpen the sign language skills of hearing employees at the school who arrived before becoming fluent in sign language. See, for example, *SE* 2, no. 2 (June 1, 1893), 8.
[8] *SE* 14, no. 3 (November 1, 1905), 3. DHR, MSD.
[9] Robert M. Buchanan, *Illusions of Equality: Deaf Americans in School and Factory 1850-1950.* (Washington, D.C.: Gallaudet University Press, 1999).
[10] *SE* 14, no. 14 (April 16, 1906), 2. DHR, MSD. Emphasis added.

Echo reported, “and some of them were pall-bearers.”[11] Pickering had recently moved to Winnipeg from Brandon, but the fact that this issue of the *Echo* featured several articles and notices about his life, death, and funeral, suggest that he had forged a relationship with the school. Likewise, social outings by both deaf community and school members were reported in the “Local Echoes” section of *Silent Echo* throughout the period from the late 1890s to 1909. “A large number of the deaf visited Winnipeg Beach during the summer,” reads an example from 1903, “and enjoyed the exhilarating breezes of the lake and woods.”[12]

Sporting events were central to interactions between the deaf community and the MIDD in the early twentieth century. In 1909, the school expanded its existing school hockey team to begin a city-wide deaf hockey team. “The team,” *Silent Echo* reported, “will be known as the ‘Silents’ and will be yellow and black. It is likely that the team will be composed entirely of deaf mutes, with one exception….”[13] The MIDD had had a school team for at least a decade, and had played games with the Manitoba Normal School team and local hearing school teams. The formation of a team on a deaf-cultural basis, rather than simply an institutional one, shows that the school was committed to establishing increased and regular ties with the deaf community. Robert Mathison, the former Superintendent of the Ontario School before his 1906 resignation when the school adopted oralism, as well as McDermid’s mentor, was the team’s “Honorary Vice-President.” Though Mathison had moved to Toronto and became an employee of the Independent Order of Foresters, an organization that pushed to extend the availability of insurance to working families and perhaps deaf Torontonians, he was present in Winnipeg at the

[11] *SE* 14, no. 16 (May 16, 1906), 2. Legislative Library of Manitoba, PAM.
[12] *SE* 12, no. 1 (October 1, 1903), 6. Legislative Library of Manitoba, PAM.
[13] *SE* 17, no. 9 (February 15, 1909), 2. Legislative Library of Manitoba, PAM.

time of the team's formation.[14] Mathison was a high-profile castaway of the new oralist era in Ontario deaf education, and frequently visited his protégé at the last fully combined jurisdiction in the country.

The Printing Trade in Winnipeg and Brandon

One of the most tangible and lasting links between the school and the deaf community was the one between the vocational printing program and deaf members of the printing trade in the province's two major centres. Printing was a common vocational program in American deaf schools, and a common occupation for deaf workers to aspire to. Winnipeg, before the vocational program had been set up in 1892, had deaf printers. Angus McIntosh had moon-lighted from his *Free Press* job at the school as a printing instructor, and later J.R. Cook, also a deaf printer at the *Free Press*, took over as a full-time instructor in 1893. Printing was a well-paid occupation squarely in the ranks of the semi-skilled working class[15], and indeed shortly after Cook's hiring, McDermid complained on his behalf about his wage as the school's printing instructor. Cook, McDermid argued, saw his own students going on to work at the *Free Press* or *Tribune's* presses to make far more money than him, and felt that a raise was in order to reflect his importance to the future earning powers of students.[16] The vocational program's relative success was also confirmed by the *Voice*, the organ of Winnipeg's Trades and Labour Congress, as it commented on vocational programs at the MIDD and other "benevolent institutions." The *Voice* argued that "the chief complaint is that they select one or two trades, such as printing or blacksmithing, and

[14] Nancy Keifer, "Robert Mathison." *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* Volume XV (1921-1930). (http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/mathison_robert_15E.html.) Last accessed February 3, 2016.
[15] Winzer, *The History of Special Education*, 154.
[16] Duncan McDermid to Robert Watson, December 7, 1893. Letter. Ministry of Public Works Correspondence Files. GS 0123 GR 1607 G 7972.

in consequence increase an already too plentiful supply of men."[17] The MIDD, argued the *Voice*, was distorting the labour market for printers by concentrating on printing training for many of its male students.

Printing remained an important occupation for members of the deaf community in Winnipeg and Brandon. Students worked during their summer vacations, and many secured employment upon graduation. The adoption of type-setting machines in 1894 by the *Free Press* and the *Tribune* had led to the firing of two deaf printers out of safety concerns, but sometime after a scathing editorial in *Silent Echo*, the printers seem to have been re-hired.[18] In 1909, a *Silent Echo* editorial expressed that, "We are all proud of our printer boys. They all, with one exception, secured work at good wages in their home printing offices during their vacation. This speaks well for their attention and industry while at school, and, encouraged by their success during the summer, they have all returned to their places with renewed energy and a determination to more thoroughly master their trade during the present school year."[19] Deaf men were drawn to printing as a well-paid and relatively stable occupation in which employers were comfortable with hiring deaf employees. Deaf immigrants from the British Isles either chose Winnipeg because of opportunities in the print industry, or because of the allure of homesteading. While many deaf homesteaders were successful in the Lipton, Saskatchewan area, others turned to printing as a stable fallback measure if farming did not work out.[20] This was also true of Brandon. "Mr. William Dickson," reported the *Echo*, "a young deaf mute, who came out from Scotland recently, with the intention of learning farming, has decided to resume his trade as

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[17] *The Voice*, May 15, 1897, 4. The "blacksmithing" program referred to by the *Voice* was the Indian Industrial School vocational program, not the MIDD's.

[18] *SE* 3, no 8 (Nov 15, 1894), 4. *The People's Voice* also took up this issue and reported on negotiations between the typographical union and the two papers. Aside from the two deaf printers, twenty to thirty hearing employees were also fired at the time of the adoption of typesetting machines.

[19] *SE* 14, no. 1 (October 2, 1905), 5. Legislative Library, PAM.

