

## Egerton Ryerson and the Mississauga, 1826 to 1856, an Appeal for Further Study

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Article abstract

*The topic of Egerton Ryerson's relationship with the First Nations is complex, a very large story. The key question returns again and again, what kind of relationship did the founder of Ontario's school system have with the Indigenous Peoples? The focus of this article is on the First Nations group he knew best, the Mississauga, in particular the Credit Mississauga, the Ojibwe-speaking Anishinaabeg at the western end of Lake Ontario. As Ryerson is such a central figure in Ontario history, and even has a major university in the province named after him, I hope that young scholars, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, will advance this discussion in future work.*

# Egerton Ryerson and the Mississauga, 1826 to 1856, an Appeal for Further Study

by Donald B. Smith



## Introduction

The topic of Egerton Ryerson's relationship with the First Nations is complex; a very large story. The key question returns again and again, what kind of relationship did the founder of Ontario's school system have with the Indigenous Peoples? This article focuses on the First Nations group he knew best, the Mississauga, in particular the Credit Mississauga, the Ojibwe-speaking Anishinaabeg at the western end of Lake Ontario.<sup>1</sup> In the midst of a pandemic this contribution to *Ontario History* presents the author's viewpoint that Egerton Ryerson was not a monster; but rather, in the 1820s to the 1830s, a strong non-

Indigenous friend of the Anishinaabeg on the north shore of Lake Ontario. His only contribution on residential schools presently known to me is a lengthy letter or report he wrote for the Indian Department in 1847. After this brief intervention he apparently offered no further significant commentary on Indigenous schooling.

At the time of writing (June-early July 2021) the statue of Ryerson at his namesake university in Toronto has been toppled and beheaded, and discussions have begun for the removal of his name from this and other institutions. This essay is a plea for a full in-depth scholarly study. We know the interpretation of historical

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<sup>1</sup> "Anishinaabe" is the singular noun, meaning "person," and "Anishinaabeg," the plural form, "people." As Canadian historian Heidi Bohaker explains in her new book, *Doodem and Council Fire. Anishinaabe Governance through Alliance* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2021), footnote 5, p. xiv: "Anishinaabe people speak Anishinaabemowin. 'Anishinaabe' can be translated as 'original men' or 'original people.'" [Today in English usage the word "Anishinaabeg" is also written "Anishinabeg"; and "Anishinaabe", "Anishinabe."].

## *Abstract*

*The topic of Egerton Ryerson's relationship with the First Nations is complex, a very large story. The key question returns again and again, what kind of relationship did the founder of Ontario's school system have with the Indigenous Peoples? The focus of this article is on the First Nations group he knew best, the Mississauga, in particular the Credit Mississauga, the Ojibwe-speaking Anishinaabeg at the western end of Lake Ontario. As Ryerson is such a central figure in Ontario history, and even has a major university in the province named after him, I hope that young scholars, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, will advance this discussion in future work.*

*Résumé: Le sujet de la relation d'Egerton Ryerson avec les Premières Nations est complexe, une très grande histoire. La question clé revient encore et encore, quel genre de relation le fondateur du système scolaire de l'Ontario avait-il avec les peuples autochtones? Cet article porte sur le groupe des Premières nations qu'il connaissait le mieux, les Mississauga, en particulier les Credit Mississauga, les Anishinaabeg de langue ojibwe à l'extrémité ouest du lac Ontario. Comme Ryerson est une figure centrale de l'histoire de l'Ontario et qu'une grande université de la province porte même son nom, j'espère que les jeunes universitaires, tant autochtones que non autochtones, feront avancer cette discussion dans leurs travaux futurs.*

events can be multiple and conflicting and that no historical interpretation can be final in any respect. My hope is that young scholars, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, will advance this important discussion in future work. The basic background for this review article comes from my 1987 *Sacred Feathers. The Reverend Peter Jones (Kahkewaquonaby) and the Mississauga Indians* (University of Toronto Press). The listing of key sources on Ryerson and the Mississauga, with mention of some digital and other sources, concludes the essay. The topic awaits new eyes. History is continually being reinterpreted, conditioned by the assumptions of the time the place in which it is written.

**I**n the early 1820s. Egerton Ryerson (1803-1882) belonged to the small group of Methodist (today the Unit-

ed Church of Canada) ministers who stepped forward to support an Indigenous community in crisis. In one generation the Credit Mississauga hunters and fishers had lost sixty percent of their population, their numbers had declined from approximately 500 to barely 200 in the mid-1820s. Highly contagious smallpox and measles epidemics had devastated their community, as did the battles fought over their territory by Britain and the United States in the War of 1812. After the War, settlers continued to invade their hunting territories, encroach upon their fisheries, and cut timber on their forested reserve land. The settler population seemed both ignorant and indifferent to the welfare of the Indigenous peoples.

The twenty-three-year-old Egerton Ryerson set out in 1826/27 to serve the already converted Mississauga to "grow

in their newly acquired Christian faith.”<sup>2</sup> First he began to learn basic Ojibwe (Anishinaabemowin). He liked languages and later immersed himself in the study of French and learned to read and converse freely in it. German came next.<sup>3</sup> In the early 1840s he studied Hebrew in his spare time.<sup>4</sup> As a young man and the first Methodist resident minister to the Mississauga (Ojibwe, or Anishinaabeg) he succeeded in acquiring a feel for Anishinaabemowin and its sounds. As modern ethnologists acknowledge, in order to understand a culture—its beliefs, perceptions, and institutions—a thorough knowledge of its language is vital. Of great interest to Egerton, a lover of the outdoors, Anishinaabemowin has a particularly rich vocabulary for describing nature. The rivers and the forests were living just like persons. For example, one could not say “tree,” without including internal and external vowel shifts specifying which kind of tree, alone or grouped, and whether it grew on a hill or was coming into leaf.<sup>5</sup> He also discovered cultural

differences between English and Anishinaabemowin. For example, no word existed in Ojibwe for good-bye which the Anishinaabeg judged as too final and preferred instead to say something like “I’ll return your visit.”<sup>6</sup> The future Mississauga chief, Kahkewaquonaby (Sacred Feathers), known in English as Peter Jones, became Egerton’s interpreter. The two men, approximately the same age, became fast friends. Years later Ryerson described his Indigenous friend as “a man of athletic frame as well as of masculine intellect;—a man of clear perceptions, good judgement, great decision of character.”<sup>7</sup>

Kahkewaquonaby had already proved himself as a strong representative of Indigenous resistance and agency. The opinion of the non-Indigenous population about the First Nations’ future was clear. They had none. Settler Robert Gourlay, for instance, in his second volume of his *Statistical Account of the Upper Canada* (1822) wrote that the North American Indians within the colony “will soon be extinct.”<sup>8</sup> Kahkewaquonaby refused to accept this

<sup>2</sup> Darin Wybenga, “A Missionary at the Credit River,” in *Historical Tidbits Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation* (Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation: Paramount Printers, 2019), 2.

<sup>3</sup> C.B. Sissons, “Introduction,” *My Dearest Sophie. Letters from Egerton Ryerson to his daughter*, ed. C.B. Sissons (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1955), xiv.

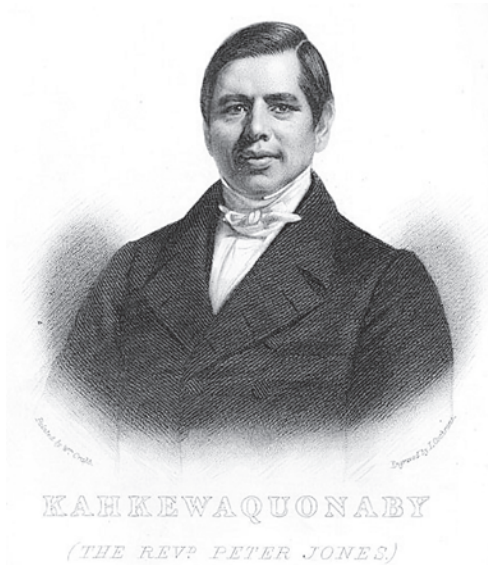
<sup>4</sup> R.D. Gidney, “Egerton Ryerson,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 11: 1881-1890 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), 785.