[20] *SE* 14, no. 3 (October 16, 1905), 5. LL, PAM. "Eighteen deaf mutes are living around here; ten of them are homesteading and are doing well." Dispatch from the Lipton area.

a printer. He succeeded in getting a good position through the kindness of Mr. James Sherriff in the Brandon Sun office, and is doing well."[21] Most importantly, the school's celebration of the success of deaf printers was important evidence of "what the deaf can do," proof that deaf workers should not be barred from any occupational aspiration because of their auditory status.[22]

Employment Advocacy

One major avenue of employment that was denied to deaf Canadians was the civil service. Before 1905, deaf people were not allowed to contest the civil service exam or accept jobs with the federal government.[23] This was one problem facing Manitoba's deaf population that the school could only complain about in the *Silent Echo*, as it was federal policy. McDermid did attempt to advocate through Provincial Inspector of Institutions J.W. Sifton, Federal Interior Minister Clifford Sifton's father, to try to have this policy changed, though the written record of this is scant and is only vaguely referred to in paper correspondence.[24] The school's record in celebrating the eventual decision of the Laurier government to allow deaf Canadians to contest the exam in 1905 is far better documented. The fact that this opening extended only to the postal service did not fully dampen J.R. Cook's enthusiasm:

> It will no doubt be welcome news to the deaf throughout Canada to know that in future [sic] they will be admitted to the postal service, and it is hoped that this is only the forerunner of more openings for them in the public service of the Dominion as well as the Provinces. There is no reason why more avenues of employment should not be open to the deaf where they are capable of performing the work required of them. If properly understood, and given a fair trial we believe that much of the prejudice which now exists in the public mind against employing the deaf would be removed. The action of the retiring Postmaster General in opening places for them in the postoffices [sic] in all the

[21] *SE* 14, no. 1 (October 2, 1905), 5. LL, PAM.
[22] *SE* 3, no. 6 (October 15, 1894), 5. DHR, MSD.
[23] Keith Wilson, "Duncan Wendell McDermid," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*. Volume 13, 1901-1910. (http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/mcdermid_duncan_wendell_13E.html).
[24] Duncan McDermid to J.W. Sifton, July 26, 1898. Letter. Ministry of Public Works Correspondence Files, PAM, GS 0123, GR 1607.

> cities of Canada will, we hope, tend to remove much of this prejudice, and to place them on an equal footing.[25]

That November, three MIDD students took the civil service exams – two male and one female. By the following year, four MIDD graduates had secured employment at Post Offices, though further bars to deaf employment in the civil service of Canada would remain for decades, rendering Cook's optimism in his 1905 editorial premature. McDermid, in his 1906 Annual Report argued that the postal service decision was important because it recognized that "we have some pupils who could perform duties above what is demanded as printer, dressmaker, or carpenter, but their deafness prevents them from getting a chance to show what they can do."[26]

These comments and actions place the MIDD's efforts at odds with Robert Buchanan's characterization of hearing deaf educators as uninterested in and unaccountable for the employment outcomes of their deaf graduates. School officials at the turn of the century, Buchanan argues, "continued to thwart renewed efforts to broaden the responsibility of school officials to assist deaf adults in finding work."[27] Buchanan also argues that administrators tended to advise deaf graduates that "individual excellence was needed" to obtain employment, "not intervention by a school official."[28] McDermid's direct lobbying of the Post Office to accept deaf graduates after the 1905 rule change provides a contrast to Buchanan's national American story, though the MIDD's continued status as a combined school likely contributed to this difference. Buchanan's provided examples are exclusively oralist schools, and the oralist project tended to

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[25] *SE* 14, no. 2 (October 16, 1905), 1. LL, PAM.
[26] Duncan McDermid, "Education of Deaf Mutes." *Annual Report of the Department of Education of Alberta, 1906.* (Edmonton: Jas. E. Richards, Government Printer, 1906), 58. Peel's Prairie Provinces: (http://peel.library.ualberta.ca/bibliography/9535.1/7.html)
[27] Buchanan, *Illusions of Equality*, 54.
[28] Ibid.

assume that deaf workers who could “pass” for hearing workers would need no extra accommodation or attention to get hired.

McDermid and Cook’s words display an understanding that deaf people were *disabled* by social and political policy as much as they were by their auditory status. This assertion, and the recognition that disability as a concept is not immutable but was constructed in different ways throughout the past, is a cornerstone of recent critical disability studies.[29] Much like Jane Elizabeth Groom, who recognized that deaf Hackney residents were disabled by employer prejudice more than their physical deafness, Cook and McDermid saw social barriers to the success of deaf people, rather than physiological ones.[30] In Groom’s time, deaf publicity in Manitoba was still mostly shrouded in the rhetoric of pity and charity, but by 1905, the MIDD had proven that deaf Manitobans could be educated, and deaf printers had proved that prelingual deafness was not incompatible with a hearing workplace. Printers, like Angus MacIntosh and J.R. Cook, had proven this without the school’s direct assistance, and offered their experience as printers to (primarily) male students in order to build a bridge between the MIDD and the print industry. McDermid and Cook had little influence over federal post office policy, but they recognized the events of 1905 as an important development in deaf employment possibilities, and hoped for continued changes within civil service policy.

Silent Echo also continued to reprint newspaper pieces that fit the school’s editorial vision. For all of its claims of employment success, Cook and McDermid sometimes reminded readers that there were still powerful barriers to gainful and stable employment for deaf members in the working class. The paper re-printed a letter from Grace Jefferson in the *Free Press* in

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[29] Reaume, “Disability History in Canada,” 36-37.

[30] Jennifer Esmail forcefully makes the point that Groom’s thinking approximates modern disability theory, and argues that Groom portayed disability as located “in a culture rather than in a body.” Esmail, *Reading Victorian Deafness,* 159-160.

which she sought to find her deaf father in Winnipeg. "Good master editor I want your paper to find my pa," seven-year-old Jefferson wrote:

> He gave me goodbye and went away three months ago. Pa worked at a Toronto factory for two years for only five dollars a week and pa said it was not enough for rent, coal, clothes, and food, so he went away to find a better job. Last Christmas I cried because good Santa Claus did not put anything in my socks and ma said that the wheels of his waggon were broken…. My pa and ma are deaf and dumb and I want to help ma, and find pa.[31]

While there is little to specifically indicate that this story was a particularly *deaf* one, the article's message links deaf un-or-under-employment to larger issues in industrial-economic issues that were being taken up by Social Gospellers at the time.[32] While such a gut-wrenching letter could have come from the children of many hearing economic migrants in early twentieth-century Canada, *Silent Echo* reprinted it for two likely reasons: to remind readers that there were dangers of wage exploitation faced by deaf employees above and beyond those of hearing workers, and that education could be a way out of this employment trap. Likely, it was a message to parents and legislators about the importance of deaf education and vocational training in stable, skilled trades. Yet McDermid and Cook rarely spelled out their intentions, and Cook, as editor, often interspersed serious stories like Grace Jefferson's with funny reprints or Biblical parables. Still, the paper, and the school itself, kept up the issue of deaf employment and advocated for both fair wages for deaf workers and the opportunity for deaf workers to labour alongside their hearing neighbours.

Silent Echo did not clearly advocate for the types of jobs that female students were trained in at the school – domestic service and dress-making and altering. It is difficult to confirm employment rates of unmarried deaf women who graduated from the school, as the *Echo*

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[31] *SE* 14, no. 6. (December 15, 1905), 2. LL, PAM.
[32] Richard Allen, *The Social Passion: Religion and Social Reform in Canada, 1914-1928.* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971).

reported when and if female graduates were married, but rarely upon women's hiring as a domestic servant, in contrast to men being hired as printers. Notices of female graduates obtaining employment were often vague. Ada Giles, a recent MIDD graduate, was reported on in the "Local and Personal" section of the *Echo.* "Miss Ada Giles," the paper vaguely reported, "who graduated from our school two years ago, has obtained a situation in Brandon and is doing well."[33] In 1905, this changed slightly, as admittance to the civil service exams and post office included female students, and female graduates' work was reported on in as much detail as male graduates'. The continuation of the combined method also helped the employment prospects of some female graduates, as a small number were hired at the school as teachers.[34]

Silent Echo also advocated for reform in the insurance business's dealings with deaf people in North America. While it is difficult to ascertain the types of insurance rates paid by deaf Manitobans in the late nineteenth-century, the paper's celebration of a New York company's decision to offer non-discriminatory rates to a deaf man in Winnipeg underline that high rates were an issue for the city's deaf community. "Contrary to the custom of some insurance companies," the *Echo* reported, "he is not required to pay a higher premium than that paid by a hearing person."[35] Cook or McDermid saw this act as important, as it was "the first time we have known of a deaf person being received by the New York Life or any other company without a higher rate being demanded."[36]

Finally, the school's paper and staff sought to publicize the use of the one-handed manual alphabet to help deaf students communicate effectively with both their hearing family members and co-workers. Cook expressed a certain level of exasperation with parents who had not learned

[33] *SE* 12, vol. 1 (October 1, 1903), 6. LL, PAM.
[34] By the time Mary Lonsdale and Annie MacPhail were hired, in 1906 and 1911 respectively, the spread of oralism had made the hiring of deaf teachers in North America a rare occurrence indeed.
[35] *SE* 3, no. 13 (February 1, 1895), 3. DHR, MSD.
[36] Ibid.

the alphabet in the pages of the *Echo* several times between 1893 and 1909. In 1906, he wrote under the heading "To Parents," "If you have not learned the finger alphabet – and strange to say some parents have not – do so. Have your child teach it to you and see how much interest he will take in doing it… when you have company do not put him in the background, but bring him out and let him feel he is as part of the family as any."[37] He also linked the practice of establishing easy contact with hearing people at home with a future need to interact with the hearing at a place of employment. After asking parents not to indulge their children too much upon their return for the summer, Cook argued that, "when he starts out to battle with the world he will not be prepared to meet his co-workers on the same equal ground that deaf people must if they are to succeed."[38] The paper, and the annual calendars that were printed after 1903, always featured pictorial representations of the manual alphabet to both help parents and to remind them to learn it. The MIDD, in this respect, was quite unique by the Edwardian period, as many oralist schools stressed that parents *speak* to their children to help keep up their oral skills.

Oralism and the MIDD/MSD, 1895-1920

Another tangible way in which the school "looked outward" and advocated for deaf communities was through the struggle against strict oralism. Both Principal McDermid and J.R. Cook, through the school newspaper and, in McDermid's case, interviews given in Winnipeg papers, continued to connect to a dwindling number of defenders of the combined method of education throughout North America. They reprinted anti-oralist arguments, defended in original editorials the use of sign language in church services, and openly chided schools that had been converted to oralism and forbade student contact with signing members of the deaf community.

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[37] *SE* 14, no. 17 (June 9, 1906), 2. LL, PAM.
[38] Ibid. By 'indulge,' Cook is referring to not keeping up their children's skills with the manual alphabet and written English. He would also be referring to continued speech practice if the child had residual hearing.

A review of *Silent Echo* during this period suggests that the MIDD was an active part of a North American and British community that printed and reprinted pro-sign stories and editorials.