<sup>5</sup> The original citation is from: Paulette Jiles, “Reverend Wilson and the Ojibway Grammar,” *This Magazine* 10, no. 1 (February-March 1976), 15; cited in Donald B. Smith, *Sacred Feathers. The Reverend Peter Jones (Kahkewaquonaby) and the Mississauga Indians* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 42, see also 143.

<sup>6</sup> “Character and Customs of Indian Tribes, Muncey Town, 11 March 1842, *Christian Guardian*, 15 June 1842.

<sup>7</sup> Egerton Ryerson, “Brief Sketch of the Life, Death, and Character of the Late Rev. Peter Jones,” *Christian Guardian*, 23 July 1856.

<sup>8</sup> Robert Gourlay, *Robert Gourlay Statistical Account of Upper Canada. Abridged and with an Introduction by S.R. Mealing* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974), 310. The quote appears in the second volume of the original publication on page 390.



verdict as he later explained, “I cannot suppose for a moment that the Supreme Disposer has decreed that the doom of the red man is to fall and gradually disappear, like the mighty wilderness, before the axe of the European settler.”<sup>9</sup> The Mississauga leader wanted a full and equal partnership between the settlers and the Anishinaabeg, including full civil rights, as well as secure ownership of the First Nations’ remaining land base.<sup>10</sup> They must remain self-ruling, with their treaty rights respected. The reserves must remain intact and not broken up which would force the First Nations to live among the settlers. These aspirations he voiced in councils, letters to Methodist publications, and talks throughout

the province. As Anishinaabe scholar Niigonwedom James Sinclair observed, Kahkewaquonaby was one of the “bravest advocates for Anishinaabeg community who have ever lived. He deserves a place amongst our greatest narrative voices.”<sup>11</sup>

The bilingual Jones, then a Methodist church worker among his people and later an ordained Methodist minister, taught Ryerson many of the common teachings between the two faiths, Indigenous and Christian. Son of a prominent surveyor of Welsh American ancestry and a Mississauga mother Peter Jones had an Anishinaabeg upbringing to age fourteen followed by seven years with his father at his farm. At the age of twenty-one in 1823 he converted to Methodism. From Ryerson he learned about the settlers’ politics. The young British Canadian church worker had just become famous in the Methodists’ ranks for his attack on the Church of England’s assertion that they constituted the official church in Upper Canada. In turn, the Euro-Canadian learned from the Mississauga about the Anishinaabeg’s system of governance, on a consensus-basis, at regular formal councils. Kahkewaquonaby wrote of Egerton some years later, that he was friend “in whom I had the greatest confidence.”<sup>12</sup>

Ryerson’s nearly year-long residence

<sup>9</sup> Peter Jones, *History of the Ojebway Indians* (London: A.W. Bennett, 1861), 29.

<sup>10</sup> Smith, *Sacred Feathers*, 239.

<sup>11</sup> Niigonwedom James Sinclair, “Nindoodemag Bagijiganan: A History of Anishinaabeg Narrative” (Ph. D thesis, The University of British Columbia, 2013), 190.

<sup>12</sup> Peter Jones to Eliza Field, Credit Mission, 10 April 1833, Letter Book, Peter Jones Collection, Victoria University Library; cited in *Sacred Feathers*, 179. Six months later Eliza Field of London, England married Peter Jones, see chapter 9 “Eliza” in *Sacred Feathers*, 130-49.

with the Credit Mississauga in 1826-1827 influenced his views of the Indigenous Peoples. He believed the First Nations could become equal with the settlers. Nevertheless, it did not dislodge his fundamental belief, one shared by nearly all Euro-Canadians of his day, that the Indigenous Peoples would eventually enter the mainline Euro-Canadian world. The predominant society regarded European civilization and the Christian religion as superior to Indigenous culture. They failed to understand the dilemma the Mississauga faced when they accepted certain aspects of another culture but at the same time wished to retain their own.<sup>13</sup> *The Methodist Magazine* in New York City published a fascinating letter from Ryerson, dated at the Credit Mission, 18 April 1827:

I arrived at my station the 16<sup>th</sup> of Sept. 1826, when I commenced my labours among this new made people. I was at that time a perfect stranger to Indians, and but little acquainted with their customs; but the affectionate manner in which they received me, and the joy they appeared to feel on the occasion, removed all the strangeness of national feeling, and enabled me to embrace them as brethren, and love them as mine own people.<sup>14</sup>

Indigenous converts from the Credit such as Kahkewaquonaby had already effectively spread word about Christian-

ity to inland Anishinaabeg communities. As Methodist evangelists they had great advantages. The fact that their first language was Ojibwe or Anishinaabemowin meant they could make the new faith comprehensible. Moreover, the self-sufficient individuals could live off the land as they followed familiar routes in the interior. These young Mississauga teachers, interpreters, and local preachers, integrated Christian beliefs into an Ojibwe (Anishinaabeg) understanding of the world. Indigenous parents supported and encouraged their children to attend the Methodists' bilingual schools to acquire the competence and self-assurance to deal in English with the newcomers. Change came about in the Mississauga community due to their own initiatives and under their own leaders.

Ryerson, the first Methodist church worker to live with the Credit Mississauga, joined them in their fight to secure a title deed to their reserve at the mouth of the Credit River, twenty kilometres west of York (as Toronto was known until 1834). Ryerson helped to protect their remaining land base.<sup>15</sup> He supported their transition to Euro-Canadian farming, by helping them build a model agricultural village. He worked to secure from the Upper Canadian legisla-

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<sup>13</sup> Basil Johnston, "Indians, Métis and Eskimos," in *Read Canadian: A Book about Canadian Books*, eds. Robert Fulford, David Godfrey and Abraham Rotstein (Toronto: James Lewis & Samuel, 1972), 169.

<sup>14</sup> *The Methodist Magazine* in New York City published this interesting letter [volume 10 (1827), 313-15], dated the Credit Mission, 18 April 1827.

<sup>15</sup> Egerton Ryerson to Lord Glenelg, Kingston, 2 Oct. 1837, Credit Mission Letterbook, 1825-1842, 121-22. RG 10, vol. 1011, on microfilm reel T-1456. Library and Archives Canada, cited in Donald B. Smith, *Mississauga Portraits. Ojibwe Voices from Nineteenth-Century Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 22, endnote 123.

ture the Mississaugas' exclusive right to their salmon fishery.<sup>16</sup> He set up a school in which the children were taught in Ojibwe and English.<sup>17</sup> The Credit Mississauga admired their non-Indigenous friend, a farmer's son who joined them in the fields, and who ate and lived with them. As the majority of the Credit Mississauga had already accepted Christianity an initial barrier had been raised. Basil Hall, an English traveler, commented in July 1827 on the transformation of the community that only a few years earlier appeared doomed to a "total and speedy extinction." When he called at the Credit mission he discovered: "They had all neat houses, made use of beds, tables and chairs, and were perfectly clean in their persons... Most of the children, and a few of the older Indians, could read English; facts which we ascertained by visiting their school."<sup>18</sup> At a council fire in December 1826 the Credit Mississauga gave Egerton the Ojibwe name of a well-regarded recently deceased chief: "Chechock" or "Chechalk," who had belonged to the Eagle doodem. The name "Chechalk" meant, "Bird on the Wing." The designation referred, in Ryerson's case, to "his going about constantly among them."<sup>19</sup>