Silent Echo's reprinting of anti-oralist arguments extended even to deaf communities in oralist Britain, where sign language instruction was rare and under siege from educational professionals and politicians. An 1895 reprint from the *British Deaf Mute* provides a representative example of cross-Atlantic republication.[39] The story relates the experiences of a deaf woman who was attempting to give evidence against a defendant to a judge, and was unable to make herself understood or to comprehend the judge's speech. The woman "had been educated at one of the Oral schools" and "great difficulty had been experienced in interpreting this woman's evidence."[40] The *BDM* suggested an ironic alternative to the woman's interpretive plight:

> Hitherto, the interpreting business has been monopolized by those who understood signs, and now the way to get even and make a show of broad and liberal views opens itself to the ultra-oralists. With an army of "familiars" to interpret information to the struggling lip-reader, flanked by another army whose duty it is to interpret the efforts at spoken language, conversation would flow smoothly and the "restored to society" millennium would at last have arrived.[41]

Oralism, in the writer's opinion, far from "restoring the deaf to society," further marginalized deaf people who were educated in, but not fully able to use, oral methods. The paper turns the emancipatory logic of oralist arguments on its head, suggesting that it did little else but *expand* the need for interpreters to bridge the linguistic gap between many deaf and hearing people. As Woll and Stone's work has shown, deaf defendants and prosecutors had usually been able to rely on interpretation from family members, co-workers, or teachers since the eighteenth-century, at

[39] The *British Deaf Mute* was the organ of the National Association of the Deaf and Dumb, a deaf organization that sought to rally deaf people against the recommendations of an 1889 Royal Commission that sought the implementation of the "pure oral" method in that country. This organization is now called the British Deaf Association.
[40] *SE* 3, no. 17 (April 1, 1895): 5. DHR, MSD.
[41] Ibid. "Familiars" refers to those who knew sign language.

least in London.[42] Decades of oralism appear to have, in this one case at least, severed the links between hearing and deaf individuals rather than brought them together. Resentment toward oralists for attempting to establish a new "monopoly" on interpretation that served to exclude non-lip reading or speaking deaf Britons is also palpable in this passage.

As described in Chapter Three, religious services were important sites of inclusion for deaf people, and sign interpretation, often by McDermid or his children, remained a part of chapel services where members of Winnipeg's deaf community worshipped. After the 1905 Convention of Educators for the Deaf, *Silent Echo* reprinted a scathing attack on oralist services from a leading American sign-singer named Mrs. Balis. On the paper's editorial page, McDermid or Cook wrote their own argument for why sign language should be afforded a place in deaf-hearing chapel services. After praising the possibility of a mixed service in which the Lord's Prayer, the Apostle's Creed, and other commonly repeated prayers could be spoken, McDermid/Cook argued that oralist services made sermons and Bible lessons impossible for deaf students and citizens to understand. "A chapel service without a lecture or a talk on a text is like a church service without a sermon," the editorial read. If a service was "made up entirely of responsive readings, recitations of prayers and songs, their object to instruct and teach would be gone and the congregation, if they did not cease attending altogether, would settle down into a lot of parrots following a leader."[43] The allusion to parrots in the editorial was a common trope employed by manualists and others opposed to oralism, as they argued that teaching students to speak and read lips reinforced an understanding of language as more tactile than abstract, and caused students to fail to develop an understanding of vocabulary and meaning.[44] This criticism was revived in the late 1970s and published by scholars like psychologist Harlan Lane and

[42] Woll and Stone, "Dumb O Jemmy."
[43] *SE* 14, no. 5 (December 1, 1905): 4. LL, PAM.
[44] Baynton, *Forbidden Signs*, 78.

neurologist Oliver Sacks in the 1980s, when the verbal and linguistic deficits of orally-educated deaf students became a focus of scientific study. Oral students, Sacks argued, suffered language delays that impeded both their oral development and acquisition of American Sign Language.[45]

Silent Echo also criticised North American schools that practiced a purely oral curriculum. In 1906, a short article about the "Deaf Mutes of Quebec" outlined the educational situation in Montreal. All three schools had begun to practice pure oralism by the late nineteenth-century, and actively forbade students from socializing with signing members of the city's adult deaf population. "After the first two years tuition in lip-reading the students are not allowed to use signs or to mix with others who use them," McDermid or Cook wrote, "and have to rely entirely on the Oral method for instruction, which we consider is not so satisfactory as the combined system."[46] The paper's mention of rules forbidding students from associating with others who used sign language is important, as it touches upon a key criticism of oralism that was commonly used by deaf Canadians and Americans: that oralism was an attempt to destroy distinct deaf communities. Oralism, as Baynton and others have argued, was a reform movement that sought to include signing people in the larger hearing community. This inclusion, however, also meant that deaf children had to sometimes be separated from local deaf communities so that they would not resort to sign language use, thereby holding back their oral development.[47] The MIDD/MSD in the early twentieth-century resisted this logic forcefully, both in *Silent Echo* and in practice, by both advocating for and *practicing* the social inclusion of deaf adults into the school environment. This is no trifling or unimportant point.

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[45] Oliver Sacks, *Seeing Voices: A Journey into the World of the Deaf.* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 110-111.
[46] *SE* 14, no. 16 (April 16, 1906): 2. LL, PAM.
[47] Edwards, *Words Made Flesh*, 193.

McDermid and Cook also traveled to the (usually) Triennial North American Congresses for the Education of the Deaf from 1893 to 1909 to advocate for the combined method. McDermid became a constant voice for moderation during these conferences, and continued to advocate in favour of a system that "gives the greatest good to the greatest number."[48] The 1898 Congress received the widest coverage in Manitoba papers, likely due to the inclusion of J.W. Sifton with the Manitoba party. Sifton was reported as speaking vaguely on "charitable institutions," while McDermid, speaking directly to a *Telegram* reporter upon his return, spoke more directly on the conflict between educators. Cook's attendance in 1898 and after was telling, as by then Congresses did not invite deaf teachers, and few attended. Even earlier, in *Silent Echo*, McDermid had lamented the splintering of the Congress into advocates of combined education, led by E.M. Gallaudet, and oralists, led by A.G. Bell.[49] In addition to coverage of McDermid and Cook's travels to conferences, the *Silent Echo* editorial board regularly went on annual "press excursions" with the Western Press Association, though McDermid rarely reported on the function and activities of these trips, beyond the sight-seeing in Ontario and Quebec, as well as the high quality golf links he found and frequented.[50]