The Mississauga wanted to remain

a distinct people, retain their language, and continue to be self-governing. With a knowledge of English and a growing awareness in the late 1820s and 1830s of British law Mississauga leaders now advanced Indigenous Title claims to many sites in their traditional territory at the western end of Lake Ontario and on the northeastern shore of Lake Erie. Ryerson continued to be an important ally of the Mississauga for over a decade after he left the Credit Mission. While he edited the *Christian Guardian* the paper included a great deal of correspondence from missionaries and Indigenous converts. It also ran occasional editorials criticizing government policy on Indigenous affairs. During his 1836/1837 trip to England Egerton worked energetically to secure the Colonial Office's protection of the Anishinaabeg's remaining land base in Upper Canada.<sup>20</sup>

Ryerson assumed many church responsibilities after he left the Credit Mission in 1827. This young man of great energy in 1829 established and became the dominant editorial voice for the *Christian Guardian*, the Methodists' newspaper. In 1836 he founded the Upper Canada Academy in Cobourg, east of Toronto, and in 1841 became the first principal of the Academy's successor, Victoria College.

<sup>16</sup> Egerton Ryerson, *The Story of My Life*, ed. J. George Hodgins (Toronto: William Briggs, 1883), 66.

<sup>17</sup> Smith, *Mississauga Portraits*, 19.

<sup>18</sup> Basil Hall, *Travels in North America in the Years 1827 and 1828*, 3 vols. (Edinburgh: Printed for Cadell, 1829), 1:259.

<sup>19</sup> Ryerson, *The Story of My Life*, 66-67; on Chechalk see Bohaker, *Doodem*, 161, 164, 177.

<sup>20</sup> Hope Maclean, "The Hidden Agenda: Methodist Attitudes to the Ojibwa and the Development of Indian Schooling in Upper Canada, 1821-1860" (M.A. thesis, University of Toronto, Department of Educational Theory, 1978), 256, 124.

This good friend of the Credit people in 1829 provided employment off the reserve for two community members. Egerton appointed two Mississauga as apprentices at the *Christian Guardian*: John Sawyer, a son of Joseph Sawyer, the Head Chief; and William Wilson [or Willson], a gifted young scholar. In the mid-1830s Egerton acted as William Wilson's sponsor when he studied for a year at Upper Canada College in Toronto. Ryerson later paid for Wilson's tuition at the Upper Canada Academy. He also lent him books from his personal library. A 5 March 1838 letter by Wilson in the Ryerson Papers at the Victoria University in the University of Toronto Library indicates his gratitude.<sup>21</sup> In Cobourg, William headed his class. Tragedy struck shortly after he left the school when he caught smallpox and died.<sup>22</sup>

In 1836 Ryerson penned a two-page flyer for distribution during his British tour to promote government and private funding for the Methodist Upper Canada Academy. Its title indicates its intent, *Education in Canada: Institution for the Education for the Youth of Canada Generally, and the Most Promising Youth of the Recently Converted Indian Tribes, as Teachers to Their Aboriginal Countrymen: also to*

*Prepare Religious Young Men for Common School Masters, Throughout the Province.*<sup>23</sup>

Day schools would continue for boys and girls as before, children could remain with their families, but a door opened for higher education. From 1836 to 1842 approximately ten Indigenous children enrolled in the Methodist college.<sup>24</sup> In the mid-1840s, Head Chief Joseph Sawyer urged the replacement of the current day schoolteacher by "one whose acquirements would be such as to fit some of the Boys for the college at Cobourg,"<sup>25</sup>

The Methodist church leader did his best in the late 1830s to advance the studies of Henry Steinhauer or Shawahnekizhek an Ojibwe from the Lake Simcoe area; he proved to be an excellent student who occupied a prominent place in the spring 1838 closing exercises at the Methodist College. The young man read a Latin passage, "with ease, fluency and appropriate emphases;" and also gave an oration, "On the Diffusion of Knowledge and Religion."<sup>26</sup> Shawahnekizhek was under no illusions about the newcomers and, in fact, later wrote, "There is always a distrust on the part of a native to the foreigner, from the fact that the native had been so long down-trodden by the white

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<sup>21</sup> The Ryerson private papers, over 2,000 letters received or written by Ryerson during over than half a century of Christianity ministry and public life, are indispensable for any study of the founder of Ontario's public school system. See: C.B. Sissons, *Nil alienum. The Memoirs of C.B. Sissons* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964), 240-48.

<sup>22</sup> Jones, *History of the Ojebway*, 191.

<sup>23</sup> Published in Leeds, England, by Rachel Inchbold.

<sup>24</sup> C.B. Sissons, *A History of Victoria University* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1952), 33.

<sup>25</sup> T.G. Anderson, First Visit to Tribes under his Superintendence 1845, RG 10, vol. 268:163-856, microfilm reel C-12653, Library and Archives Canada.

<sup>26</sup> M. Richey, Principal, Cobourg, 5 May 1838, *Christian Guardian*, 9 May 1838.



man.”<sup>27</sup> The fact that Henry later named one of his middle sons, Egerton Ryerson Steinhauer, indicates his respect for him.

In the late 1840s Ryerson, now the superintendent of education for Upper Canada or Canada West, welcomed Allen Salt, a Mississauga from the Rice Lake area near Peterborough to the Toronto Normal (Teacher Training) School, the predecessor of what is now Ryerson University. The fully bilingual son of a Mississauga woman and a non-Indigenous father had served as an Ojibwe interpreter at the important 1846 Council at The Narrows (Orillia). He later entered the Methodist ministry. At the Rev. Allen Salt’s last mission on Parry Island (Wasauksing) on Georgian Bay the mission day school bore the name Ryerson. Only recently was the First Nation Day School renamed, “Wasauksing Kinomaugewgamik.”

The Methodist church in Canada split into two warring factions in 1840:<sup>28</sup> the Canadian Conference, led by Egerton Ryerson, and the British Wesleyans with organizational ties to Britain. The separation which greatly weakened the Methodists’ missionary outreach lasted for seven years. Ryerson’s appointment three years

later as superintendent of education for Canada West, made his time even more precious. His remaining links with the Credit Mississauga weakened after they left the immediate Toronto area in 1847. Yet, he maintained his close friendship with Kahkewaquonaby, then a Methodist minister and second chief of the Credit Mississauga, and his English wife, Eliza Field, the daughter of a wealthy English soap and candle manufacturer. In 1831, Peter and Eliza had met and fallen in love during his first Methodist mission fund raising tour of Britain; they married two years later. In Canada Eliza copied out in her fine hand the Credit council’s English language minutes and correspondence, an incredibly rich source of information for Anishinaabeg history.<sup>29</sup> She taught the Mississauga girls to sew and instructed them in religion. Peter’s English bride also strengthened him in his determination to Europeanize the Credit River Mississauga, an unpopular decision for many community members. He introduced European-style discipline for the children and promoted the idea of residential schools, eventually to be run by Indigenous Christians. Was Kahkewaquonaby becoming

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<sup>27</sup> Henry B. Steinhauer, quoted in *Missionary Society Report*, 1874/75, xx; quoted in Smith, *Mississauga Portraits*, 261.

<sup>28</sup> David Sawyer, a son of Chief Joseph Sawyer, a veteran of several missionary campaigns in the interior, was confused by the breakup of their church. As David said at an 1840 council, he saw no differences between the British and Canada Methodists. The preachers in Canada were as proud as the British. They love ease and were afraid to go into the backwoods for fear [of] wetting their feet.” Smith, *Sacred Feathers*, 179.