The MIDD/MSD, under the Duncan and Howard McDermid tenures from 1890 to 1920, provides evidence for the continued support of combined education in a provincial school well into the oralist period, as well as further evidence for resistance to oralism from deaf communities and individuals themselves. While this does not serve to dismiss the oralist trend outlined by scholars since the 1980s, it does force us to reconsider the date and prevalence of the oralist triumph in late nineteenth-century North America. *Silent Echo*'s editorial page, reprints from other North American deaf community papers, and criticism of schools which adopted a

[48] "Deaf and Dumb", *Morning Telegram*, August 15, 1898, 6.
[49] "A Curious People." *SE* 3, no. 14 (February 15, 1894), 4. DHR, MSD.
[50] "Press Excursion," *SE* 12, no. 1 (October 1, 1903), 5. LL, PAM.

purely oralist curriculum show that allies of sign language use did exist in state schools as late as the First World War. While the combined method was not the same as manualism and the McDermids did support some oral instruction for students with residual hearing, separate streams for oral and sign students did not exist at the MSD until 1911, and pure oralism was not implemented at the school before its closure during the Second World War.[51]

Advocacy for Deaf Children in Alberta and Saskatchewan

The lack of organized education for deaf children in Alberta and Saskatchewan continued to be an ongoing concern for *Silent Echo* and in McDermid's Annual Reports. As we have seen in Chapter Three, he had kept up a correspondence with the provincial government to admit students from the pre-1905 Northwest Territories, but was largely unsuccessful due to accommodation problems and the unwillingness of the Canadian government to help the Territories pay for student accommodation in Winnipeg.

An offer for an arrangement between Manitoba, the Northwest Territories, and the Canadian Government had been rejected by the federal Department of the Interior in September 1897. Deputy Minister of the Interior James Smart had informed Haultain's and Greenway's governments that fiscal responsibility was to rest with the NWT alone, and should be arranged out of its budgetary allotment from the Canadian Government.[52] Two years later, Duncan McDermid wrote to J.W. Sifton, the Inspector of Public Institutions, to remind Public Works Minister Robert Watson to negotiate a solution with Clifford Sifton in Ottawa. By 1899, the federal government had suggested that Manitoba and Canada work on a solution to co-fund NWT students, but by McDermid's tone in his letter it seems apparent that the Manitoba

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[51] Carbin, *Deaf Heritage*, 142.
[52] "James Smart to John W. Sifton, Inspector of Institutions," September 14, 1897. Letter. Ministry of Public Works Correspondence Files, PAM. GS 0123 GR 1607.

government was not enthusiastic to take up financial responsibility for students in the heavily-indebted NWT. “Mr. Sifton asked me to keep the question before Mr. Watson until something is done,” McDermid wrote, likely trying to use J.W.’s fatherly links to Clifford to put more fulsome pressure on Watson to negotiate in good faith. “It is altogether likely that an offer has been made and my reminder is unnecessary,” McDermid continued, “I sincerely hope so.”[53] An offer had not been made. A complete solution would not be found for the problem of uneducated deaf children in Alberta and Saskatchewan for decades to come.

Silent Echo continued to publish editorials on the issue, but McDermid began to focus more of his advocacy efforts in his Annual Reports in the new century. In 1909, he dedicated an entire section to the issue, which was excerpted in the school’s paper. In this piece, he contrasted Manitoba’s commitment with Alberta and Saskatchewan’s. First, he wrote in sweeping terms about Manitoba’s fairly unique efforts, in the Canadian context:

> There is perhaps no province in Canada, considering its population and financial standing, that has done more for its afflicted classes than the Province of Manitoba. With the exception of Ontario it has assumed responsibilities far in advance of all other provinces, and is showing a generosity in support of its public institutions that should be regarded with pride by every citizen of our country… Manitoba has absorbed that spirit of sympathy, and has shown it in a most practical way in providing as far as possible for its afflicted people.[54]

While McDermid was perhaps glossing over his own past struggles to ensure a stable and accommodating school in the 1890s, his pride in Manitoba’s achievements is palpable. His allusions to the province’s willingness to accept the fiscal responsibility for deaf education reflects less a *right* to education than a public *responsibility*, which was the way in which he framed the issue in most of his Annual Reports. Alberta and Saskatchewan, he argued after his treatment of Manitoba’s record, had begun to take the issue seriously since they gained

[53] “Duncan McDermid to J.W. Sifton,” February 20, 1899. Ministry of Public Works Correspondence Files, PAM. GS 0123 GR 1607.
[54] *SE* 17, no. 9 (February 15, 1909), 3.

provincial status in 1905. An ad hoc arrangement had been recently made to send students from these provinces, though no effort was made to ensure that *all* deaf students in the former NWT would come to Manitoba. "While I speak in commendation of what has been accomplished…" McDermid continued, "We must admit that the problem…has not been entirely solved."[55]

Applications for admission to the MSD from the period after 1909 suggest that problems remained with Alberta's and Saskatchewan's systems of financial support for students to be sent to Winnipeg. Ivy Binner of Okotoks, Alberta, a recent British immigrant, was admitted to the school a full year after her 1916 application. Binner's mother and stepfather were fairly lucky, as Ivy attended the school from the ages of ten to eighteen.[56] Anna Palmer's experience, as a seventeen-year-old student admitted in 1916, was a more representative story for those growing up deaf in the former NWT. Her application, filled out by her mother in Delburne, Alberta, suggests that she had no formal schooling, though she was at such an advanced age and had been born deaf.[57] Most children from Alberta and Saskatchewan, as well as the earlier NWT, entered school at later ages and seem more likely to have foster parents fill out application forms for them. Potential students from Alberta and Saskatchewan were also more likely to not gain admission, though from applications alone it is difficult to suggest why. The unwillingness of Regina and Edmonton to pay transportation and tuition costs for all students was likely a factor, as was the higher average age for applicants from Alberta and Saskatchewan.