<sup>29</sup> “Paudash Papers” [Credit Mississauga Papers], RG 10, vol. 1011, containing the Credit Mission: Letter Book, 1825-42; Entry Book, 1831-48; Council Minutes, 1835-48. These papers are available on microfilm, but not yet to my knowledge on the web. This collection has been misidentified in old inventories at Library and Archives Canada as the “Paudash Papers,” after the nineteenth-century Rice Lake chief, George Paudash. Actually, all three of the above items relate to the Credit Mississauga.

too accommodating to non-Indigenous culture and its codes of behaviour?<sup>30</sup> The tensions in the community were accentuated by the British government's refusal to recognize the Mississauga's ownership of their Credit Reserve. In early 1847 the Credit community decided to re-locate inland to the Six Nations Territory on Grand River west of Hamilton. The Six Nations had invited them to settle beside them. The new settlement was designated New Credit, named after their old mission.

Egerton Ryerson and Peter Jones might best be described as 'blood brothers.' On 1 Nov. 1847 the Mississauga thanked Ryerson for his dispatch of "a set of your School Reports," from which, "I trust I shall receive much valuable information which may prove beneficial in our Indian School schemes." Kahkewaquonaby added, "My brother, I thank you for all the kindness you have ever shown to me and my dear family, and I hope and pray that the friendship which was formed between us many years ago will last forever."<sup>31</sup> Apart from a short report written in May 1847, upon the request of the Indian Department of the Union of the Canadas (from 1841 to 1867 the future Ontario and Quebec were united in the Province of Canada), Ryerson, to the best of my knowledge, had no further direct involvement with Indigenous education. George Vardon, assistant superintendent general of Indian affairs, had asked Ryerson, as the superintendent of edu-

cation for Canada West, for a short report on Indigenous schooling. In short, Ryerson's direct connection with the topic ended with the submission of his approximately 3,000-word letter.

Weighed down by his demanding administrative duties it took Ryerson, the senior educational bureaucrat, two months to complete this unsought assignment. A huge volume of correspondence dominated his daily routine. In the submission he finally submitted, Ryerson recommended agricultural training schools, or Industrial Schools as he called them, to teach young men the most up-to-date European-style agriculture. Although unstated in his 1847 letter he possibly had prior knowledge of the well-regarded manual labour school established eight years earlier at the Methodist Shawnee mission in eastern Kansas. This boarding school in the United States, built with church funds and substantial federal government aid, was regarded as a progressive venture, one worthy of imitation.<sup>32</sup> Ryerson knew of Kahkewaquonaby's determination to see manual labour schools established in Canada West, schools run by Indigenous people themselves as administrators and teachers.<sup>33</sup> He realized the First Nations must be vigilant and become financially literate to redress repeated injustices. In 1841, for example, the Act of Union bringing Upper and Lower Canada together, omitted to provide for the annuities to which the First

<sup>30</sup> Smith, *Sacred Feathers*, 158-60.

<sup>31</sup> Peter Jones to Egerton Ryerson, quoted in Ryerson, "The Story of My Life," 412-13.

That August Egerton, at their request, had baptized Peter and Eliza's fourth living son, Wuhyah-sakung, "the shining one or sun," known in English as "George Jones." Smith, *Sacred Feathers*, 213.

<sup>32</sup> Francis Paul Prucha, *The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians*. Abridged Edition (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), 101.

<sup>33</sup> Smith, *Sacred Feathers*, 160.

Nations were entitled in their treaties. This was only corrected in 1844.<sup>34</sup> From 1837 to 1845 S.P. Jarvis the chief superintendent of Indian Affairs in Canada West, refused to give the Credit Mississauga a report on their own band funds.<sup>35</sup>

Ryerson's hastily drawn up plan advocated for the training of males to become "industrious farmers" or agricultural labourers. In pre-industrial Canada farming was the motor of the economy. At the schools special attention would be paid to instructing the students in "book-keeping and farmers' accounts."<sup>36</sup> The churches would run the residential schools, as in the words of Ryerson biographer R.D. Gidney: "At the heart of his educational ideas lay his Christian faith... First and foremost, a system of education must be Christian."<sup>37</sup> An important supervisory role existed for government, namely to inspect institutions and to receive the "detailed reports" they must regularly furnish at least once or twice a year.<sup>38</sup> Government must exercise a strict oversight. As a staunch Methodist, Ryerson worked for the economic self-sufficiency of the Anishinaabeg. Today

his prose sounds very paternalistic, classic mid-nineteenth-century colonialism; "The North American Indian cannot be civilized or preserved in a state of civilization (including habits of industry and sobriety) except in connection with, if not by the influence of, not only religious instruction and sentiment but of religious feelings."<sup>39</sup> This was the language of the times. One must read beyond what historian Jennifer Brown has described as "the Methodistical prose of a past century" In this passage the Ryersonian dream of what one today might term, economic development, rings clear, his dream was to:

train up the pupils to habits of order and business, that will render them objects of desire by proprietors, as overseers of farms, should they not settle on farms of their own [...] It would be a gratifying result to see graduates of our Indian industrial schools become overseers of some of the largest farms in Canada, nor will it be less gratifying to see them industrious and prosperous farmers on their own account.<sup>40</sup>

Before he entered the ministry Egerton himself had spent a year as manager and labourer on his father's farm.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>34</sup> J.E. Hodgetts, *Pioneer Public Service, An Administrative History of the United Canadas, 1841-1867* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1955), 205-206.

<sup>35</sup> Smith, *Sacred Feathers*, 177.

<sup>36</sup> Egerton Ryerson to George Vardon, Assistant Superintendent General, Indian Affairs, Montreal, dated Education Office, 26 May 1847, in *Statistics Respecting Indian Schools with Dr. Ryerson's Report of 1847 Attached* (Ottawa: Government Printing Bureau, 1898), 74. The copy is in RG 10, vol. 2952, file 202,239, Library and Archives Canada. See the section "Primary Sources" for the location of the original document.

<sup>37</sup> Gidney, "Ryerson," 789.

<sup>38</sup> Ryerson to Vardon, in *Statistics*, 74.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 73. Two popular sources on the Web which attach great significance to this section of his letter are: Wikipedia <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canadian\\_Indian\\_residential\\_school\\_system](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canadian_Indian_residential_school_system)> and the current Web edition of *The Canadian Encyclopedia* <<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/egerton-ryerson>>.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 77. For Brown's remark, see page 241 below.

<sup>41</sup> Sissons, "Introduction," *My Dearest Sophie*, xvi

At an important July 1846 general council with Indigenous peoples held at The Narrows (Orillia), most of the Methodist Ojibwe communities in central and eastern Canada West requested boarding schools. They offered one-fourth of their annuities or annual payments stipulated in the treaties to support them. But right from the very beginning many non-Indigenous Methodists and the Anishinaabeg had two different ideas of the objective of this schooling. Peter Jones and other Methodist Ojibwe were adamant that the Anishinaabeg secure the advanced Euro-Canadian agricultural knowledge necessary to develop their communities' economic base. Intensive farming would protect them from the settlers' insatiable appetite for what the newcomers saw as empty land. On his special 1845 fundraising tour of Britain to secure money for a residential school, Peter told a Scottish audience, "The Indian territories have been taken away till our possessions are now so small that you would almost require a magnifying glass to see them. We are surrounded on all sides by white settlers, still encroaching on us."<sup>42</sup> With other Anishinaabeg leaders he supported

the idea of a residential school, not as a means of working to erase their separate Indigenous identity, but rather as a defence tactic to strengthen it.