McDermid's 1909 Annual Report, his final one before his death that year, is important because he widened the scope of his advocacy to include blind and intellectually disabled children. "It is perhaps not within the scope of a report on the affairs of this school to refer to a matter of this character," he wrote, "but I am confident that my interest in a subject so closely

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[55] Ibid.
[56] "Ivy Gladys Binner, Application for Admission, 1916." Application Record Book, A0061, GR 1635. PAM.
[57] "Anna M. Palmer, Application for Admission, 1916." Application Record Book, A0061, GR 1635. PAM.

associated with my own work, and the advantage I possess in being familiar with such conditions will be sufficient justification for the recommendations I make." His recommendation was that "all classes of defectives in the Great West" be supported by provincial educational institutions.[58] Manitoba lacked a school for the blind until the Norris Government established one in 1916, and decided to send some blind students to the Ontario School for the Blind before then. Yet in 1909, McDermid was actively seeking to extend the kind of educational support that the province had committed to deaf students to blind and intellectually disabled students. By the time of his 1909 death from heart and kidney failure, McDermid was still using his positions as Principal, President of the Manitoba Club, and co-editor of *Silent Echo* to advocate for the provincial responsibility to educate those who fell outside of mainstream schooling.

Saskatchewan would not establish a provincial deaf school until 1916, and it would close the following year. It was not until 1928 that the Saskatchewan government would appropriate the funds to build the R.J.D. Williams Provincial School for the Deaf in Saskatoon. A copy of the "McDermid Memorial Booklet" was deposited in the new building's cornerstone in 1930 as a gesture toward McDermid's advocacy for deaf education in the Northwest for so many decades. Uniquely, R.J.D. Williams would begin as a combined method school with several deaf teachers, and the school was named after a former Boys' Supervisor of the MSD, who served as the residential supervisor at his namesake school until 1961. By the late 1930s, however, the school's combined mandate had, as Carbin describes it, "deteriorated."[59] From 1951 until a student walk-out in 1973, the school was entirely oralist. Alberta, after 1905, regularly sent deaf students to Winnipeg, Belleville, or Halifax to be educated. Yet parents and private charities had

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[58] *SE* 17, no. 9 (February 15, 1909), 3. LL, PAM. His use of the word "defectives" here, while jarring, will perhaps serve to remind the reader again that paternalistic language was uniform among both supporters and detractors of deaf education, and even both manualists and oralists. See Baynton, *Forbidden Signs*, 149-150.

[59] Carbin, *Deaf Heritage*, 167.

to bear the burden of transportation and tuition costs, as funds were not allocated by the Alberta Legislature for this purpose until 1924. The province lacked a provincial residential deaf school until 1955. The Alberta School for the Deaf, situated in Edmonton, was strictly oralist from its inception, and forbade sign language even in its dormitories until the 1970s.[60]

Epilogue: The Manitoba School for the Deaf, 1909-1920

Upon Duncan McDermid's death, his son Howard closed his young medical practice and became the MIDD's principal. Under Howard, the school's name changed in 1912, a distinct stream of oral classes was established in 1913, and the Portage and Sherbrooke location was abandoned for a larger series of buildings at Manitoba College in 1914. The school maintained a combined curriculum, but the ratio of oral to manual students steadily climbed until Howard's death in 1920, as the funneling of students into the oralist stream by administrators became more of a priority. The Manitoba School for the Deaf had begun to fall under joint Department of Education and Public Works control in 1912, and the influence of the DOE likely accounts for the slowly increasing emphasis on placing more and more students in an articulation and oral stream by 1920.

Howard McDermid's successful push to rename the school represented a culmination of his father's efforts to have the public see the institution as a *school* and not an asylum or an institute. As was apparent in McDermid's 1893 *Silent Echo* editorial that is quoted at the start of this study's introduction, late nineteenth-century deaf educators began to strive to have state and provincial schools fall under public support because they would no longer have to use completely paternalistic rhetoric and insist that deaf education was "miraculous" or more difficult than the education of hearing children. The movement to use the term "school" for

[60] Roots, "Deaf Education and Advocacy," 77-82.

institutions formerly called “asylums” and “institutes” came from deaf communities and their allies, and reflected a desire for deaf educational institutions to be seen as simply a different type of school, rather than an ameliorative or “benevolent” institution. This movement was also reflective of a desire for the deaf community across the continent to become a more socially accepted, rather than an especially problematic, group. While changes in names, which began to occur in the early twentieth-century in North America, hardly erased paternalistic attitudes toward deaf students, they did reflect an increasing normalization of the concept of state-sponsored deaf education.

A large new building was constructed in Tuxedo Park for the 1922 school year. This new building finally solved the accommodation problem that had plagued the school since 1889, despite McDermid’s efforts and the province’s ad hoc solutions. In the MSD’s 1922 Annual Report, the idea that deaf education was much like education for hearing children was put forward forcefully by the school’s interim Principal Henry Gordon Lilley, whose words are worth quoting at length:

> The Institution…is not an asylum. The public do not need protection from the deaf and it is not required for the deaf to be in a place of refuge… [it is not] a home. It is only for children… [it is not] a hospital. The children do not come for treatment…The object of this institution is not to restore the hearing of the child by any medical course… [it is not] a reformatory. Children are not sent for correction… [it is not] a charitable institution… IT IS simply a School and the Pupils are sent for INSTRUCTION…the children should never be thought of as “inmates,” “patients,” or anything else other than pupils or students.”[61]

While Lilley’s writing is a culmination of the McDermids’s efforts to have the public see the school like any other, subject to the same levels of public support as was the education of hearing children, his emphasis on certain phrases is striking. He was clearly trying to put old attitudes about the MIDD/MSD to rest by proposing a unity of language with which Manitobans could

[61] Manitoba School for the Deaf Report and Calendar. Quoted in Carbin, *Deaf Heritage*, 145. Emphasis in original Report.

refer to the school and its students. But the forcefulness of his rhetoric likely indicates that the public and press was not moving at a pace to his liking toward this type of unified, educational language.[62]

Conclusion

In the early twentieth-century the MIDD, assured of public funding and a baseline level of financial and institutional support, began to advocate for causes important to deaf people outside of the school's confines. Through *Silent Echo*, Annual Reports, and government correspondence, Duncan McDermid, J.R. Cook, and subsequent principals advocated for employment opportunities for Winnipeg and Brandon's deaf community, the survival of sign language within and without the school, the establishment and nurturing of links between students and members of Winnipeg's deaf community, and the responsibility for the NWT to provide educational institutions for their deaf citizens.