Shortly after his appointment as the organizer and administrator of Canada West's educational system in 1844 Ryerson undertook an over year-long tour of educational establishments in Britain and Europe, to learn about the most enlightened teaching methods of the day. On his return to Canada the Chief Superintendent of Schools worked with others to design the structure of elementary education in Upper Canada or Canada West (the future Ontario). This would lead to his crowning achievement in 1871 of universal, free and compulsory education at the elementary level.<sup>43</sup> Each month in the late 1840s he wrote hundreds of letters in response to requests for guidance and advice.<sup>44</sup>

What was the historical context in which Egerton's report was written? The First Nations in the Union of the Canadas around 1850, in an era of incredible British migration, represented only a tiny percentage of the total population of roughly two million, at best 1%.<sup>45</sup> George Vardon, the Indian Department official who contacted

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<sup>42</sup> Peter Jones quoted in the *Banner* [Aberdeen, Scotland], 15 August 1845; cited in Smith, *Sacred Feathers*, 222, endnote 44, p. 328.

<sup>43</sup> J. Donald Wilson, "The Ryerson Years in Canada West," in *Canadian Education: A History*, eds. J. Donald Wilson, Robert M. Stamp, and Louis-Philippe Audet (Scarborough, Ontario: Prentice-Hall of Canada, 1970), 216.

<sup>44</sup> Gidney, "Ryerson," 790.

<sup>45</sup> About 11,900 First Nations people (in the account cited as "Indians") apparently lived permanently in Upper Canada or Canada West in 1842 and 3,300 in Lower Canada or Canada East; see "Report on the Affairs of the Indians in Canada," Appendix T, nos. 52, 53, 54, and 55, *Journals of the Legislative Assembly of Canada, 1847*. I arrived at the figure of 11,900 for Upper Canada by deducting the visiting American Indians at Manitoulin Island [2,800] from the total number of Indians given presents in Upper Canada (14,700). Anthony Hall confirms the figure of 11,000 Indians in Upper Canada in the mid-

Ryerson on 18 March 1847, had asked him “to assist me with your advice in establishing the Manual Labor Schools for education of the Indian youth in this Province.” He encouraged the educator to offer “suggestions (the result of your observations, & experiences in Europe as you may conceive to be useful).” Vardon then shared his “great anxiety” with Ryerson about the project. “You are aware that there are numerous persons in the colony, though actuated by different motives, who will alike rejoice in the failure of a plan which tends to place the Indian on a footing of perfect equality with their White Brethren.”<sup>46</sup>

In the background the removal of the Credit community from their established mission to a corner of the Six Nations Territory on the Grand River had begun. Despite becoming Christians and a number of them English-speaking successful farmers, they had failed to obtain recognition of their title to their Credit reserve. Wishing to be separate, not amalgamated with the settlers, the Credit Mississauga accepted the Six Nations of the Grand River’s invitation to settle beside them near Brantford, 100 kilometres to the west. Finally, to

obtain a secure home the Credit Mississauga left their cultivated fields, comfortable houses, and a village with mills, a hospital, a school, and even a schooner behind.<sup>47</sup> Again, they began the arduous task of clearing farms and building new homes, as well as a comfortable place of worship and a school.<sup>48</sup>

At the back of Egerton’s mind as a model for an Indigenous boarding school was Hofwyl, a celebrated Swiss institution for the rural poor, founded by Philipp Emanuel von Fellenberg. Ryerson visited the school near Berne and later drew upon Fellenberg’s educational reforms in his 1847 *Report on a System for Public Elementary Instruction for Upper Canada*.<sup>49</sup> Egerton’s 1847 report for the Indian Department on Industrial Schools confirms his vision of an Indigenous agricultural training school, very similar to Hofwyl. The institution would have to support itself financially (or almost). The pupils would produce the crops and handle the livestock that would pay the bills. Entrance was to be voluntary. Ryerson’s intent was to have Indigenous males learn the use of tools and equipment required to farm in the

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nineteenth entry in his “The Red Man’s Burden: Land, Law and the Lord in the Indian Affairs of Upper Canada, 1791-1858 (Ph.D. thesis, University of Toronto, 1984), 208. For the population of the Canadas in 1850 which was approximately two million, see J.M.S. Careless, *The Union of the Canadas 1841-1857* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1967), 150.

<sup>46</sup> George Vardon to Egerton Ryerson, dated Civil Secretary’s Office, Indian Department, 18 March 1847, in Indian Affairs, Civil Secretary’s Office, Letterbook, 1 July 1846- 31 December 1847, RG 10, vol. 512. Library and Archives Canada.

<sup>47</sup> Wybenga, “January 1848—Eight Months after the Move,” in *Historical Tidbits Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation*, 11.

<sup>48</sup> Smith, *Sacred Feathers*, 212, 219-20.

<sup>49</sup> *The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Final Report, vol. 1, The History, Part 1. Origins to 1939* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2015), 77.



European manner. Farming would provide the Indigenous peoples with stable economic base. It would enable them to retain their lands and to continue as a separate people. He wanted Indigenous students to become self-sufficient and independent—totally confident in their relationships with the non-Indigenous society. In short, as it turned out, they obtained the total opposite of independence: the disastrous federal Indian Residential School system imposed in the late nineteenth century—the results of which the 2015 *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Final Report, vol. 1, The History, Part 1. Origins to 1939*, clearly outline. This is not at all what Ryerson proposed in May 1847.

Like his generation of non-Indigenous Canadian and Indigenous Methodist church leaders, Ryerson deemed

Christianity to be essential in the students' training. In the words of Canadian educational historian Robin Harris; "Ryerson was a Christian first, last, and all the time, his religious principles were his first principles."<sup>50</sup> The Christian leadership, in Ryerson's vision, was to be Indigenous, as he hoped Peter Jones would head the new Mount Elgin boarding school near London. Unfortunately, the Mississauga chief's deteriorating health obliged to resign his position as superintendent just before the school's opening ceremony in July 1849. Subsequently the school was never transferred to the Christian Anishinaabeg's control. Egerton Ryerson and his Methodist colleagues in the 1820s and 1830s had done all in their power to encourage an Indigenous clergy.

After Kahkewaquonaby's death in 1856 a popular pseudoscientific theory arose following the 1859 publication of Charles Darwin's *Origin of the Species*. It contended that all human beings might well issue from common ancestors, but the races themselves represented different stages of evolution. Even in the Methodist church many came to accept the totally erroneous misconception later known as race theory, about "inferior" and "superior" races. The Reverend Alexander Sutherland, for example, who served as the Methodists' mission secretary for nearly forty years wrote of an Indigenous clergy in 1904, "it is better as a rule that Indians should be under the care of white men."<sup>51</sup>

<sup>50</sup> Robin S. Harris, "Egerton Ryerson," in *Our Living Tradition*, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> series, ed. Robert L. McDougall (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1959), 255.

<sup>51</sup> Alexander Sutherland, editorial note in T. Ferrier's "The Indian Problem," *The Missionary Outlook*,

This was a complete reversal of Egerton Ryerson's 1847 suggestions.

After the spring of 1847 Ryerson apparently said nothing more in detail about Indigenous education; he had his hands full establishing a complete public education system, with free schools and compulsory education, for an entire province. And no longer were the Indigenous peoples a burning issue in southern Canada West, as they had been a generation earlier, when they had provided invaluable military support to Britain in the War of 1812. They now were relatively remote from the public's attention and concern.