By the time of Duncan Wendell McDermid's death, the school had successfully advocated for the resolution of deaf employment issues for male graduates and the few female graduates who returned as teachers or matrons. The school, and its deaf and hearing employees, also successfully resisted the onslaught of oralism – and were aided by the lack of interest shown by the Department of Public Works in the methods debate. Yet this resistance would eventually bear less and less fruit. By 1920, more students were being educated orally, though a substantial number were still educated through sign language and the manual alphabet. Efforts to publicise the uneducated status of people with hearing impairments from Alberta and Saskatchewan were far less successful, as we have seen.

[62] Even Duncan McDermid, in his 1909 Annual Report, used language that is implicitly condemned by Lilley, though the content of his arguments – that deaf people are socially disabled as much as physically disabled – is similar.

The MSD was closed in 1940 to facilitate the founding of a radio operator school in 1940, and remained closed, despite the protests of deaf Manitobans, until its reopening as an oralist school in 1965. During the twenty-five years of its closure, deaf students in Winnipeg went to oralist day schools in the city, a development that provided momentum for both the MSD's oralism that lasted until the 1970s as well as the concerted protests of students and deaf Manitobans who wanted a return to combined education. While this study has presented a qualified success story in terms of school support for the deaf community's key issues until 1909, it does not claim that this success was completely carried forward beyond that date. Oralism did eventually come to Manitoba, against the organized wishes of its deaf community, and caused real damage to at least two generations of Manitoba students. The larger continental movement of Deaf activists against oralism, and to turn residential deaf schools into sites of cultural formation once again, culminated in protests during the 1970s and 80s across North America and especially on the campus of Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C. Only in 2010 did the International Congress for the Education of the Deaf fully apologise for the policy of oralism, and finally renounce it.[63] Strict oralism had a relatively brief stay in Manitoba, but in other North American locales, it damaged the language and cultural acquisition of deaf people for up to one hundred years.

[63] The full text of this statement, as well as the Milan 1880 statement, is available at (http://deafwellbeing.vch.ca/media/2010-07%20ICED%20Resolution%20-%20A%20New%20Era%20document.pdf). Assessed February 3, 2016.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

One of the primary reasons that the MIDD/MSD was able to resist oralism for so long, advocate for employment opportunities in the deaf community, and ensure the survival of deaf education in Manitoba until 1940 was that its staff and students used publicity to their advantage. Habermas argued that the emerging public sphere was a process through which more and more people were able to advocate for the inclusion of their reasoned speech. Not all marginalized groups were able to take advantage of this process which began with the explosion of print culture and voluntary associations in the early-to-mid nineteenth century in Canada, as some were defined as outside of the bounds of capability to engage in reasoned, public speech.[1] The emergence of deaf education in Manitoba does, however, represent such a process, though initially deaf students were seen as unfortunate children in need of rescue. Through the rest of the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth century, the MIDD was able to directly publicise the issues confronting deaf Manitobans of all ages, and often from the perspective of deaf individuals and the deaf community.

This publicity that originally emanated in proxy form from mainstream newspapers, and eventually from deaf and hearing individuals within the school, stands in marked contrast to the lack of publicity for deaf issues in the Northwest Territories and subsequently Alberta and Saskatchewan. Through Annual Reports, school publications, and at charitable events for other reform causes, deaf Manitobans and their hearing allies were increasingly able to make themselves both visible and heard as bearers of reasoned, political dialogue. McDermid's writing and interviews in mainstream papers also increased the school's profile and allowed hearing Manitobans an opportunity to become familiar with at least the existence of deaf individuals as a coalescing community. Citizens of the Northwest Territories rarely had this opportunity, and

[1] McNairn, *The Capacity to Judge*, 226.

were often confronted in print with stories of deaf people as the “butt of the joke,” isolated individuals, and victims of terrible accidents brought on by disability. While deaf Manitobans had a limited opportunity to argue that they were disabled only as far as the larger hearing community failed to accommodate them, deaf Northwesterners lacked this opportunity, insofar as they remained in the Territories. The failure of the Northwest Territories to establish education for people with hearing impairments is partially explained by the precarious fiscal situation of the Territories, but more directly by the lack of publicity that could have created the kind of public will that led to the education of deaf Manitobans. This failure of the Northwest Territories and the Canadian Government deserves much more concerted study.

There were profound limitations on the deaf publicity that the MIDD could generate and thrust into the public sphere. The school used a variety of resources to do this, but the most forceful and best articulated advocacy was contained in *Silent Echo*, which had a limited reach to the Manitoba public. Yet *Silent Echo* could reach other deaf communities and schools throughout North America, and did, through the well-established network of deaf school papers of which it was a part. There were also instances of mainstream papers, especially the *Free Press*, reprinting articles from *Silent Echo* or taking up concerns first formulated there. Annual Reports were constructed for a bureaucratic audience more than for public consumption, though by the early twentieth century the MIDD was packaging Annual Report/Annual Calendar packages that were available for direct public consumption, though most often mailed to parents of MIDD students. Advocacy with the greatest reach could be found in mainstream newspapers. Before the last few years of the nineteenth century, this advocacy was directed toward the health of the school itself, but in the early twentieth century it began to concern issues important to Manitoba’s deaf community. Mainstream newspapers, however, mostly printed interviews with McDermid, as

opposed to publishing material produced by the school's deaf employees or members of the province's deaf community.

A key limitation on deaf publicity was the existence of longstanding doubts about the abilities of deaf employees and students – a limitation that was linked to a legacy of legal discrimination against deaf people that can be found in English Common Law. While the law banning prelingually deaf individuals from owning and inheriting property had changed even between the publications of Michael Dalton and William Blackstone and was not practiced by the late nineteenth century in Canada or Britain, it left a legacy of doubt about the capabilities of deaf people and the dangers of allowing them to undertake some streams of employment among some hearing Canadians.[2] These types of attitudes were slowly eroded in Winnipeg and Brandon, if not in Manitoba as a whole, by the MIDD's publicity and advocacy efforts, but remained visible in the type of newspaper coverage afforded deaf people in the former Northwest Territories. Even in Manitoba, Lilley's 1922 Annual Report shows us that these attitudes were still being confronted, and the MSD's staff and students were clearly losing their patience with them.