Egerton's deep friendship with Kahkewaquonaby continued until his death. The corruption and poor administration of the Indian department continued. George Vardon himself was caught in 1851 embezzling departmental funds, although the extent of time that he did this was never determined.<sup>52</sup> In 1854 a scandal broke out in the Indian Department upon the discovery that Col. Joseph Clench, the Western Superintendent of Indian Affairs, had embezzled from the sale of First Nations' lands a sum later estimated at £9,000. The official's

immediate dismissal left his position as visiting superintendent to the First Nations west of London, vacant. Egerton stepped forward to suggest Peter Jones for the important post. In his letter to the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs on 21 November 1854 Ryerson stated, "I know of no man whom I think better qualified for the office lately vacated by the removal of Colonel Clench."<sup>53</sup> His recommendation was not followed. For three decades, Kahkewaquonaby had advocated a new approach to Indigenous affairs: secure titles to the First Nations reserves, a viable economic land base for each First Nation community, a first-class system of education, and self-government for the Indigenous population. The Mississauga leader wanted First Nations communities to become self-sufficient and stable, not to vanish. But the Indian Department wanted the Indigenous Peoples to leave their communities, and fully join the dominant Canadian society. In the 1830s this approach became known as the "civilization policy," a later generation termed it "assimilation," then in the mid-twentieth century as "integration." Recently many opponents simply term it, "cultural genocide."<sup>54</sup>

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June 1904, p. 126; cited in James Ernest Nix, "John Maclean's Mission to the Blood Indians, 1880-1889" (M.A. thesis, McGill University, Faculty of Religious Studies, 1977), 229.

<sup>52</sup> R. Bruce, Governor's Secretary, Govr Secretary's Office, Toronto, to G. Vardon, Montreal, 4 Feb 1851, LAC RG7 G17C vol. 14, 283. Reel H-1204 Image 841. My thanks to James Morrison for this reference.

<sup>53</sup> Copy of a letter from Egerton Ryerson to Chief Superintendent Indian Affairs, 21 November 1854, RG 2, C1. Ontario Archives. My thanks to Bob Gidney of the University of Western Ontario for this reference. A draft of this letter (no. 2358) is in the Ryerson Papers, Victoria University in the University of Toronto Library.

<sup>54</sup> Today in Canada, one might add, the whole concept of what a previous generation called "assimilation" has vanished. As the award-winning Canadian novelist M.G. Vassanji notes: "In this day when cultural diversity is celebrated in a globalized world—and even in the melting pot, what does one assimilate to?" M.G. Vassanji, *Mordecai Richler* (Toronto: Penguin Canada, 2009), 109.

In the last weeks of Kahkewaquonaby's life in the spring of 1856. Peter and Eliza stayed at the Ryersons for over a month in Toronto in an unsuccessful attempt to find a cure for his declining health. Clearly, he was dying. His demise obviously in sight, Peter and his wife now returned to their home in Brantford. The Credit Mississauga brought a respected Anishinaabe healer from Rice Lake, northeast of Toronto, to intervene.<sup>55</sup> It was too late. In Brantford Egerton gave the oration to Kahkewaquonaby at his cherished friend's funeral in late June.

The mid-1850s marked the entry of an aggressive program of Indigenous assimilation in the Union of the Canadas. A year after Peter Jones's death the Canadian Parliament passed the Gradual Civilization Act, the pre-Confederation predecessor of the Enfranchisement Act of 1869 and the Canadian Indian Act of 1876. The enfranchisement program revealed the shift of government policy away from schooling toward legislation leading to full assimilation. Canadian Indian policy's central dynamic became the relentless campaign to place the Indigenous peoples, without consultation, in

the settler society. It drastically reduced the limited degree of Indigenous self-government still permitted. The male Indians who qualified, could now become "enfranchised," or legally equal to their non-Indigenous neighbours, with the same rights and privileges including the right to vote; but they must cut their ties with their communities and sign away their rights as Indians forever. The policy had no Indigenous appeal, as the First Nations had no intention of disappearing into the dominant society. Prime Minister John A. Macdonald accurately observed in 1882 that the Indians had not shown a "much-to-be-desired demand for enfranchisement."<sup>56</sup>

What was the impact of Ryerson's recommendation in his 1847 Report for a boarding school with agricultural training alone?<sup>57</sup> He felt it was a bad idea to provide instruction for trades as well. It was just too expensive. The later introduction of training in the trades in the federally sponsored Indian residential schools in 1883, against Ryerson's advice in 1847, proved a huge mistake. Instead of developing apprenticeship programs with tradespeople in the immediate

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<sup>55</sup> Eliza Jones in Jones, *History of the Ojebway Indians*, 16. Peter believed in Indigenous medicine. In his article "The Indian Nations," *The Monthly Review* (Toronto), 1, 5 (May 1841), 323; he wrote: "I have known instances where persons who have been given over by the English doctors were completely restored to health by the simple administration of Indian medicines."

<sup>56</sup> Canada, *Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs, 1882* (Maclean, Roger & Co, 1883) at xxvii, cited in Coel Kirkby, "Paradises Lost? The Constitutional Politics of 'Indian' Enfranchisement in Canada 1857-1900," *Osgoode Hall Law Journal*, 56,3 (Summer 2020), 616. I thank George Anderson for this reference.

<sup>57</sup> *Statistics Respecting Indian Schools with Dr. Ryerson's Report of 1847 Attached*. (Ottawa: Government Printing Bureau, 1898) is available from Library and Archives Canada, RG 10, vol. 2952, file 202,239. It is reproduced on the World Wide Web. On 27 April 2021 Canadian archivist Bill Russell located the original document in RG 10, volume 164, pp. 95368-95384. It has been microfilmed on Library and Archives Canada reel C-11501.



area off the reserves, a full costly trades education program was attempted in the federal “industrial schools” of the mid-1880s.<sup>58</sup>

Any attempt to portray Egerton Ryerson as anti-Indigenous should sound an alarm. As should the frequently advanced opinion that casts him as one of the ‘architects’ of the oppressive, non-Indigenous controlled Indian residential schools of the late nineteenth century and beyond. The federal Indian residential schools that developed in early 1880s, became, in effect “boot camps” controlled by non-Indigenous individuals for coercive entry into settler society. Underfunding, mismanagement, and lax federal oversight multiplied the shortcomings of these institutions. They bore little resemblance to the boarding schools called for by First Nations’ leaders at the 1846 Council with the Indigenous Peoples in Orillia: the system they received proved entirely different from what they had requested. By the late 1890s the retreat from the spirit of Ryerson’s 1847 Report, with its idea of eventual Indigenous control, was complete. In 1898, the Indian Department under the direction of Clifford Sifton, Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, located, typed up and had printed the half-a-century old letter in

*Statistics Respecting Indian Schools with Dr. Ryerson’s Report of 1847 Attached*. Read in 1898 without any historical context it gave the erroneous impression that Egerton Ryerson had designed the draconian repressive system, both ugly and real, that Clifford Sifton now administered. It would be hard to advance a view farther from the truth. Ryerson believed in the educational potential of Indigenous students, Sifton did not. In 1904, the Deputy Superintendent General stated in Parliament: “I have no hesitation in saying—we may as well be frank—that the Indian cannot go out from school, making his own way and compete with the white man... He has not the physical, mental or moral get-up to enable him to compete. He cannot do it.”<sup>59</sup>

Egerton Ryerson favoured the eventual entry of the Indigenous population into the main line society, through choice, not coercion. The important educator had lived in an Indigenous community for almost a year and had acquired basic fluency in an Indigenous language. He had an infinitely better understanding than someone like Clifford Sifton who had no prior contact with the First Nations before becoming Superintendent General of Indian Affairs. Yet, although Egerton had some awareness, he still had

<sup>58</sup> *The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Final Report, vol. 1, The History, Part 1. Origins to 1939*, p. 77.

<sup>59</sup> Clifford Sifton, quoted in House of Commons, *Debates*, 1904, cols. 6946-56, 18 July 1904; quoted in D.J. Hall, “Clifford Sifton and Canadian Indian Administration 1896-1905,” reprinted from *Prairie Forum* 2:2 (1977) in *As Long As The Sun Shines And Water Flows. A Reader in Canadian Native Studies*, eds. Ian A.L. Getty and Antoine S. Lussier (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1983), 126. Also, Clifford Sifton, House of Commons *Debates*, 1904, 6948, 6956, cited in J.R. Miller, *Shingwauk’s Vision. A History of Native Residential Schools* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 135.

enormous gaps in his knowledge of Anishinaabeg history and culture. Like his non-Indigenous contemporaries in general he underestimated the strength and resilience of the Indigenous peoples and their society. In fairness before praising or condemning this important non-Indigenous educational leader, please keep in mind that in the 2020s, a century and half after his death in 1882, intercultural misunderstandings still abound.

An example of one of Egerton Ryerson's cultural blind spots survives. It provides an interesting conclusion to this essay. The Credit Mississauga, in an 1850 letter written to the Indian Department on their behalf by Peter Jones, claimed Long Point on the northeastern shore of Lake Erie. The letter reads, the "Peninsula and Islands were Reserved by our Fathers as hunting and fishing grounds."<sup>60</sup> Did Egerton know this? He was born

and raised at the Long Point Settlement, one of the oldest British Canadian communities in Canada West. His father owned a small island off Long Point that he willed to Egerton in 1854. It became his haven.<sup>61</sup> Did Egerton ever learn that "Ryerson Island" was, in the eyes of the Mississauga, disputed territory? Most likely Kahkewaquonaby had not introduced the subject. The Credit Mississauga forwarded their land entitlement after his death to the Indian Affairs minister at the time, who was none other than Clifford Sifton. In 1897, Dr. Peter Edmund Jones, Peter's third son who had become a medical doctor, signed the Credit community's petition that specified "Long Point and Ryerson Islands" belonged to them.<sup>62</sup> Peter Jones and Egerton Ryerson were true friends, but they retained their own outlooks and beliefs. Good friends often keep some topics to themselves.

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<sup>60</sup> Peter Jones to T.G. Anderson, Brantford, 30 March 1850, RG 10, vol. 409:445, microfilm C-9615, Library and Archives Canada. In 1847 the Mississauga of the Credit had re-located from the Credit River to their new community they named New Credit beside the Six Nations Territory near Brantford.

<sup>61</sup> Clara Thomas, *Ryerson of Upper Canada* (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1969), 126-27. Sissons, "Introduction," *Dearest Sophie*, xxxci.

<sup>62</sup> Petition of the Electors and Council of the Mississaugas of the Credit, to the Honourable the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, Hagersville, 28 April 1897, RG 10, 2750, folder 147944, microfilm C-12,792, Library and Archives Canada.

## Impressions of the Founder of Ontario's Public School System: Then and Now

Donald B. Smith's new book *Seen but Not Seen, Influential Canadians and the First Nations from the 1840s to Today* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2021) explores the history of Indigenous marginalization and why non-Indigenous Canadians failed to recognize Indigenous societies and cultures as worthy of respect. The author of six other books in Canadian History he is also the co-editor, with the late Edward S. Rogers, of *Aboriginal Ontario. Historical Perspectives on the First Nations* (Toronto: Dundurn, 1994).

Hard to believe the dignified ceremony pictured here took place fifty years ago in contrast to the toppling of the Ryerson statue at Ryerson University followed by its beheading earlier in early June of this year! By a strange coincidence Thursday 24 June 2021, marked the fiftieth anniversary of the unveiling at the village of Vittoria of Ontario's plaque commemorating Egerton Ryerson. The Ryerson family farm was located about halfway between Vittoria and Port Ryerse on Lake Erie, in the Long Point Settlement. In the image, Canadian historian Stan-



Stanley Ryerson standing by the plaque commemorating Egerton Ryerson. On a visit to Vittoria on 1 March 2011, Twila Cruikshank and Roger Cruikshank kindly gave me a copy of this image. Please see their book, *Old Woodhouse Church—The Cradle of Methodism in the Long Point Settlement (Vittoria: Printed by Laser Tec. Print & Design, 2000)*, page 71.

ley Ryerson is standing by the plaque to his great-grandfather, “a vigorous, prolific controversialist, he wrote on agriculture, politics, religion, the Loyalists and Canadian Methodism.” The plaque was one of a series being erected by the Ontario Department of Public Records and Archives, acting on the advice of the Archaeological and Historic Sites Board.

This ceremony recalls the *Globe's* comment on the unveiling of Toronto's statue to Ryerson, May 25, 1889, cited in the *Ryerson Memorial Volume 1844-1876: Prepared on the occasion of the Unveiling for the Ryerson Statue in the*

*Grounds of the Education Department, on the Queen's Birthday, 1889* by J. George Hodgins (Toronto: Printed by Warwick & Sons, 68 & 70 Front Street West, 1889), pages 8-9. "Among the greatest of Canadian public men was Rev. Dr. Egerton Ryerson, the founder of the Ontario Public School system of education." At the unveiling of the monument, *The Globe* continues "seldom in the history of a nation that all classes, creeds and colors could be got together to do honor to the memory of one man." Please note members of, "all classes, creeds and colors" at-

tended.

It is interesting to add that great grandson Stanley Ryerson was a non-Indigenous visionary in respect to the appreciation of the historical role of the Indigenous Peoples. In the words of Canadian historian Robert Sweeny, "In 1960 Ryerson wrote the first history of Canada [*The Founding of Canada: Beginnings to 1815*] to reject the founding myth of Cabot, Cartier, and Champlain in favour of a recognition of the historical significance and agency of indigenous peoples."

## Primary and Secondary Source Material

A full examination of Egerton Ryerson's relationship with the First Nations necessitates a wide sweep of a large body of manuscript and published material. Much more can be done. Ryerson's over half-century-long career as a Methodist minister and administrator, newspaper editor, college president, and educational administrator, has resulted in a voluminous documentary record, a mountain of information. To indicate the extent of the literature I have examined for this essay, a selected list of primary and secondary sources follows. The discovery of any sizable amount of information on Egerton Ryerson and the Indigenous Peoples after 1840 to his death, would be a major contribution. For his attitudes toward the First Nations toward the end of his life future scholars, for instance, might closely examine his

*The Loyalists of America and Their Times from 1620 to 1816*, 2 vols (1880), available on the Web in Project Gutenberg.

### *Primary Sources*

The most complete source of information about Ryerson and his relationship with the First Nations (to my knowledge) is contained among my nineteenth-century Mississauga history notes in the Pratt Library in the Archives of Victoria University in the University of Toronto. I used these to prepare *Sacred Feathers* (1987) and *Mississauga Portraits* (2013). The excellent inventory the Archives has prepared of my donated research notes (collected over nearly half a century) identifies key files to consult—Box 24, files 9 to 14. The files 9 to 11 cover Ryerson and the Indigenous Peoples, 1803-1882. The files include everything

I was able to locate—most of the information is from the mid-1820s to the late 1830s. My files on Hofwyl, the Swiss school Ryerson so admired, are numbered 12 to 14. For a complete summary of the collection simply goggle: “Donald B. Smith, Pratt Library, Egerton Ryerson (Fonds 80).” Other records relating to the nineteenth-century Mississauga and Ontario Anishinaabeg are located in the Donald B. Smith fonds, in the Trent University Library, Peterborough, Ontario, accession numbers 13-007 and 15-009.