This study has described a move toward a *rights* paradigm in Manitoba, at least with regard to deaf education, if not education for blind children. McDermid and Cook certainly approximated rights language at times, but most public rhetoric about deaf children in the province remained focussed on the responsibility of the state to educate them. The notion that deaf children had a *right* to be educated in the language of their choice (or their parents' choice) was a late twentieth-century achievement, won by years of struggle by deaf students and parents against a paternalistic educational system that had eliminated sign language from the classrooms

[2] Blackstone, in the first volume of his *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (1765), argued that only deaf-blind persons were to be barred from land ownership, in contrast to Dalton's treatise from a century and a half before.

and dormitories of the MSD by the mid-1960s. Deaf community members did not have complete control over aspects of the education offered to the deaf community even during the age before oralism, and as Phyllis Valentine has argued, "benevolent paternalism" was always an aspect of how deaf people were treated, even by their allies.[3]

McDermid and Cook also suggested in much of their advocacy that deafness was a *social* disability rather than a biological one. Modern practitioners of Disability History need to be more cautious when identifying this constructivist critique in the past, however, as some literary theorists have not been. I have stated that McDermid and Cook's writings *suggest* this interpretation, because their words can be understood within a constructivist framework. McDermid, at times, used regressive language and "saviour" rhetoric right up until the end of his career. Cook, as a deaf man, was probably more likely to use the language of social disability than McDermid, but without a clear way to determine the authorship of editorials, this is tough to prove. The issue of culturally-embedded disability does help to establish the authorship of varying editorials, however, as McDermid often wrote as a professional educator and advocated for improvements in hearing condescension to deaf individuals. Editorials that emphasised the efforts of deaf community members and individuals were more likely Cook's, as these types of editorials became more numerous after McDermid began to step back from certain duties due to health difficulties in the years before his death.

Deaf education was originally established in Manitoba because it addressed the problem of education and opportunity for deaf children in the province, and also because it fit the Greenway government's emphasis on both provincial rights and the development of provincial institutions. Once the vast majority of Manitoba's children with hearing impairments had access

[3] Phyllis Valentine, "Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet: Benevolent Paternalism and the Origins of the American Asylum." In *Deaf History Unveiled: Interpretations From the New Scholarship.* Edited by John Vickrey Van Cleve. (Washington, D.C., Gallaudet University Press, 1993), 53-73.

to education, the school's function was to address larger problems that faced the adult deaf community – rising but still grim employment prospects, the preservation of sign language, and the ability to advocate for itself in the public sphere. Hearing Manitobans, represented by their elected MPPs, were overwhelmingly supportive of the establishment and support of the school. Parents of deaf children and members of communities with deaf children began the process of "summoning the state" in the summer of 1888, as part of a similar process of creating "benevolent institutions" that relieved the family of some of the pressure of dealing with populations who needed different types of support than those who met the emerging standard of "normality." Manitobans looked to the south and the east and saw provinces and states that had established and supported asylums for "feeble-minded children," "incurables," "deaf mutes," the "insane," and others – and demanded the establishment of these types of institutions in their own province. Once the school was secure in its funding and mandate, which took about ten years under Watson and McDermid, it began to expand the school's mandate beyond these earlier wishes of rural and urban citizens. The right to education had been established for deaf Manitobans, but McDermid, and increasingly J.R. Cook, became important leaders in the push for the extra-educational concerns of Winnipeg and Brandon's deaf communities.

When Manitoba's Liberal government fell in 1899 to Hugh John Macdonald and (subsequently) Rodmond Roblin's Conservatives, little changed for the school. It continued to operate under the Ministry of Public Works, continued to offer combined-method instruction, and the Conservatives continued and completed the Liberal plans for the school's expansion by 1901. The MIDD had become greater than the Liberal politics that had allowed for its adoption and improvement. Incoming Minister of Public Works Robert Rogers took a level of interest in the school that was equal to that of J.W. Sifton during the later Greenway years and likely

greater than Robert Watson's before him. Rogers, as Public Works Minister, did create an expansive political patronage network that allowed Roblin to serve as Premier for 15 years but did eventually destroy his government in 1915.[4] The MIDD/MSD was likely part of this network, as the province took out numerous contracts with companies to provide the school with foodstuffs, heating, lighting, and other amenities. The central point is, though, that the MIDD during the period under study had transcended the types of spoils politics that had led to Superintendent turnover and the implementation of oralism at most Canadian and American schools by 1909.

The Manitoba Institute for the Deaf and Dumb offers historians and social theorists a unique example of the expansion of the public sphere in Western Canada during the period from 1884-1909. Deaf citizens were increasingly able to partake in reasoned political speech and advocate for their own political, economic, and linguistic rights, and in an era before the Canadian Association for the Deaf, these efforts were largely conducted within or through the MIDD and its publications. Manitoba offers a local counter-narrative to the spread of oralism and the loss of deaf political agency that has been theorized by scholars of deaf education and Deaf Cultural emergence in the past twenty years. The telegraphic reach of *Silent Echo* also allows researchers to illuminate the network of deaf school and community papers throughout the United States, Canada, and Britain that resisted oralism and called for the opinions of deaf people to be heard in governmental deliberations about its adoption. In this way, Manitoba's *uniqueness* does not signify *irrelevance* in the larger trans-national story of the decline of deaf control of and participation in hearing-impaired education in the period from 1880 the 1970s.

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[4] James Blanchard, "Rodmond P. Roblin, 1900-1915." In *Manitoba Premiers of the 19th and 20th Centuries*, Barry Ferguson and Robert Wardhaugh, eds. (Regina, CPRC Press, 2010), 118-138

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