A word of caution for researchers new to mid- nineteenth-century Canadian Methodist records, some decoding is necessary. Egerton Ryerson and his “cotemporaries,” to use John Carroll’s phrase in the title of his multi-volume, *Case and his Cotemporaries, or, The Canadian Itinerants’ Memorial* (Toronto: Methodist Conference Office, 1867-1877), are sometimes challenging for modern readers, on account of what ethnohistorian Jennifer S.H. Brown calls, “the Methodistical prose of a past century.’ This, she adds, “requires a leap into a worldview that sometimes seems as remote from our own as the traditional worlds of Ojibwe.” [Jennifer S.H. Brown, “Afterword: Aaniskotaapaan—Generations and Successions,” in *Gathering Places: Aboriginal and Fur Trade Histories*, ed. Carolyn Podruchny and Laura Peers (Vancouver, B.C.: UBC Press, 2010), page 30; reprinted in her collection, *An Ethnohistorian in Rupert’s Land. Unfinished Conversations* (Edmonton: AU Press, 2017), 195- 214.]

The vital 26 May 1847 report or let-

ter by Egerton Ryerson was printed half a century after it was written in *Statistics Respecting Indian Schools with Dr. Ryerson’s Report of 1847 Attached*. It is reproduced on the World Wide Web from that source. The original of this document, however, is located at Library and Archives Canada within Record Group (RG) 10, among the records of the Office of the Civil Secretary to the Governor General, acting in his capacity of Superintendent General of Indian Affairs. The incoming correspondence of the Office of the Civil Secretary is arranged in docketts that are organized in ascending numerical order. Ryerson’s letter of 26 May is one of three documents that make up the contents of docket 2525; the other two documents are a 24 March 1847 letter from Ryerson to George Vardon, thanking him for his 18 March request for Ryerson’s views; and a one-page Memorandum which Vardon gave to the Civil Secretary, Major Campbell, by way of context about Ryerson and his ideas based on the Hofwyl example. The archival reference for docket 2525 is: RG 10, volume 164, pages 95368-95384, within which Ryerson’s 26 May letter is found at pages 95371-95384. The complete docket has been reproduced on Library and Archives Canada microfilm reel C-11501. This microfilm reel has also been digitized and can be accessed online through the <heritage.canadiana.ca> Web Site. When consulting this digitized version of microfilm reel C-11501, the reader can go direct to the first page of docket 2525 by using the ‘Images’ search function box and scrolling to and

selecting Image 770.

For important background on how to use the mid-nineteenth-century RG records see Bill Russell, "Study in Documents. Indian Department Headquarter Records, 1844-1861: A Case Study in Recordkeeping and Archival Custody," *Archivaria*, 75 (Spring 2013), 187-223 (this can be accessed on the Web). John Leslie's article, "The Bagot Commission: Developing a Corporate Memory for the Indian Department," *Historical Papers/ Communications historiques*, 17:1 (1982), 21-52, is most helpful for an understanding of Indian Policy in Central Canada in the 1840s and 1850s. An older study, but one still worthy of consultation, is J.E. Hodgetts, *Pioneer Public Service. An Administrative History of the United Canadas, 1841-1867* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1955). Egerton Ryerson's memoirs, "*The Story of My Life*," edited by J. George Hodgins (Toronto: William Briggs, 1883), published posthumously, is available on the Web. Chapter Four, "Missionary to the River Credit Indians;" and Chapter Five, "Diary of Labours among Indians" are very important. A wonderful introduction to the private Ryerson is provided in *My Dearest Sophie. Letters from Egerton Ryerson to his daughter*, ed. C.B. Sissons (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1955). Contemporary Mississauga accounts include Peter Jones's *Life and Journals* (Toronto: Anson Green, 1860), edited by his wife Eliza Field Jones and the Rev. Enoch Wood. Eliza Jones edited his historical notes, which appeared as the *History of the Ojibway Indians* (London:

A.W. Bennett, 1861).

Extremely valuable for any study of the Credit Mississauga are the "Paudash Papers" [Credit Mississauga Papers], RG 10, vol. 1011, containing the Credit Mission: Letter Book, 1825-42; Entry Book, 1831-48; Council Minutes, 1835-48. These papers are available on microfilm, but not yet to my knowledge on the web. This collection has been misidentified in old inventories at Library and Archives Canada as the "Paudash Papers," after the nineteenth-century Rice Lake chief, George Paudash. All three of the above items actually relate to the Credit Mississauga.

### *Secondary Sources*

Neil Semple's chapter seven, "The Methodists and Native People before 1860," in *The Lord's Dominion. The History of Canadian Methodism* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), 148-78, looks at the early Methodist Indigenous outreach. Hope MacLean's M.A. thesis for the University of Toronto (1978), "The Hidden Agenda: Methodist Attitudes to the Ojibwa and the Development of Indian Schooling in Upper Canada, 1821-1860), provides the best overview. Her two published articles on the Methodists and the education of the Mississauga are available on the Web: "A Positive Experiment in Aboriginal Education: The Methodist Ojibwa Day Schools in Upper Canada, 1824-1833," *Canadian Journal of Native Studies* 22:1 (2002), 23-63; and "Ojibwa Participation in Methodist Residential Schools in Upper Canada," *Canadian Journal of Native*

*Studies* 25:1 (2005), 93-137. Robin Harris's insightful essay, "Egerton Ryerson," appeared in *Our Living Tradition*, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> series, ed. Robert L. McDougall (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1959), 244-67. C.B. Sissons, *A History of Victoria University* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1952), is useful. Important for an understanding of Henry B. Steinhauer is the biography by Melvin D. Steinhauer, his great-grandson, *Shawabnekizhek: Henry Bird Steinhauer: Child of Two Cultures* (Edmonton: Priority Printing Ltd., 2015).

Clara Thomas's very readable 1969 biography, *Ryerson of Upper Canada* (Toronto: Ryerson, 1969); and the short well-illustrated overview by Laura Damania, *Egerton Ryerson* (Don Mills, Ontario: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1975) provide good introductions. For details on the Credit Mission, see Donald B. Smith, *Sacred Feathers. The Reverend Peter Jones (Kahkewaquonaby) and the Mississauga Indians* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), and chapter one, "Peter Jones, or Kahkewaquonaby (1802-1856) and Canada West, Spring 1856," in *Mississauga Portraits. Ojibwe Voices from Nineteenth-Century Canada* (2013), 3-32. Useful studies include Kevin Hutchings, *Transatlantic Upper Canada. Portraits in Literature, Land, and British-Indigenous Relations* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2020); and Niigonwedom James Sinclair, "Nindoodemag Bagijiganan: A History of Anishinaabeg Narrative," (Ph.D. the-

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Easy to access, and providing a scholarly critical overview is R.D. Gidney, "Egerton Ryerson," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*. vol. 11: 1881-1890, 783-95 which is also available on the Web. Gidney provides an extensive guide to Ryerson's writings both in manuscript as well as print, pp. 793-95. See also: J. Donald Wilson, "The Ryerson Years in Canada West," in *Canadian Education: A History*, eds. J. Donald Wilson, Robert M. Stamp, and Louis-Philippe Audet (Scarborough, Ontario: Prentice-Hall of Canada, 1970), 214-40. It provides a good summary. For background on the nineteenth-century Anishinaabeg see Heidi Bohaker, *Doodem and Council Fire. Anishinaabe Governance through Alliance* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2020). Allan Sherwin has written a fine biography of a son of the Rev. Peter Jones, *Bridging Two Peoples. Chief Peter E. Jones, 1843-1909* (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2012). A most useful collection of sketches of the Old Credit Mission and of New Credit is *Historical Tidbits Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation* (Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation: Paramount Printers, 2019) by Darin Wybenga member of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation.