

“EVEN THE YOUNGEST CAN HELP” THE FIRST WORLD WAR, GIRLS AND THE
JUNIOR RED CROSS IN WESTERN CANADA

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KARRIE LORENA GIBBONS

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Dean
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University of Saskatchewan
116 Thorvaldson Building, 110 Science Place
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan S7N 5C9
Canada

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Abstract

This thesis explores the history of the Junior Red Cross (JRC) in Western Canada during the First World War and immediately afterward. It aims to fill in some of the gaps in scholarship that surrounds the history of Canadians in the war and, in particular, the experiences of Western Canadian girls. By studying a group such as the JRC, this thesis provides insight into the experiences of women and girls in the early 20th century. While a co-ed organization, the Junior Red Cross had a majority of female members and they catered to these members through their fund-raising efforts. Involvement in this organization offered girls opportunities for leadership and a chance to contribute to society as full-fledged citizens. However, the JRC's treatment of recent immigrant and Indigenous children complicates the history of the organization. The use of their branch at the File Hills residential school for assimilation purposes furthered the colonial, assimilationist agendas of the provincial and federal government.

Table of Contents

Permission to Use.....	i
Acknowledgements	ii
Abstract.....	iii
Table of Contents.....	iv
List of Maps and Illustrations.....	v
Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1: “United to Help” The Junior Red Cross in Western Canada.....	13
Chapter 2: Healing the Nation: The JRC and the Health of Children.....	41
Chapter 3: Canadianizing the “New Canadians”.....	67
Chapter 4: “Enthusiastic Supporters” The File Hills Farm Colony and the Junior Red Cross.....	88
Chapter 5: Conclusion.....	100
Bibliography.....	104

List of Maps and Illustrations

Map 1.1 Saskatchewan JRC Branches December 1917.....	24
Map 1.2 Manitoba Youth Volunteer Groups 1917.....	25
Illustration 1.1 “The Lady with the Lamp”.....	31
Illustration 4.1 Junior Red Cross Girls, File Hills	96

Introduction

In 1917 Aileen Rogers' teddy bear was sent back to her. Her father Lieutenant Lawrence Rogers, a stretcher-bearer during the First World War, had carried it with him through two years of training and warfare until his death at the battle of Passchendaele.¹ The story of Aileen and her bear has captured the attention of prominent historians like Tim Cook and Kristine Alexander because the story speaks not only to the importance of her father's experience of war but to hers as well. However, little historical work has been done on the experiences of children, particularly girls, during the First World War. This project explores to what degree the lives of Western Canadian children changed as a result of their participation in voluntary patriotic organizations within the prairie provinces of Saskatchewan, Alberta, and Manitoba.

The study of volunteer groups that targeted children provides valuable insight into the activities that helped incorporate children's direct participation in the war effort. Moreover, the study of the institutionalized values and world views of these groups as demonstrated through their publications and activities reveal their hopes and anxieties for the future, of children, and de facto, the nation, and the ways in which these intersected with understandings of gender, class, race, and ethnicity. The Junior Red Cross (JRC) is a particularly important group to study, especially in Western Canada, because of their goals regarding gender. They developed an expansive and contradictory understanding of what it meant to be female. The organizations' goals were the health and hygiene of children. In particular, they attempted to create healthier children for the next generation. Among those goals were the assimilation of both new

¹ Tim Cook and Natascha Morrison. "Longing and Loss from Canada's Great War," *Canadian Military History* 16: Iss. 1, (2007) Article 5. And Alexander, Kristine. "An Honour and a Burden: Canadian Girls and the Great War", in *A Sisterhood of Suffering and Service: Women and Girls of Canada and Newfoundland During the First World War*. ed. Sarah Glassford and Amy Shaw (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011), 173-95.

immigrant and Indigenous children through the organization, and the prioritization of very middle class notions of what constituted health.

By focusing on the JRC's understanding of citizenship both during and after the war, I examine the ways in which the JRC negotiated traditional notions of femininity and domesticity, that both placed restraints on participating girls and offered them new opportunities, such as being community leaders. At the same time, the Red Cross and the JRC used their organizations as a vehicle for the assimilation of both non-British and First Nations children. For example, the JRC established a branch at the File Hills residential school which included all seventy students as members.

Childhood and youth as scholarly topics have only recently begun to be studied in greater depth. Previously, these areas were often marginalized and categorized as a branch of family or women's history.² Only recently has the *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, been established and devoted to the topic. Childhood historian Steven Mintz argues in one of the early articles in this journal that the study of childhood is important and unique because childhood can connect the "personal and the public" and the "domestic and the State."³ The study of childhood is vital because it is a defining factor in an individual's experience, that intersects with race, class, gender, and region, and therefore needs to be considered in historical inquiry. For instance, children growing up during the war would have a different experience from their adult counterparts. It can even be argued, as Kristine Alexander does in her article "Can the Girl

² Steven Mintz "Why the History of Childhood Matters," *The Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth* 5, no 1, (Winter 2012): 17.

³ Mintz, 17.

Guide” Speak?”, that children are a form of the subaltern; a colonized group, not fully realized and for the most part, without a public voice.⁴

Although there has been little work in the field of children and the First World War, there are two notable exceptions. One of the few major works published thus far has been Susan Fisher’s *Boys and Girls in No Man’s Land: English-Canadian Children and the First World War*.⁵ Fisher’s work fills in a major gap in the history of the war and of children, by examining representations of their lives during the war, primarily through children’s literature. Her work features both boys and girls, and although she sets aside a chapter to discuss girls, she focuses on fictional works and not necessarily lived experiences. The other major work in the field is Kristine Alexander’s “An Honour and a Burden: Canadian Girls and the Great War.”⁶ Drawing on her dissertation, which examined the relationship between Girl Guides and British imperialism, Alexander covers issues such as propaganda and volunteer efforts, but she does not focus on any particular region of Canada. Alexander also recently published an award-winning book on the Girl Guides *Guiding Modern Girls: Girlhood, Empire, and Internationalism in the 1920s and 1930s*.⁷ *Guiding Modern Girls* explores how Guiding affected different aspects of girls’ lives, including preparations for marriage and motherhood, citizenship, and the importance

⁴ Kristine Alexander, “Can the Girl Guide Speak?: The Perils and Pleasures of looking for Children’s voices in Archival Research.” *Jeunesse* 4, no. 1 (Summer 2012):134.

The title of this article is paraphrasing the famous article by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak “Can the Subaltern Speak?” *Die Philosophin*, 2003, Vol.14(27):.42-58.

⁵ Susan Fisher, *Boys and Girls in No Man’s Land: English-Canadian Children and the First World War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011).

⁶ Alexander, Kristine. “An Honour and a Burden: Canadian Girls and the Great War.” In *A Sisterhood of Suffering and Service: Women and Girls of Canada and Newfoundland During the First World War*, edited by Sarah Glassford and Amy Shaw, 173-95. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011.

⁷ Kristine Alexander, *Guiding Modern Girls: Girlhood, Empire, and Internationalism in the 1920s and 1930s*,(Vancouver: UBC Press, 2017) It won the Founder’s Prize for Best English-language Book, Canadian History of Education Association in 2018 and it won the Wilson Book Prize, The Wilson Institute for Canadian History at McMaster University in 2017.

of the outdoors and camping. This study of the JRC builds upon Alexander's work and the Girl Guides organizations but it is restricted to one children's organization.

Canadian society changed considerably between 1914 and 1918, and although some scholars would argue that it would have changed without the war, there is significant evidence that the war accelerated social change processes. The war interrupted some feminist agendas, but advanced others, such as temperance and suffrage. The war and the consequent stress put on Canadian society provides a unique opportunity to see continuity and change at a pivotal moment in our national history. One of the most significant elements in this shift was the impact on women and girls. As Desmond Morton, one of the most prominent Canadian First World War experts has argued, the absence of a significant cohort of men in Canadian society affected women's lives, more than some historians are willing to discuss.⁸ Married women and their children felt the greatest impact because, for many, their husbands were their economic support, and their abrupt departure left many in dire financial circumstances. Owing to loss of military personnel, many of these circumstances would prove to be permanent.⁹ The war presented a very real and harsh reality for children for a variety of reasons, both economic and emotional. The long absence, or even loss of male relatives, who were often the main source of family income, left children without both emotional and economic support systems. What is interesting about the First World War is how this hardship was constructed, as both "an honour and a burden" for girls by their communities.¹⁰ In one sense, it was an honour to have a male relative serving overseas

⁸ Kristine Alexander, "An Honour and a Burden: Canadian Girls and the Great War", and Desmond Morton, "Supporting Soldiers' Wives and Families in the Great War: What was Transformed?" 195-218 in *A Sisterhood of Suffering and Service: Women and Girls of Canada and Newfoundland During the First World War*, ed by Sarah Glassford and Amy Shaw. 195-218. (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011).

⁹ Morton, 196-7.

¹⁰ This is the title and argument of Kristine Alexander's work. "An Honour and a Burden: Canadian Girls and the Great War."

and yet, the everyday reality of missing those important relatives, the financial and emotional toll of their service, was a burden families had to carry.

As is well known, Canadians were excited when the war was announced in August 1914; enlistment offices were overrun, parades and celebrations were held. The assumption was that the war would last only a few months due to the long period of peace that had preceded 1914, as well as advancements in military technology that would ensure a quick, short war. This expectation of a short war changed the mindset of Canadians. In the early years, the government's justification for war was Canada's loyalty to Britain, and many of the first to enlist were recent British immigrants. As the war continued and Canadians experienced their own substantive losses, such as at the battle of Ypres, the narrative shifted to a war for democracy and a way of life. Women played a significant role in this narrative because women, but especially young girls, purportedly represented this way of life. Women represented home, domesticity, innocence, family life, and therefore were powerful images for promoting the war effort.¹¹ Women were also symbols for the war effort; they would often be portrayed in propaganda as innocent victims in need of rescue.¹² Even women in mourning were seen as important symbols, as throughout the war they were encouraged to change from full black mourning to wear to purple arm bands to represent victory.¹³ However, girls were seen as the complete binary to the soldier. Soldiers were idolized as tough, wise, masculine adults, and girls were young, innocent, and emotional, making their symbolic presences all that more important to the war effort.

Alexander shows through her work, the variety of ways in which this symbolic importance was

¹¹ Alexander "An Honour and a Burden: Canadian Girls and the Great War," 175-6.

¹² For examples see Canadian War Museum online collection https://www.warmuseum.ca/cwm/exhibitions/propaganda/poster4_e.html.

¹³ Suzanne Evans, "Marks of Grief: Black Attire, Medals, and Service Flags" in *A Sisterhood of Suffering and Service: Women and Girls of Canada and Newfoundland During the First World War*, ed by Sarah Glassford and Amy Shaw. 219-240.(Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011).

acted out, such as in popular songs, propaganda, and recruiting posters.¹⁴ The girls were, of course, always represented as middle class, white, Anglo-Canadians, and usually in vulnerable or emotional situations.¹⁵ Due to their status as symbols of democracy, great pressure was placed on girls to maintain feminine norms, and stay within gender roles as much as possible. Expectations were high, and as the war became increasingly difficult – both economically and politically – to fight, these expectations became especially challenging and impractical, particularly when it came to volunteer organizations.

Women's volunteer organizations played a significant role in the First World.¹⁶ These organizations were either involved with children's groups or helped pave the way for them. Women were needed for the war effort, and through these organizations women were allowed, enabled and encouraged to participate in voluntary work. The activities were varied, from large fund raising events to small, but essential work knitting socks and rolling bandages.¹⁷ Other established organizations, such as the Women's Christian Temperance Union, (who advocated for the prohibition of alcohol and for suffrage) and the Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire, (who supported imperialism and women's education) gained momentum as a result of the war, and their numbers increased.

The effects of the war and women's war work had long-term political and social implications, since their contributions extended beyond the war effort.¹⁸ Many women found

¹⁴ Alexander "An Honour and a Burden: Canadian Girls and the Great War," 176-8.

¹⁵ Alexander "An Honour and a Burden: Canadian Girls and the Great War," 176-8.

¹⁶ Tarah Brookfield "Divided by the Ballot Box: The Montreal Council of Women and the 1917 Election." *The Canadian Historical Review* 89, no. 4 (2008): 473-501. Or *A Sisterhood of Suffering and Service: Women and Girls of Canada and Newfoundland During the First World War*. ed. Sarah Glassford and Amy Shaw (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011), 173-95.

¹⁷ John Herd Thompson, *The Harvests of War: The Prairie West, 1914-1918* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1978) 109.

¹⁸ See Sarah Glassford and Amy Shaw, eds. *Sisterhood of Suffering and Service: Women and Girls of Canada and Newfoundland During the First World War*.

freedom in these groups because their participation enabled them to work outside the home. While still being socially acceptable, this work supported the war, was charitable, voluntary work intended to produce practical goals.¹⁹ Moreover, women gained confidence and a new sense of self. Women's volunteer work, in organizations such as the Red Cross, during the war, was also a major contributor to the achievement of women's suffrage and its long-term political effects. The rhetoric of first wave feminism, which emphasized maternalism, gained significant traction during the war, and the Borden government partly justified giving women the vote, due to their work in the war effort.²⁰

Volunteer work had great implications for women and their lives during the war, but can the same be said for girls? The girls who grew up during the war inherited the achievements of first wave feminism, such as attaining the vote, and yet women's futures were still limited: women's roles were still restricted primarily to becoming a wife and mother.²¹ Some of the girls in these organizations during the war became underpaid, overworked women, within and beyond the home. How did the groups both find a way to work in non-traditional roles yet end up without the benefits and the better world that first wave feminism had promised?

The Junior Red Cross (JRC), sometimes referred to as The Red Cross Youth, was founded in Northgate, Saskatchewan in 1915 and led by teacher and nurse Jean Browne. The organization quickly expanded throughout the country, and by the end of the war, Saskatchewan alone had 40,000 members.²² The Red Cross gained importance during the war, and as historian

¹⁹ See Brookfield and Joan Sangster. "Mobilizing Women for War." In *Canada and the First World War: Essays in Honour of Robert Craig Brown*, edited by David Mackenzie, 157-94. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005)

²⁰ Brookfield, 487.

²¹ Veronica Strong-Boag, *The New Day Recalled: Lives of Girls and Women in English Canada 1919-1939*, (New York: Penguin Books, 1988) 1-2, 44.

²² Nancy M Sheehan, "Junior Red Cross in the Schools: An International Movement, a Voluntary Agency, and Curriculum Change." *Curriculum Inquiry*, Vol. 17, No. 3 (Autumn, 1987), 250.

Susan Fisher shows in her work, the Red Cross was glamorized for young girls of the time.²³ They represented a “New Girl,” someone who was independent and liberated.²⁴ There were even novels written about fictional Red Cross Nurses having wonderful and exciting adventures overseas.²⁵ If young boys more often played soldier, then girls, as a counterpart, often played Red Cross nurse.²⁶

The JRC, in order to reach as many children as possible, connected itself to the public school system. The JRC’s involvement with the school system is part of why it was so successful. Educational historian, Nancy Sheehan, found that the organization was one of the few in Canada to be incorporated into public school systems, with Junior Red Cross courses as part of the curriculum.²⁷ The group had a strong British imperial message, as well as a nationalist one, which fit well with the patriotic rhetoric of the war, and their meetings revolved around themes such as nationalism and children’s health. The meetings would start with roll call, and to confirm their presence, members would have to state one of twelve rules of hygiene.²⁸ The emphasis on hygiene and health was for the express purpose of building better, healthier, citizens who would become either the next generation of soldiers or the next generation of wives and mothers of soldiers. The group encouraged girls to take their own initiative, particularly with respect to the war effort. They arranged many fund raising activities in their communities, such as skits, teas, and various sales.²⁹ The members consisted of both boys and girls, but girls held

²³ Susan Fisher, *Boys and Girls in No Man’s Land: English-Canadian Children and the First World War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011) 195.

²⁴ Fisher, 196.

²⁵ Fisher, 195-200.

²⁶ Fisher, 195-200.

²⁷ Sheehan, 247.

²⁸ Sheehan, 247-8.

²⁹ Sheehan, 252 and Fisher, 35.

important leadership positions within the groups, including as the head of western Canadian regional groups.³⁰

The Canadian West is an important area to study, and it is often neglected, particularly in the history of the First World War. Many historical works have neglected the regional differences between Central and Western Canada. The West had a different ethnic composition, economic situation, and political environment than Central Canada. The West is often remembered as the place where women's suffrage was realized, and although that achievement was significant, it does not cover the breadth of their experiences, particularly during the First World War.

Not only are there important differences between Central and Western Canada, but there are significant differences within the West itself. Children in the West had a range of experiences during the war because each province responded differently to the conflict. Some reacted enthusiastically, as Saskatchewan did, and some, such as Manitoba, saw their organization grow after the war. The West has a distinct makeup of urban centres and rural settlements. It was home to a range of immigrants from Eastern and Western Europe, resulting in an ethnically diverse society.³¹ This diversity became more complicated with the war, as recent newcomers' loyalty to Canada, and the British Empire, was often questioned.³² Many JRC leaders felt the most important aspect of the JRC was in its work with "foreigners," i.e., Non-British settlers.³³ Some immigrant children joined the JRC, despite the growing public distrust of immigrants during the

³⁰ Sheehan, 247-8.

³¹ See Bill Waiser. *Saskatchewan: A New History*. (Calgary: Fifth House, 2005). And ³¹ Gerald Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 248.

³²Thompson, 74-5.

³³ Minutes of the Executive, July 15, 1920. Reginald Rimmer Fonds. Saskatchewan Archives. [1895-1944], F19 R468 2F

First World War, often because they were encouraged by teachers.³⁴ Likely, some joined to fit in, or for the social opportunities the JRC offered in rural Saskatchewan.

There is much that can be learned studying a group such as the Junior Red Cross. This thesis aims to show the ways in which age and gender shaped children's experiences of war. It aims to offer a different perspective of the war and early 20th Century Canadian history, by presenting the experiences of Western Canadian girls. Its goal is to contribute to the expanding scholarship informing social histories of Western Canada. A group such as the JRC offers a unique opportunity to see the shift in gendered Canadian identity processes from a war- to peace-time society and the lasting legacy of the war. In addition, this thesis seeks to unpack the complicated history of the JRC regarding its treatment of immigrant and Indigenous children.

Primary research on which this thesis is based was conducted in three main archives, one from each prairie province: the Glenbow Archives in Calgary, the Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon, and the Archives of Manitoba in Winnipeg. My sources primarily consist of minutes from both the Senior and Junior Red Cross meetings in Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba. Those minutes include executive committee meetings, and minutes of related committees, such as nursing, and child welfare. For Saskatchewan, I utilized several personal accounts of teachers in rural areas which were located in Premier William Melville Martin's files at the Saskatchewan archives. In addition, I have located a number of Junior Red Cross pamphlets and magazines with various materials relating to the organization.

Chapter one examines the JRC, its origins, goals, and how it functioned, as well as the involvement of girls in the JRC, their participation rate compared to boys, the girls' leadership

³⁴ Thompson, 74.

roles, and what sorts of activities were encouraged within the group. I argue that the JRC catered to its female members. The JRC provided sewing groups and encouraged the production of a number of homemade items that were sent to the soldiers overseas. Many of the JRC's explicit goals point to the affirmation of traditional notions of femininity, yet they balanced this with their encouragement of citizenship and participation in public life.

Chapter two examines the JRC's health and hygiene strategies, which were a major part of the group's overall philosophy of improving the nation for future generations, and reveals their anxieties about the future during and after the war. The war, and the overall fitness of soldiers revealed many inadequacies in public health that the JRC sought to rectify. In many ways, these particular goals were embedded in traditional notions of femininity, such as the promotion of nursing and mothering. Women led many of the health initiatives; indeed Jean Browne, the health and hygiene director and leader of the JRC, was a trained nurse. Chapter two focuses on the post war period because after the war, concerns over the health of returning soldiers created a growing realization about the importance of the next generation's health.

Chapter three discusses how the organization viewed non-British children and their goals for their participation. In particular, the JRC paid attention to children in the Ukrainian districts. For this research, I draw on personal accounts from teachers in rural Saskatchewan between 1916-1922, which reveal both prejudices toward immigrant children and a desire to assimilate them.

Chapter four examines the Red Cross and Junior Red Cross at File Hills. In this chapter, I discuss First Nations' involvement and views regarding the war, the nature of File Hill as an

“experiment” by the Canadian Department of Indian Affairs, and why the Red Cross would choose to establish a JRC in this location.

This history of girls’ participation in the JRC not only focuses on the experiences of western Canadian girls, but intersects with broader, complicated questions within the scholarship of the First World War and women’s and gender history. This then raises questions about the long-term effects of the war, as well as the legacy of first wave feminisms. Notable scholars, such as Kristine Alexander, Amy Shaw, Sarah Glassford, and Susan Fisher have made important contributions over the last few years, and have provided a foundation for this project, but there is still a significant amount to explore and understand. Public and academic interest in the Great War has been heightened through recent hundredth anniversary commemorations. The Great War is often touted as the time that Canada “came of age,” but, despite the metaphor, the experiences of the youngest members of society remained largely unexamined. The legacies of this pivotal moment in their lives have shaped Canadians’ understanding of what it means to be a Canadian and a citizen.

Chapter One: “United to Help,”¹ The Junior Red Cross in Western Canada

In 1921 two exceptional items of children’s clothing were made by JRC members—a sturdy blue cotton dress and a simple outfit made for a toddler. These articles were ultimately destined for the “hard-working wife of a soldier settler.” However, on the way to the recipient, they were displayed at local teacher conventions where they were “greatly admired.”² Why were these items special? Because to the young girls of Coldwell school in Manitoba, their construction was their first real act of “service.”³ The items were both a display of their skill and a sign of their compassion and loyalty. Why did this act of service matter to these girls? What inspired them? Moreover, why were their adult counterparts just as concerned with that service? Furthermore, what role did the organization that inspired this service- the Junior Red Cross-play in the lives of children like them?

First World War and Settlement

The war was a long and traumatic event for Canadians. When the war began in 1914, the expectation was it would only last a few months at most. Many enlistees worried that the war would be over before they even got overseas. However, the war lasted for four years, and Canada lost over 60,000 (mostly) men. The long duration of the war combined with the heavy losses meant Canada was involved in a total war, which meant every citizen, male or female, need to be involved whether it was on the battlefield or on the Homefront; this included children. However,

¹ Title taken from a letter from a poem featured in the JRC magazine. Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, Pamphlet collection, G279.9 Canadian Red Cross Society-Saskatchewan Branch, The Junior Red Cross (magazine) number three, “Junior Red Cross” December 1920, p.16.

² Archives of Manitoba, Canadian Red Cross Society Manitoba Branch, Minutes of the Executive, Q 22128 file 3Superintendents’ Report to Junior Red Cross Advisory Committee, June 23rd 1922 p. 3

³ AM, Canadian Red Cross Society Manitoba Branch, Minutes of the Executive, Q 22128 file 3Superintendents’ Report to Junior Red Cross Advisory Committee, June 23rd 1922 p. 3.

enlistment or even involvement on the Homefront during the war could be complicated by racial and ethnic tensions, particularly on the Prairies. Before the war, the prairie provinces had been in a recession and relations between British-Canadians and new immigrants were tense due to economic hardship. The war exacerbated those tensions.⁴ As well, fear that the new immigrants would take too much land, or that they would not succeed at farming and move to the cities where they would be an economic burden on the government, also created tensions.⁵ There was also fear that newcomers would not assimilate to Anglo-Canadian culture, and therefore compromise the future of their imagined ideal Anglo Canada.⁶

Immigration is a vital part of the history of the prairies. Attitudes about immigration varied throughout the period and therefore so did related policies. The original immigration policy in the 1867 British North American Act only excluded criminals and those seen as mentally or physically “unfit.”⁷ Later in 1885, Chinese immigrants were also limited.⁸ By 1897 new policies were introduced both to include and exclude certain groups based on occupation.⁹ So while the federal government desired immigration to develop the west, there were racial, class, and occupational hierarchies of “ideal” immigrants.

The prairie provinces during the war had many difficulties, tensions, divides, and conflicts¹⁰—some of which can be traced back to the federal government’s efforts to settle the prairies after the Resistance of 1885.¹¹ In addition, the ranching industry in Saskatchewan, failed

⁴ John Herd Thompson, *The Harvests of War: The Prairie West, 1914-1918* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1978), 73-95.

⁵ Waiser *Saskatchewan: A New History*, 76,

⁶ Waiser *Saskatchewan: A New History*, 64-79.

⁷ Friesen, 245.

⁸ Friesen, 245.

⁹ Friesen, 246.

¹⁰ For a more detailed discussion see chapter three.

¹¹ Bill Waiser, *A World We Have Lost: Saskatchewan Before 1905*, (Markham ON: Fifth House Limited, 2016),574.

by weather and border issues with American ranchers during the late 1880s, meant Euro-Canadian settlement was the most viable option for securing the prairies.¹²

The future of Western Canada was idealized as an Anglo-Protestant society, and for many, the best way to achieve this ideal was to encourage British settlers. However, the early years of settlement resulted in a great deal of failure; more people were leaving Canada than coming in.¹³ In the early 1900s, this situation changed. The United States had recently run low on homestead land, and an increase in the demand for Canadian land caused a boom in the population of Western Canada.¹⁴ The most historically significant shift happened in 1896 when Clifford Sifton was appointed Minister of the Interior. His philosophy regarding the settlement of the Prairies varied from his predecessors. Sifton sought to settle the Prairies with members of the “peasant class,” meaning farmers from eastern European countries, such as Ukraine. His policies were on the whole, successful; between the late 1890s and the 1930s, the population on the prairies increased six times from 400,000 in 1901 to 2.4 million in the 1930s, mostly due to immigration.¹⁵ However, any immigrants would be expected to assimilate through a process which at the time was referred to as “Canadianization.” One organization involved in this process of Canadianization was the JRC.

Beginning of the JRC

The JRC was created during the First World War, but the Red Cross had a longer history in Canada. The International Red Cross has its roots in the Geneva convention of 1863. The founding goals were to provide a neutral organization dedicated to care for sick and wounded

¹² Waiser, *A World We Have Lost*, 589-94.

¹³ Bill Waiser. *Saskatchewan: A New History*. (Calgary: Fifth House, 2005) 62-3.

¹⁴Waiser. *Saskatchewan: A New History*, 63.

¹⁵Gerald Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 242.

soldiers during the war.¹⁶ It was officially founded in Canada in 1896, but it began unofficially in western Canada during the resistance of 1885.¹⁷ The Canadian branch was formed relatively late but was still the first branch within the British Empire.¹⁸ Originally founded as a way to promote medical reform in the army, the organization did not find its first true challenge until the South African War.¹⁹ The organization was initially all-male; however, by the time of the South African War, it was actively seeking women volunteers.²⁰ Since women began volunteering in large numbers, they demanded executive positions within the organization.²¹ Although there were thirty-two male presidents of local branches in 1909, sixteen women also occupied the position.²² These women were not only acknowledged as leaders within their communities, but their status as leaders was officially incorporated into the Canadian Red Cross charter with the Government of Canada.²³ For example, women such as Mrs. Adelaide Plumtre, whose leadership played a major role in the organization throughout the war reformed the operating system of the Red Cross organization.²⁴ Formally a teacher at a private institution, Adelaide Plumtre received her education at Oxford, although she was never officially awarded a degree, as Oxford did not award degrees to women at that time.²⁵ She was able to effect change at a high level, and even set standards and procedures for local branches.²⁶ However, when the First

¹⁶ Sarah Glassford, *Mobilizing Mercy: A History of the Canadian Red Cross*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen University Press, 2017),9.

¹⁷ Glassford, 27.

¹⁸ Glassford, 12.

¹⁹ Glassford, 47.

²⁰ Glassford, 69.

²¹ Glassford, 75.

²² Glassford, 75.

²³ Glassford, 75.

²⁴ Glassford, 90-1

²⁵ Gail Youngberg and Mona Holmlund, *Inspiring Women: A Celebration of Herstory*, (Regina: Coteau Books, 2003)98.

²⁶ Glassford, 90-3.

World War began, the Red Cross saw not only the need for women but for children volunteers as well.²⁷

The Establishment of the JRCs in the Three Prairie Provinces

Childhood and adolescence were evolving concepts at the beginning of the 20th century.²⁸ The idea that adolescence was a distinct phase of life, separate from child and adulthood, was relatively new. “Youth” was recognized as a time of struggle for independence and adulthood, but also, adolescents were still dependent on adults and expected to defer to authority figures.²⁹ This new stage in the life course was constructed differently for boys and girls. For boys, seeking independence and freedom and even defying authority was seen as a natural phase in their lives, a type of normal rebellion that would ultimately help them become men.³⁰ However, for women, the same type of rebellious behavior or defying authority, was seen as morally wrong. Volunteer organizations such as the Junior Red Cross (JRC) would have been vital to girls in the preteen and teenage years as they provided outlets for a small amount of independence and socializing, but still maintained societal norms that encouraged girls to become primarily wives and mothers.

The Junior Red Cross, or JRC, was a popular movement throughout Canada and the United States. In Saskatchewan, the movement could be considered the most successful of the three prairie provinces. With 1000 groups and 40,000 members by the end of the war, it had the

²⁷ Glassford, 92.

²⁸ Cythnia Comacchio, *The Dominion of Youth: Adolescence in the Making of Modern Canada 1920-1950*. (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2006), 1.

²⁹ Rebecca Priegert Coulter, “Between School and Marriage: A Case Study Approach to Young Women’s Work in Early Twentieth-Century Canada,” in *Histories of Canadian Children and Youth*, ed Nancy Janovicek and Joy Parr, (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2003) 91.

³⁰ Coulter, 91.

most substantial growth.³¹ In fact, the organization originated in Saskatchewan, in the southern town of Northgate in October 1915. A single nurse, Emily Holmes-Orr founded it in 1915 for children to “help bear the burden their country was bearing.”³² The JRC was not given official status as an auxiliary branch of the Red Cross society until 1919, and then Jean Browne was made the national director.³³ However, even in its “unofficial” years, the organization had a strong and meaningful presence.

The JRC was first officially recognized in the minutes of the senior branches in August 1917; but, by that time, 55 groups had been formed already. Moreover, groups continued to form throughout the war. Every month new groups were formed; some months had as few as six and others had as many as eighty-one new groups.³⁴ The groups formed as auxiliaries of senior branches, and initially in 1917, they were under the senior branches’ control and direction. JRC branches were meant for children and youth under the age of sixteen.³⁵

The success of the JRC was directly connected to the influence of the senior branches within the provinces. All three provinces reacted differently to the war effort and fundraising efforts. One of the reasons that the JRC had more success in Saskatchewan than all of the other provinces was due to the high participation and accomplishments of the senior Saskatchewan

³¹ Nancy M Sheehan, “Junior Red Cross in the Schools: An International Movement, a Voluntary Agency, and Curriculum Change.” *Curriculum Inquiry* 17, No. 3 (Autumn, 1987), 250.

³² Glassford, 93.

³³ Sheehan, 248.

³⁴PAS, Reginald Rimmer Fonds, R-87 R468 2F, Canadian Red Cross Society-Saskatchewan Branch Minutes of the Executive.

³⁵ PAS, Reginald Rimmer Fonds, R-87 R468 2F, Canadian Red Cross Society-Saskatchewan Branch Minutes of the Executive, August 1917. Unfortunately, the sources are sparse regarding the specific age of their members, but the organization was open to children and from age five into their late teens. See Sarah Glassford, “Bearing the Burdens of Their Elders: English-Canadian Children’s First World War Red Cross Work and Its Legacies” *Études canadiennes / Canadian Studies*, 80: (2016) 136.

Red Cross branch, which, during the war, raised an impressive \$1.1 million.³⁶ The only province to raise more funds was Ontario with \$1.3 million, but its population base was significantly higher--2.5 million compared to 492,000 in Saskatchewan.³⁷ Manitoba was third, but it raised less than half of what Saskatchewan accumulated, with \$498,000.³⁸ The success of the organization can be attributed to a large number of branches which made substantial regular contributions. The Saskatchewan Red Cross financial reports are several pages long for each month, covering the contributions of each town; some donations were as small as five dollars, while others were as large as \$500 or \$1000, which today would be the equivalent between \$8,000-16,000.³⁹

The executive committee was committed to organizing as many branches as possible, but it was the hard work of the branches themselves where the real difference was seen. Not only did they raise a significant amount of money, but they also made or purchased large quantities of items, such as socks, shirts, and pyjamas, for both soldiers at the front and prisoners of war. During the war, Saskatchewan children were also making regular contributions to the war effort. Towns such as Indian Head, Northgate, Hoosier, and Kerrobert were making monthly contributions ranging from \$1 to over \$300 every month, in addition to making supply packages. The JRC, despite their notable fundraising efforts, was in many ways a charity of its own. The senior Red Cross absorbed all administrative cost, and the 25 cents membership fee went directly

³⁶ PAS, Pamphlet collection R-1187 Canadian Red Cross Society Saskatchewan Branch Annual Report 1917-1918, p. 5. And Library and Archives Canada, 1911 Census. <http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/census/1911/Pages/about-census.aspx>

³⁷ PAS "Canadian Red Cross Society Saskatchewan Branch Annual Report 1917-1918," p. 5. And LAC, Census of Canada, 1911 <http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/census/1911/Pages/about-census.aspx>

³⁸ PAS "Canadian Red Cross Society Saskatchewan Branch Annual Report 1917-1918," p. 5. And LAC, Census of Canada, 1911 <http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/census/1911/Pages/about-census.aspx>

³⁹ PAS, Reginald Rimmer Fonds, R-87 R468 2F. Canadian Red Cross Society-Saskatchewan Branch Minutes of the Executive. And Bank of Canada inflation calculator <http://www.bankofcanada.ca/rates/related/inflation-calculator/> (accessed October, 2017)

to fundraising efforts.⁴⁰ The Canadian Red Cross Society was clear that the true purpose of the JRC was not for financial benefits of the Senior Red Cross and by covering all of the JRC administrative costs, the senior division actually lost money.⁴¹

Manitoba had the fourth highest money donated but that was still less than half the amount of Saskatchewan at \$498,000, and Alberta was even lower at number five in Canada with \$271,000 raised.⁴² Quebec, with a large French Canadian population and involved in the heated conscription crisis, raised close to the same amount as Alberta, \$212,000.⁴³ In fact, Saskatchewan raised more funds per capita than any of the other provinces or even countries in the commonwealth for the war.⁴⁴ Saskatchewan's distinguished fund-raising efforts were due, at least in part, to the strong support the Red Cross received from the Saskatchewan Provincial Government. It is clear from the different ways the three provinces developed, that the JRC's connection to the school board and its acceptance as a vital organization was critical to its success in Saskatchewan. The JRC not only had the permission of the Saskatchewan board of education to organize in public schools from the beginning, but also the deputy minister, A.H. Ball. His active campaign began with 14 groups in May 1918, increasing to 81 in June 1918.⁴⁵ The success of the junior groups was facilitated by the presence of the highly active senior Red Cross, which had more resources and a much larger administrative staff. Unlike Alberta and Manitoba, many high-ranking members of the provincial government were also executive

⁴⁰ PAS, Reginald Rimmer Fonds. R-87 R468 2F. Canadian Red Cross Society-Saskatchewan Branch Minutes of the Executive.

⁴¹ "Canadian Red Cross Society-Saskatchewan Branch Minutes of the Executive."

⁴² PAS, Pamphlet collection, Canadian Red Cross Society-Saskatchewan Branch, Annual Report 1917-1918. R-1187. pg 5.

⁴³ "Canadian Red Cross Society Saskatchewan Branch Annual Report 1917-1918," p. 5.

⁴⁴ PAS, Reginal Rimmer Fonds, R87 R-486, letter from W.F. Kerr to Canadian Red Cross life members. May 2, 1921.

⁴⁵ PAS, Reginald Rimmer Fonds, R-87 R104 Canadian Red Cross Society-Saskatchewan Branch Minutes of the Executive., May 1st 1918, June 6th 1918.

committee members of the Red Cross, including the Premier. Sir Richard Lake, Saskatchewan's Lieutenant Governor, was President of the Saskatchewan branch of the Red Cross.

In Alberta, the Red Cross was small; only a handful of towns contributed on a regular basis compared to the dozens in Saskatchewan. Therefore, Alberta had less power and resources to create a large JRC during the early years of the war. It was not until 1919 that the JRC came to the attention of the Executive Committee of the Alberta Branch and, even then, minimal progress was made.⁴⁶ Unlike Saskatchewan, the Albertan Board of Education was not entirely convinced of the JRC's value, and the deputy minister even neglected to respond to multiple letters requesting permission to organize branches through the schools.⁴⁷ The government gave no concrete reasons for its resistance. However, once they were given permission, the organization grew quickly, and by 1922, they had contributed to the establishment of a children's hospital. Although not significantly active during the war, the group was greatly influenced by the experience and legacy of the war. For example, their previous work during the war involved caring for the orphaned children of soldiers through a children's home and a Child Welfare Committee.⁴⁸

Initially, the province of Manitoba was hesitant about the formation of a JRC, particularly through the school system. In 1918, a Mr. A.H. Isaac wrote to the Red Cross, suggesting they consider developing a program where they collected weekly funds from the school children in an attempt to involve them in the war effort.⁴⁹ However, the request was coolly met by the Red

⁴⁶ Glenbow Archives. Canadian Red Cross Society NWT Division, series 2a, M-8228-15, Minutes February 26, 1919.

⁴⁷ GA, Canadian Red Cross Society NWT Division, series 2a, M-8228-15, Minutes 1920.

⁴⁸ GA, Canadian Red Cross Society NWT Division, Minutes "Care of Soldier's Children and Work of Child Welfare Committee, series 2a, M-8228-15, 1920. And GA Canadian Red Cross Society NWT Division, Minutes, Alberta Red Cross Convention, Care of Soldiers Children and work of Child Welfare committee, December 10th, 1919.

⁴⁹ Archives of Manitoba, Canadian Red Cross Society Manitoba Branch, Minutes of the Executive, Q 22127 file 3, December 4, 1917.

Cross committee and refused by the chairman (*sic*) of the school board.⁵⁰ What is particularly surprising about their decision was that there were already a number of JRCs in the province by 1917. As well, there was thirty-six other youth organizations contributing to the Red Cross and the war effort.⁵¹ Winnipeg alone had eleven.⁵² Even in 1919 when the JRC became an official auxiliary of the Red Cross, Manitoba choose to “take no further action.”⁵³ The organization did not become official, and little effort was made towards its growth until 1921 after delegates from the Red Cross had attended a conference in America about the success of their JRC.⁵⁴ The delay may have been because there were several independent youth groups already contributing to the war effort and, therefore, the province did not see what other benefits the JRC could offer until attending the American conference. The American Red Cross had shown their experience and value in the aftermath of the Halifax Explosion and now had a reputation as a respected branch of the Red Cross.⁵⁵ The conference confirmed for the Manitoba branch that the JRC message of health and citizenship was worthwhile, and they believed that organizing through the public schools and remaining a secular organization would be the best way to succeed.⁵⁶ Because children would not be hindered by religious or language barriers, a higher number of children could be reached.⁵⁷ With the growing diversity of the three Provinces, secularization was seen as the best way to avoid alienating the parents.⁵⁸

⁵⁰ AM, Canadian Red Cross Society Manitoba Branch, Q 22127 file 4, Minutes of the Executive, January 4, 1918

⁵¹ AM, Canadian Red Cross Society Manitoba Branch, Q 22127 file 4, Annual Financial Report, 1917, 1917.

⁵² “Annual Financial Report, 1917.”

⁵³ AM, Canadian Red Cross Society Manitoba Branch, Q 22132 file 6 Annual Financial Report, 1919.

⁵⁴ AM, Canadian Red Cross Society Manitoba Branch, Report on the Junior Red Cross, 1921, Q 22128 file 4, 1921.

⁵⁵ Glassford, 124-5.

⁵⁶ “Report on the Junior Red Cross, 1921.”

⁵⁷ “Report on the Junior Red Cross, 1921.”

⁵⁸ For a further discussion of school and secularization see chapter three.

The variation in JRC programming and design among the three provinces shows that the west was not homogenous in their reaction to the war as has often been presented in scholarship. It also reveals the adaptable nature of the JRC and its ability to adjust to a wide range of concerns over children and youth in the early 20th century in Canada.

Women in Leadership Positions

The Red Cross and the Junior Red Cross are part of a larger historical discussion about women and expanding roles during the First World War, including women's increased involvement in leadership positions.⁵⁹ There were many other volunteer organizations active during the war years, and a high number were exclusively female, such as the I.O.D.E. (Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire), Y.W.C.A (Young Women's Christian Association), Women's Christian Temperance Union, and others. The Red Cross, although a co-ed organization, had a high number of women who participated and held positions of authority. The hard work done by women in organizations such as the Red Cross directly connects to the suffrage movement. In her article "Divided by the Ballot Box," Tara Brookfield argues that women during the war used their efforts and sacrifices to gain access to "full citizenship,"⁶⁰ both by achieving the vote but also by gaining respect. There were many different types of feminism in the early 20th century, such as egalitarian feminism or Maternal feminism⁶¹ and although the goals of each organization could vary, the war work done by participating women was so vital that it played a significant

⁵⁹ Such as Adelaide Plumtre and Mrs. A.E. Gooderham who were associate members of the CRCS executive. See Glassford, 90.

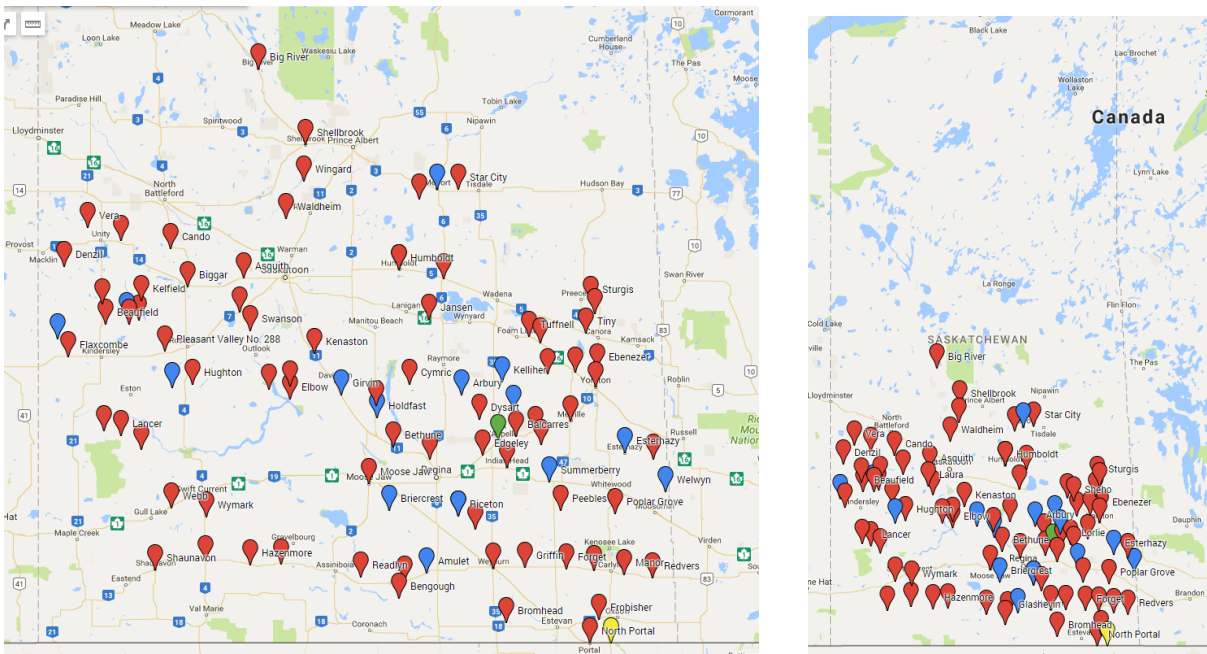
⁶⁰ Tara Brookfield "Divided by the Ballot Box: The Montreal Council of Women and the 1917 Election." *The Canadian Historical Review* 89, no. 4 (2008): 483. Egalitarian feminism believed women should gain political and social power based on their equality to men, and maternal feminism believed their position as mothers gave them a "special responsibility", to engage in politics. see Brookfield, 477.

⁶¹ See Brookfield.

role in achieving the vote. However, this war work was not easy and came with responsibility. The JRC was no exception.

The gender make-up of the JRCs also varied across the three prairie provinces.⁶² In 1917 there were 129 JRCs in Saskatchewan and of those branches, 106 (82%) had girls in elected executive positions, such as secretary.⁶³

Map 1.1 Saskatchewan JRC Branches December 1917

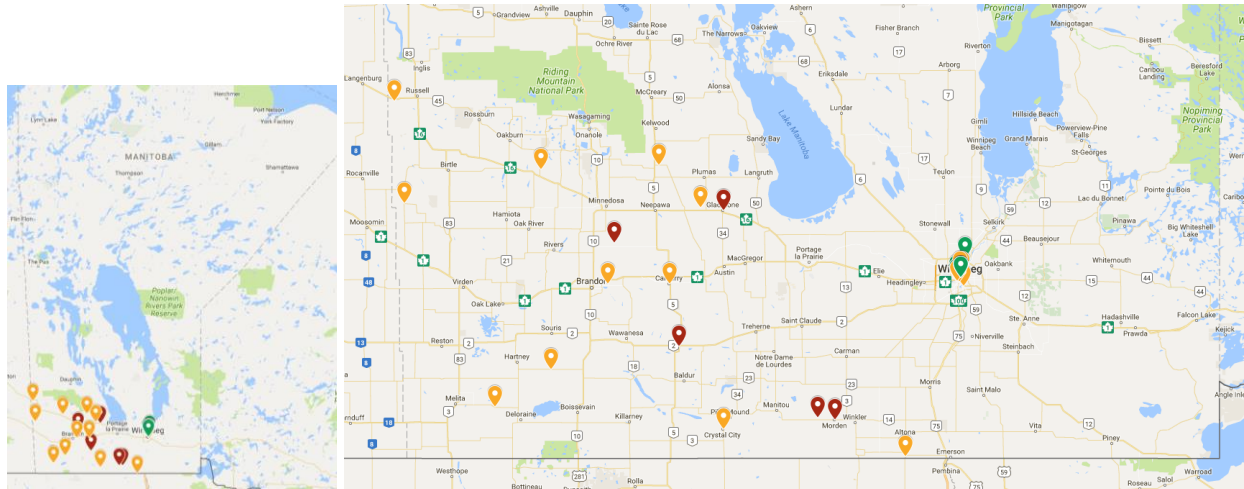


Red= Female executive positions Blue= Male executive positions

⁶² Unfortunately numbers for individual branches do not exist.

⁶³ PAS, Pamphlet collection, Canadian Red Cross Society-Saskatchewan Branch, Annual Report, R-1187, Report for October 1st, 1916 to September 30th 1917. P.5.

Map 1.2 Manitoba Youth Volunteer Groups 1917 ⁶⁴



Red = Junior Red Cross Yellow= Groups for girls only Green= Groups for boys only

Saskatchewan was not the only province with a significant number of girls in leadership positions. In Manitoba, even before the JRC was officially adopted by the Manitoba branch, most of the children's and youth groups that were donating to the Red Cross were led by females. By 1917, there were thirty-six children's and youth groups donating supplies to the Red Cross, five were calling themselves a Junior Red Cross, seven were mixed youth groups (either through a church or town), and the remaining twenty-four groups were exclusively groups for girls.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ These two maps were created using Google maps. The JRC Branches map was created from a list of branches found in a Canadian Red Cross Society pamphlet which listed the branch locations and the secretaries. (see footnote 63). The information for the Manitoba Youth Volunteer map came from the Manitoba Branch Financial reports (see footnote 65)

⁶⁵AM, Canadian Red Cross Society Manitoba Branch, Annual Financial Report, 1917, Q 22132 file 6, 1917, p. 33-76.

In particular, Manitoba was very explicit about the value of women within the Red Cross. In the president's addresses in the financial reports from 1915-1919, the women are both praised and thanked.⁶⁶ He congratulated them "on the large amount of work done, and also upon the thoroughly efficient manner in which the affairs of the Society have been conducted."⁶⁷ He later went so far as to express his gratitude that "The Red Cross Society is essentially a women's organization."⁶⁸ Even Prime Minister Robert Borden was quoted as saying "The unselfish devotion and the tireless energy with which the women of Canada have consecrated their efforts to this work deserve and command the highest praise."⁶⁹

One of the most important efforts made by participating women and girls was supplying valuable supplementary items for the army, such as additional socks, shirts, pyjamas, and others. Having additional items such as these would be invaluable to soldiers at the front and the vast majority of these necessary items were made and prepared by women.⁷⁰ For example, the continuous supply of socks helped combat trench foot among soldiers. As of the Incorporation Act of 1909, it was the Red Cross' mandate within Canadian law to "To furnish volunteer aid to the sick and wounded of armies in time of war."⁷¹ The production of clothing and preparation of toiletries was part of this duty. Although men were involved in raising funds to purchase the materials to make these items, they were far less likely to contribute the large amount of time and labour necessary to produce these invaluable items. Therefore, women were more important to the overall functioning of the organization than men, especially at the branch/local levels.

⁶⁶ AM, Canadian Red Cross Society Manitoba Branch, Q 22132 file 6, Annual Reports, President's Address 1915-9.

⁶⁷ "President's Address," p. 5

⁶⁸ "President's Address," p. 5

⁶⁹ "President's Address," p. 5

⁷⁰ Glassford, 110.

⁷¹ Glassford, 74-5.

Historian Sarah Glassford argues that roles such as these actually allowed women “a means of extending the domestic sphere.”⁷² The importance and authority given to women in the organization made the Red Cross a place where women could experience opportunities for service and exercise leadership, for example, by leading their own branches and by holding important high-ranking positions within the organization

The Manitoba branch’s success depended on its female members and the women’s auxiliary branch. The branch had several thousand female members (2200 by 1915) who raised a majority of the funds.⁷³ Most notably, the Manitoba branch was solely responsible for running the shipping department, which managed a difficult and essential task. The department was responsible for packaging and organizing items for men overseas that were sent from the volunteers of the provincial branches. The department opened in 1915, and by the end of the war they packaged and shipped 78,000 pairs of socks, 76,000 pairs of pyjamas, and 40,000 shirts.⁷⁴ The ultimate value of the goods shipped by the women’s auxiliary was over half a million dollars, which was more than the money given to the general fund by all of Manitoba.⁷⁵ Comparing women’s and men’s contributions to the war effort, Sir Richard Lake, the Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan, in a letter to the Saskatchewan branches, exhorted men to do more: “Great numbers of noble-minded women throughout the length and breadth of our Province have been laboring devotedly since the early days of this terrible struggle... It is now the turn of the

⁷² Glassford, 122.

⁷³AM, Canadian Red Cross Society Manitoba Branch, Q 22132 file 6, Annual Report 1920, Report of the Women’s Auxiliary 1920. And AM, Canadian Red Cross Society Manitoba Branch, Annual Report 1915, Report of the Women’s Auxiliary p. 30.

⁷⁴ “Report of the Women’s Auxiliary” p. 34.

⁷⁵“Report of the Women’s Auxiliary” p. 34,. And PAS, Pamphlet collection, Canadian Red Cross Society-Saskatchewan Branch, Annual Report, R-1187. pg 8-9,1917-1918.

men to supplement with contributions of money the work already being done.”⁷⁶ Not only were women running the shipping department in Winnipeg, they were also making the thousands of items shipped. In Manitoba, there were 500 sewing groups to meet the demand.⁷⁷

Saskatchewan women also played a significant role in the Red Cross. Like the women of Manitoba, they were called upon to make most of the material goods shipped overseas. In a request for these items, women were encouraged not to “fail their boys,” and were repeatedly reminded that men’s suffering was in their hands.⁷⁸ This kind of rhetoric shows not only the importance placed on women and their labour, but also the duties ascribed not only for their families, but to all soldiers, furthering emphasizing ideals of maternal nursing, care, and sacrifice. Their service was framed as a patriotic responsibility, which was synonymous with sacrifice, especially in terms of enlisting and fighting overseas.⁷⁹ In Saskatchewan, women also had prominent roles in the administration of the Red Cross. Jean Browne, the director of Health and Hygiene, was often consulted in matters of nursing and patients within the Red Cross. Other women such as Jean Urquhart and Mrs. W.M. Graham, were both members of the Junior Red Cross committee and members of the Red Cross executive committee, and were almost always in attendance at the meetings.⁸⁰ These women were professionals: Jean Urquhart graduated from the Winnipeg General Hospital School of Nursing in 1910. She held various positions in her

⁷⁶ PAS, Reginald Rimmer Fonds, R-87 R468 2F Canadian Red Cross Society-Saskatchewan Branch Minutes of the Executive, Letter from Sir Richard Lake., November 1915.

⁷⁷ AM, Canadian Red Cross Society Manitoba Branch, Q 22132 file 6 Annual Report 1917, Minutes of the Women’s Auxiliary, October 31st 1917.

⁷⁸ PAS, Reginald Rimmer Fonds, R-87 R-104 2C, Canadian Red Cross Society-Saskatchewan Branch Canadian Red Cross Society-Saskatchewan Branch 1914-1918, “Letter to the Women of Saskatchewan” from R.B. Ferguson Secretary, October, 1916.

⁷⁹ Glassford, 118.

⁸⁰ Mrs. W.M. Graham was the wife of Indian Agent William Morris Graham, see chapter four page 93 for a more detailed discussion of her.

career, including Operating Room nurse at Regina General Hospital in 1914.⁸¹ At the time, she was a single woman and was the matron of the Saskatchewan branch of the Canadian Army Medical Branch and served overseas from 1916-1918.⁸² After the war, Urquhart taught Hygiene at the Provincial Normal School, and had an impressive career as a nurse and teacher.

The Junior Red Cross: Practices and Values

By 1921 the Manitoba Red Cross decided to write to the chairman of the school board again, and this time he hesitantly agreed to let the branches be organized through the schools.⁸³ Since the branches now had the full support of the Red Cross, an executive committee was established, and were allotted \$500 worth of funding.⁸⁴ In the first six months, 228 members joined and through their Crippled Children's Fund, thirty-six families were helped. Early activities were highly gendered; knitting and sewing was encouraged for the girls and toy and furniture making for the boys."⁸⁵

With such high rates of female involvement, both the senior Red Cross, and the JRC tried to embody notions of maternalism and feminine traits, making the organization an acceptable outlet for women, especially for those trying to gain access to the public sphere.⁸⁶ Even women such as Nellie McClung used the Red Cross as a way to promote maternal feminist ideas.⁸⁷ From the literature of the JRC, it is evident they were targeting girls. For example, in one of their

⁸¹ Health Science Centre Archives. Winnipeg General Hospital School of Nursing, Class of 1910, Jean Urquhart. <https://hscarchives.com/winnipeg-general-hospital-school-of-nursing-class-of-1910/>

⁸² Cynthia Toman, *Sister Soldiers of the Great War: The Nurses of the Canadian Army Medical Corps* (Vancouver: UPC Press, 2016), 197.

⁸³AM, Canadian Red Cross Society Manitoba Branch, Q 22128 file 4, Minutes of the Executive Committee- RE Junior Red Cross, 1921.

⁸⁴ "RE Junior Red Cross, 1921." p.3

⁸⁵ "Superintendents' Report to Junior Red Cross Advisory Committee," p. 3.

⁸⁶ Glassford, 122.

⁸⁷ Glassford, 122.

pamphlets, which were distributed to the branches, they highlighted the career of Florence Nightingale, in an article entitled: “The Lady with the Lamp.”⁸⁸ The article begins with a poem referring to Nightingale as “A noble type of good Heroic womanhood,” and features a highly feminized image of her diligently reading, in a grand flowing dress, with hair neatly coiled into a bun (See Figure 1, pg 31).⁸⁹ She was portrayed as a pious, educated woman, but also highly romanticized. What is interesting about this article is that it positions Florence Nightingale as a hero for girls but provides no alternative role model for boys who might read the magazine. Such features provide evidence that the intended audience was female readers. As well, Florence Nightingale is presented as the ultimate example of a woman, because of her nurturing nature and domestic abilities, and yet the article emphasizes that during her own time, her pursuit of nursing was considered “unladylike.”⁹⁰ It is presenting a complicated, perhaps conflicting, message to girls by encouraging them to pursue options outside the home, while remaining as close to feminine duty as one can, and to preserve a delicate balance between professional expertise and leadership within a female-defined model which highlights charity, femininity and maternal stereotypes.

This idea of caring and nurturing, fostering femininity, also extended to other activities encouraged by the JRC. For example, the Junior Red Cross hosted activities such as sewing groups, “care of the baby” competitions and, of course, making items for soldiers overseas such as socks, shirts, and pyjamas. To engage the young volunteers, these undertakings were set up as competitions. The winners created presentations that were meant to instill pride in young girls. In these displays, girls were presented as becoming capable women and preparing to be efficient

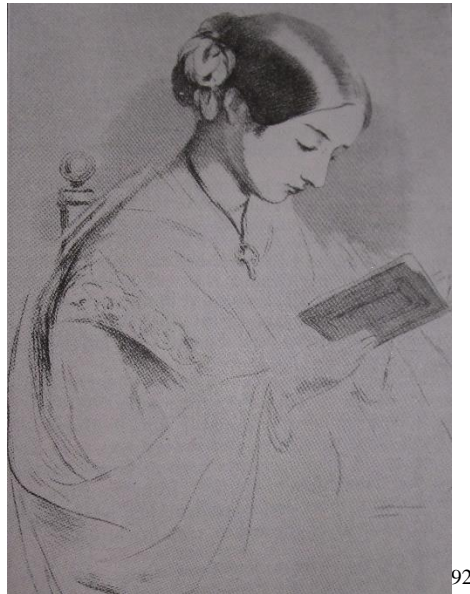
⁸⁸PAS, Pamphlet collection, G257.7, Canadian Red Cross Society-Saskatchewan Branch, The Junior Red Cross (magazine), “The Lady with the Lamp,” April 1920. p. 8-10.

⁸⁹ “The Lady with the Lamp,” p. 8.

⁹⁰ “The Lady with the Lamp,” p. 10.

and useful wives and mothers. Garments made by these groups were usually made for children younger than themselves, such as the Coldwell School branch whose items were made for toddlers.⁹¹ It was vital that these items were made for “a hard-working wife of a soldier settler.” However, sewing was not the only skill women participated in for patriotic reasons.

Illustration 1.1 “The Lady with the Lamp”



Knitting in both the senior and junior Red Cross was an exceedingly important activity because it was a very real and tangible way for any woman to participate in the war effort. During a course of eight months in 1918, Red Cross volunteers knitted and shipped almost 707,000 socks overseas.⁹³ Socks were important for the well-being of soldiers because trench foot was a serious problem at the front and a steady supply of socks was the best way to combat

⁹¹ AM, Canadian Red Cross Society Manitoba Branch, Minutes of the Executive, Q 22128 file 3 Superintendents' Report to Junior Red Cross Advisory Committee June 23rd 1922, p. 3.

⁹² “The Lady with the Lamp,” p. 9.

⁹³ PAS, Reginald Rimmer Fonds. R-87 R104 1B Canadian Red Cross Society. Central Council. Summary of Shipments. January 1st to August 31st 1918.

it. It was, therefore, vital to keeping up interest in the campaign.⁹⁴ Urban areas even experienced a “knitting revival” thanks to the Red Cross.⁹⁵ By the time of the war, many items could be store-bought, and knitting had declined in urban areas. The war offered an opportunity for young women to learn a so-called “traditional” skill.⁹⁶ While encouraging women to knit was one challenge, the other was to follow knitting patterns so that the socks fit. Standardized knitting instructions were distributed, but poor work that was sent in either had to be fixed by the inspectors or in worse case scenarios, thrown out.⁹⁷ Memos sent to branches, gently reminding them to work carefully, were not uncommon.

Knitting was a way to provide not only comfort to the soldier, but to the volunteer as well. The mind-set of “fight or knit” became more common as the war went on.⁹⁸ The idea that if one was unable to enlist and fight due to factors such as age or gender, they should be wholeheartedly contributing to the war effort in another way.⁹⁹ Knitting became an important show of patriotism that not only provided items for soldiers, but also “knitted” the country together: Mrs. Plumtre identified knitted objects for soldiers as “love gifts,” gifts not only to individual soldiers but gifts to the nation as well.¹⁰⁰ Historian Bruce Scates has labeled this type of work as “emotional labour.”¹⁰¹ Local newspapers throughout Canada, as a show of pride, were even known to publish the knitting and sewing contributions of community women.¹⁰²

⁹⁴ Glassford, 110.

⁹⁵ Glassford, 110.

⁹⁶ Glassford, 110.

⁹⁷ Glassford, 112.

⁹⁸ Glassford, 124.

⁹⁹ Glassford, 119.

¹⁰⁰ Glassford 120.

¹⁰¹ Bruce Scates “The Unknown Sock Knitter: Voluntary Work, Emotional Labour, Bereavement and the Great War.” *Labour History*, No. 81 (Nov., 2001): 31.

¹⁰² Glassford, 124.

The JRC, in many ways, was proud to have girls in the organization and of the opportunities provided to encourage their development. They claimed they were creating good future wives, and especially future mothers. For example, in Manitoba, in an attempt to increase awareness and membership in the province, the JRC brought girls into the organization to complete both “Home Nursing and First Aid” and “Proper care of the baby” contests at the Winnipeg Garden Show.¹⁰³ Earlier that month they had also brought the JRC to the Brandon Fair and received positive feedback. At the Garden Show, they brought six teams trained by public health nurses to give their demonstrations.¹⁰⁴ According to the report, many people attended the event and had a positive response, including the visiting teams from Minnesota and Iowa who gave full credit to “those responsible for the experiment.”¹⁰⁵ The official winners of the demonstrations were from Carmen, Manitoba, but overall the organizers felt they had done well in promoting the value of their organization.¹⁰⁶ They were particularly proud of the “Very warm appreciation of the work done by the girls” which “was voiced by certain experts” from Minnesota and Iowa. The American Red Cross was both larger and had been established longer than its Canadian counterpart, and therefore their opinion carried a great deal of importance. Their statement proves how valuable girls were in the promotion of the organization.

The idea of encouraging girls to be “Little Mothers” was not new or unique to wartime society, but its involvement within the JRC organization reveals the continued importance of femininity and teaching young girls maternal skills. The most important role for women was to be a mother. Girls were taught in various aspects of their life about training for motherhood,

¹⁰³ Archives of Manitoba, Canadian Red Cross Society Manitoba Branch, Q 22128 file 3 Minutes of the Executive, Superintendents’ Report to Junior Red Cross Advisory Committee, June 23rd 1922, p. 3.

¹⁰⁴ “Superintendents’ Report to Junior Red Cross Advisory Committee, June 23, 1922” p.3.

¹⁰⁵ AM, Canadian Red Cross Society Manitoba Branch, Minutes of the Executive, Superintendents’ Report to Junior Red Cross Advisory Committee, Q 22128 file 3, September 29th 1922.

¹⁰⁶ “Superintendents’ Report to Junior Red Cross Advisory Committee, September 29th 1922.” p.3.

everything from the production of dolls and other such tools, to the expectation within most homes that girls of all ages would care for their younger siblings.¹⁰⁷ As historian Veronica Strong-Boag discusses, not all girls liked being responsible for other children, but for many, the “societal approval” they received made it well worth it.¹⁰⁸ In a practical sense, many stretched mothers did require the assistance of older siblings to help with younger ones. However, this responsibility placed on girls enforced the idea that motherhood was where they would find fulfillment.¹⁰⁹ The kind of competitions that the JRC were hosting makes it explicitly clear that in accordance with society, girls’ primary worth was based on their ability to be capable mothers.

It is clear girls were a focus for recruitment within the JRC, shown through their activities such as sewing groups and little mother competitions. The sole purpose of these programs was to encourage the recruitment of girls. What is significant about the recruitment of groups within this organization is their primary goal was to create better citizens, and the JRC were turning to girls as future wives and mothers to be and birth those better citizens. Yet what is significant about citizenship? It can be defined as “membership in a political community.”¹¹⁰ Citizenship, by its nature, is something public. It is a responsibility to one's country, government, and community. Women’s “traditional” responsibilities were seen to fall within obligations to their families and homes.

The making of better citizens was a clear goal of the JRC. However, citizenship, particularly at this time in Canada history, was a complicated idea. In fact there was no such

¹⁰⁷ Veronica Strong-Boag, *The New Day Recalled: Lives of Girls and Women in English Canada 1919-1939*, (New York: Penguin Books, 1988) 12.

¹⁰⁸ Strong-Boag, 12.

¹⁰⁹ Strong-Boag, 12-3.

¹¹⁰ Anne R. Epstein and Rachel G. Fuchs, introduction to *Gender and Citizenship in Historical and Transnational Perspective: Agency, Space, Borders*, Ed. By Anne R. Epstein and Rachel G. Fuchs (London: Palgrave, 2017), 4.

thing as a Canadian citizen until the passage of the Citizen Act of 1947; prior to this, naturalized Canadians were technically subjects of the British Empire.¹¹¹ If there were no technical Canadian citizens, why was the JRC so concerned with creating new ones for the future? In the view of the JRC, creating “good citizens” was linked with forging a Canadian identity: “good” or acceptable behavior was defined by middle-class Anglo-Protestant values. But in the early 20th century, the make-up of the prairies presented individuals of many nationalities, which according to historian Veronica Strong-Boag, created competing loyalties, or at least a fear of them.¹¹² This atmosphere of anxiety only increased during wartime.

The JRC promoted the idea of citizenship in a variety of ways. Citizenship was such an important goal that it was included in the motto, found on the back of its pamphlets; “Junior Red Cross stands for good lives, good health and good citizenship for humanity and the service of others...” Running a JRC was also linked to notions of citizenship. In the “hints” section of the pamphlets, under the stated goal of “objective” was a commitment to “kindly thought and sympathetic action by personal effort and sacrifice on behalf of others thus providing intelligent training in good citizenship.”¹¹³ Leaders within the JRC also held to the idea that the goal of the organization was to promote citizenship. For example, in a letter intended to increase JRC membership, the Lieutenant Governor and president of the Saskatchewan Red Cross, Sir Richard Lake, addressed young women members as citizens. He stated that “the fact you are working for the others and doing your bit of service in this great war, will tend to make you all better

¹¹¹ Robert Menzies, Robert Adamoski, and Dorothy E. Chunn “Rethinking the Citizen in Canadian Social History,” in *Contesting Canadian Citizenship: Historical Readings* ed. Robert Adamoski, Dorothy E. Chunn and Robert Menzies (Toronto: Broadview Press, 2002), 21.

¹¹² Veronica Strong-Boag “The Citizen Debates: The 1885 Franchise Act” in *Contesting Canadian Citizenship: Historical Readings* ed. Robert Adamoski, Dorothy E. Chunn and Robert Menzies (Toronto: Broadview Press, 2002), 70.

¹¹³ PAS, Pamphlet collection, G257.7, Canadian Red Cross Society-Saskatchewan Branch, The Junior Red Cross (magazine), “Hints on Organization of Junior Red Cross Societies,” April 1920, pp. 15-16.

citizens.”¹¹⁴ Also, in a letter published in the JRC magazine, W.M. Martin, the premier of Saskatchewan and the minister of education, stated his support for the organization and twice stated the importance of citizenship: “Ideals of humanity and good service will be daily inculcated, and our citizenship thereby strengthened towards a good end,” and “In order to assist the realization of these objects, a portion of each Friday afternoon be given to the study of those humanitarian phases of education and citizenship for which the Junior Red Cross stands.”¹¹⁵ His position as both Premier and minister of education and Sir Lake as Lieutenant Governor made their endorsements very significant and signaled the support of the entire Saskatchewan government.

Endorsed by the Canadian Red Cross, citizenship, the development of a moral character, and good health were the cornerstones of the JRC’s philosophy. The organization sought to instill the values of empathy and sacrifice among children, which in turn, provided the basis for citizenship. One document, recorded in the executive minutes from between 1917-1919 and signed by both A.H. Ball, the Deputy Minister of Education and Jean Browne, the Director of School Hygiene, encouraged the following goals:

- 1) It was the opinion of this Meeting that upon an extensive organization of the Junior Red Cross work depends the future success of the Red Cross movement in Canada.
- 2) That the Junior Red Cross is the medium through which the Canadian Red Cross must introduce amongst our children and young people a knowledge of the aims and objects of the Red Cross Society and such Red Cross activities and instruction as have an educational and social value.
- 3) That it should serve to enlist the sympathies and services of our children and young people on behalf of the suffering childhood and the need of those children less fortunately situated than themselves.

¹¹⁴ PAS, Pamphlet collection, R87 R468 Canadian Red Cross Society-Saskatchewan Branch, 1914-1918, Richard Lake to the School Children of Saskatchewan., April 15, 1918.

¹¹⁵ PAS, Pamphlet collection, G279.9 Canadian Red Cross Society-Saskatchewan Branch, The Junior Red Cross (magazine), W.M. Martin to The Teachers of Saskatchewan, , p. 9, March 31, 1920.

- 4) That it should encourage through unselfish sacrifice and the knowledge of human needs these broadening interests and intelligent sympathies which make for the growth of true citizenship.
- 5) that it should make Red Cross service applicable generally to the health of children and young people, and through instruction in the aims and purpose for which the Red Cross exists and the enrollment of Junior Members it should ensure the continuance and development of the Red Cross.¹¹⁶

The most fundamental message of the JRC was to be a good citizen. In its view, the future of the organization and the country were interconnected with its goals to develop sympathy and empathy among children, especially girls. Based on these two qualities, all three provincial JRCs decided to focus their fund-raising efforts on children helping other children.¹¹⁷ Some campaigns included: Saskatchewan's Crippled Children's Fund, Alberta's children's hospital, and Manitoba's children's mobile dental clinic. Through this work the children were not only helping someone else, but also building their own moral character. The JRC may have had the best intention when creating what it perceived were "good citizens," but these ideals of empathy were based on middle-class notions of economics. Their goals explicitly stated that the children should focus on those "children less fortunately situated than themselves," thereby assuming that the members of the JRC were part of the middle class and therefore in an economic position to help others.

The message of sacrifice in addition to sympathy was prominent and particularly meaningful given the historical context and direct connections to both women and children. This idea also gave children a direct connection to the war and to potential relatives overseas. Adults, in particular, adult men, had a clear expression of patriarchal sacrifice, through military service

¹¹⁶ PAS, Reginald Rimmer Fonds, R-87 R486, Canadian Red Cross Society-Saskatchewan Branch Minutes of the Executive, Recommendation for the JRC, 1917-9.

¹¹⁷ PAS, Reginald Rimmer Fonds, R-87 R486 2F, Canadian Red Cross Society-Saskatchewan Branch Minutes of the Executive, Recommendation for the JRC, 1917-9.

or financial contributions. Children could only offer financial contributions. Children were expected in all three provinces to obtain the membership fee, and make contributions through “some special effort, or self-denial on the part of the child, and not through the medium of parents or interested friends.”¹¹⁸ The message of sacrifice was central for mobilizing the population during war and was most clearly constructed in the image of the soldier. As historian Jonathan Vance discusses, sacrifice was an important way to construct loss. It conveys the ideas of both the willingness of the soldier to give his life and, therefore, emphasizes the purposefulness of the action and provides meaning to both the soldier and family, as well as implies preservation of ideals such as truth, justice, liberty, mercy, honour, and freedom.¹¹⁹

Sacrifice was not limited to men or soldiers; women were expected to sacrifice as well, and in particular mothers. In an article published in 1915 in *Everywoman's World*, Suzanne Evans explores the ways in which mothers constructed the loss of their sons as a sacrifice, or rather, how they were expected to construct it.¹²⁰ Evans tells the story of a woman who, when learning of her son's death while working at a munitions factory, continued her work in order to further the cause her son had died for.¹²¹ Other magazines published similar stories by other women, often signing them as “A Little Mother.” This signature may have provided anonymity or perhaps that an identity as a mother was more important than her personal identity. Yet even as just a “humble mother,” she was able to sacrifice for her country, just as any other woman and mothers of good character and patriotism would do.¹²² This constructions reveals how women

¹¹⁸ PAS, Reginald Rimmer Fonds, Canadian Red Cross Society-Saskatchewan Branch Minutes of the Executive, Recommendation for the JRC, R-87 R486 2F, 1917-9.

¹¹⁹ Johnathon F. Vance, *Death So Noble: Memory, Meaning, and the First World War*. (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997) 50-1, 28-9.

¹²⁰ Suzanne Evans. *Mothers of Heroes Mothers of Martyrs: World War I and the Politics of Grief*. (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007) 86.

¹²¹ Evans, 86.

¹²² Evans, 86-90.

were seen as deeply involved in the war, and it shows how invested public perceptions and expectations were. The woman from the munitions factory story, Mrs. E.A. Hughes and her son, Danny, likely did not exist, as there are no records of him, but the idea of her story resonated with Canadian women and the general public.¹²³ Women's service and volunteerism during the war were often constructed in the same language as for those enlisting.¹²⁴ To carry the idea of sacrifice over to children, as the Junior Red Cross did, gave them a great deal of responsibility, and made them active members in the nationalist war effort.

The JRC was created out of a wartime necessity and its success ultimately varied across the three western Canadian provinces. Like their adult counterparts, girls in the JRC were following a strong tradition of women volunteers. Work in these volunteer groups offered women and girls an opportunity for leadership and the skills learned led to lasting political change, such as achievement of the vote. The war was a fundamental event in creating and shaping the JRC organization. Like the senior organization, girls were both a clear target for the JRC, as evidenced by the group's literature, programs, and activities, particularly knitting and mothering competitions. The strong presence of girls within the organization reveals the contradictory notions of femininity presented by the group through the encouragement of "traditional" tasks such as knitting and sewing, while also encouraging important leadership roles and presenting girls as good citizens in their communities and society. To be a citizen was to be a full member of society and to be a full member of society meant girls and women existed in some way in the public sphere, a demand that first wave feminists and the suffrage movement fought for during the war.¹²⁵

¹²³ Evans, 87.

¹²⁴ Glassford, 118.

¹²⁵ Brookfield, 483.

The organization remained viable from the 1930s and the Second World War, and had great success in the 1950s and 60s, but by the 1970s and 1980s, membership sharply declined and chapters closed. Today the Red Cross focuses on safety courses for youth, including water safety programs, first aid, and babysitting courses. They have attempted to update their mandate to address bullying, cyberbullying, and harassment.¹²⁶

After the war, the activities and overall goals of the JRC shifted, but their focus on girls and seemingly contradictory notions of empowerment and traditional femininity did not. The Red Cross found themselves searching for a way to keep the public interested and maintain their organization. The war highlighted concerns about the physical fitness of soldiers which revealed widespread national health problems. The Red Cross, like many others, felt the best way to make the nation healthier, was to start with children. As their focus on health initiatives increased, as we shall see in chapter two, girls and women became an integral part of this development.

¹²⁶ See Red Cross website for more information <http://www.redcross.ca/how-we-help/violence--bullying-and-abuse-prevention/youth>

Chapter Two: Healing the Nation: The JRC and the Health of Children

When Winnifred was fourteen years old, she needed a back brace that cost a total of \$85.00; in today's currency that would be equivalent to over \$1800.¹ She had suffered from tuberculosis of the spine as a young child, and as the daughter of a veteran with economic hardships, there was little chance that her family could afford her care. Fortunately, the Junior Red Cross was able to provide the funds for her brace, her hospital stay, and warm clothes that would "enable [her] to play out of doors and get strong." Through their assistance, the JRC hoped they could allow her "in so far as she is able, to live the life of a normal child."²

Some of the JRC's greatest efforts, particularly after the war, were directed towards children's health. The connection between the war and an increased interest in children's health was no coincidence, but rather was an outgrowth of concerns expressed about the poor physical fitness and health of the soldiers during the war.³ As early as 1914, when thousands of men enlisted, officials and doctors were shocked and surprised by the ill-health of potential recruits. Recent medical and scientific discoveries, coupled with the great number of casualties incurred during the war, as well as the high number of deaths from the Spanish flu in 1919, resulted in public health taking on a new significance,⁴ The public health movement began to make a real difference in school-age children's lives with an increase in both school inspections and nurses in

¹ Bank of Canada inflation calculator <http://www.bankofcanada.ca/rates/related/inflation-calculator/> (accessed January, 2018).

² Archives of Manitoba, Canadian Red Cross Society Manitoba Branch. Q 22128 file 4, "Superintendent's Report to the Junior Red Cross Advisory Committee: Cases of the Physically Handicap Children," 1922.

³ Sarah Glassford, *Mobilizing Mercy: A History of the Canadian Red Cross*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen University Press, 2017), 132.

⁴ Glassford, 132.

the prairie schools.⁵ As a result, the health concerns of children became one of the primary foci of both the Red Cross and JRC in the post-war period.

The Red Cross and the JRC were able to build on the efforts of the public health movements, which started in urban areas in the late 1800s. By the start of the war in 1914, conditions in urban areas, particularly schools, had greatly improved. However, the war exposed serious health problems in rural Canada and the rural prairie areas in particular. In Saskatchewan, for example, a school hygiene questionnaire sent out in 1918 near the end of the war, found that approximately 74% of school children had not been vaccinated.⁶ The study also revealed sanitation issues in 75%, or about 1575 schools' washrooms, while almost 230 schools had "impure" water supplies.⁷ These poor public health conditions contrasted sharply with the romanticized mythology of rural communities and their lifestyles as healthy and pure places to live. The countryside was idolized as having wide open spaces, sunshine, and fresh air, and, therefore, rural life did not seem to pose as a great a health risk as the crowded urban centers. As a result, rural areas were less of a concern for early public health reformers, and yet, these areas needed public health reforms the most.⁸

As the Saskatchewan questionnaire showed, conditions in public schools were horrid, and conditions at home could be the same or likely worse. Many families living in rural prairie communities had little or no access to health care.⁹ Although the provincial governments, particularly in Saskatchewan, took these public health issues very seriously and were trying to

⁵ Neil Sutherland, *Children in English-Canadian Society: Framing the twentieth-Century Consensus*, rev. ed. (1978; repr., (Waterloo , Ontario, Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2000) republished from University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 55.

⁶ Sutherland, 80.

⁷ Sutherland, 80

⁸ Sutherland, 79.

⁹ Glassford, 152.

make improvements through visiting school nurses and by implementing inspection programs, they did not have the funds to address the problem fully. But, the Red Cross, in a transitional phase in their development after the war, had both money and volunteers to serve as an auxiliary to the government.¹⁰ The Junior Red Cross, because they focused on two primary concerns for the Red Cross--children and public health--became a natural outlet for the promotion of child health.

Improving the Health of Children Through the School Systems

As early as 1916, the Saskatchewan government was the first to heed the goals of the social reform movements and find ways to improve the health of children.¹¹ These measures started with the appointment of a Director of School Hygiene, Jean Browne. The provincial government felt the province had reached a point where medical education and services should be made more public and less private.¹² The hope was that a director would, by improving the state of the public schools, improve the lives of the children. The director's responsibilities were to arrange school inspections, appoint school nurses, and make the general public understand the importance of the cause.¹³ Miss Browne was the first choice of W.M. Martin, the Minister of Education and W.A. Thompson, a prominent doctor, and member of the Saskatchewan JRC committee. Their support for her position can be seen in the fact that she was given a higher salary than first discussed and the position started immediately.¹⁴

¹⁰ Glassford, 136.

¹¹ Mona Gleason, *Small Matters: Canadian children in sickness and health, 1900-1940* (Montréal ; Ithaca : McGill-Queen's University Press, 2013), 7-8.

¹² Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, W.M. Martin Fonds, M4 I. 46 "Memo for Mr. Scott" from W.M. Martin, Regina, July 19, 1916, p. 16302.

¹³"Memo for Mr. Scott," 16302.

¹⁴ PAS, W.M. Martin Fonds, M4 I. 46, Letter to Mr W.A. Thomas from W.M. Martin. November 17, 1916. And PAS, W.M. Martin Fonds, M4 I. 46, Letter to Mr W.A. Thomas from W.M. Martin. February 19, p.16304-5.

Jean Browne committed her life to health care and the betterment of children's lives, which is why she was highly sought after for the position. A single woman, she graduated from nursing at George Brown College in Toronto and was recruited to Saskatchewan to serve as the first public health nurse in 1911.¹⁵ In addition, she started the registration of nurses in Saskatchewan and served as their vice president before becoming the Director of School Hygiene in 1917.¹⁶ Her work as a nurse was not her only accomplishment. Due to her impressive work with the JRC in Saskatchewan, the provincial branch claimed the most members compared to all of the other provinces, and she was made the first national director of the JRC in 1919.¹⁷

As part of her position, Brown developed a new health course that became part of the public school curriculum, which included lessons and tests for children from grades one through eight. She had a long list of goals to help improve health within the province, which included setting up regular health inspections for schools across its diverse regions. As well, she hoped to engage parents in the new program.¹⁸ She sent forms to every school in the province to inquire about a range of issues including the size of the classrooms and schoolyard, what the building was made out of, how often it was cleaned, and even the colour of the window shades. She also asked about how much time the children spent outside, the water supply, heating method, hours of the school, whether the students had any health inspections, such as eye, dental or physical, and questions about the children's intellectual capacities.¹⁹ Browne realized that schools were the logical targets for improving the health of children. They were often the site of epidemic onsets, where disease and sickness could easily spread. Under Browne's leadership, schools were turned

¹⁵ Saskatchewan Women's Division. *Notable Saskatchewan Women*. (Regina: Saskatchewan Labour, 1980),5.

¹⁶ Saskatchewan Women's Division, 5.

¹⁷ Saskatchewan Women's Division, 5.

¹⁸ PAS, W.M. Martins Fonds M4 I. 46, "Hygiene" Jean Browne, 1917, p. 16315-23.

¹⁹ PAS, W.M. Martins Fonds M4 I. 46, Letter sent to teachers in rural schools. From Bureau of Education Washington D.C. 1917, p. 16312.

into places where children could be inspected, vaccinated, and educated about their own health.²⁰ The survey by Browne was instrumental in this process and it circulated information on the condition of schools and where the most effort was needed to correct poor conditions.

The environment of the classroom was only the first step. In the new curriculum, grades one through three were taught basic hygiene practices such as washing their skin and clothing, hair brushing and nail clipping.²¹ Hygienic habits were taught first, as they were regarded as the most important. The explanation and rationale for these practices came later as a method to enforce the new habits. Thus, the higher grades had more formal lessons, and by grade five, children received education about the importance of good nutrition, sleep, exercise, and avoiding harmful substances like alcohol.²² The upper levels, up to grade eight, were taught about diseases, germs, and bodily functions, and the role of organs and blood in the human body²³ This curriculum was not unusual for its time. As early as 1910, Manitoba had insisted on health education, and a Winnipeg doctor had written a textbook for school-age children about basic health issues.²⁴

The Red Cross not only saw itself as an auxiliary to the government in its crusade for public health, but also in the government's goal to assimilate new immigrants. The Red Cross was one of the organizations that met new immigrants coming into Canada. These initial encounters were used to begin the integration process, including offering places to bathe and rest and distributing literature about being "better" parents.²⁵ Health and morality were closely

²⁰ Sutherland, 39-41.

²¹ PAS, W.M. Martins Fonds M4 I. 46 "Hygiene" Jean Browne, 1917, p. 16317.

²² "Hygiene," 16318.

²³"Hygiene," 16318.

²⁴ Sutherland, 53.

²⁵ Glassford, 151.

linked, and new immigrants were seen to be lacking both. The health curriculum was influenced by the racial and classist values of the era. Health curriculum encouraged middle-class, Anglo-Protestant views of health.²⁶ For example, “foreign” food was deemed unhealthy or dangerous, and bathing practices that were not practical for working-class families were recommended.²⁷

The educational programs were not strictly about health and physical well-being; embedded in these practices was the persistent goal to create “good citizens.” Children were taught that good health was linked to “proper” behaviour. For example, in the education plan for grade five, children were not only to be taught appropriate personal appearance at the table, but also the “important” connection between “cheerfulness” and its relations to digestion.²⁸ According to the JRC’s literature, in order to digest their food properly, children must be happy, polite, and well-behaved at the dinner table.²⁹ This moral and classist curriculum was linked also to physical health. For example, children were warned from grades five to eight against the consumption of alcohol, and the excessive consumption of candy, ice water, and pickles.³⁰ Temperance education in schools had been promoted since the mid-1880s in central Canada, and therefore, it is no surprise to see similarities in the Saskatchewan program.³¹ While the physical ramifications of children either consuming alcohol or too much candy are apparent, embedded in these issues was a “hidden curriculum” that valued the middle-class values of self-control, willpower, and restraint; thus, health was linked to morality.³²

²⁶ Gleason, 97.

²⁷ Gleason, 96-98.

²⁸ “Hygiene,” 16317.

²⁹ “Hygiene,” 16317.

³⁰ “Hygiene,” 16316.

³¹ Sutherland, 173, 175-8.

³² “Hygiene,” 16315.

There is evidence that the parents were readily engaged in the health education of their children and pushed for resources to help improve the health of their children. Since most of the health education was delivered by public health nurses, Jean Browne had initially suggested six or seven nurses making rounds at different schools throughout the province. However, there was only room in the budget for two.³³ In response, parents from different districts wrote multiple letters requesting nurses for their areas. These requests from parents reveal fears about the future, both physical and moral, not simply the decision of the government to mandate children's health.³⁴

The JRC's Health Programs and Policies

Since Jean Browne was both the creator of the curriculum for the school system, as well as one of the leading organizers for the JRC, it is not surprising that the goals and the methods of both overlapped. Moreover, the health policies and programs that the JRC employed were an essential part of the transition from targeted functioning for the war effort to a successful peacetime organization.³⁵ The health programs of the JRC were intended to achieve a number of goals. First, they promoted qualities such as sympathy, empathy, and compassion. Second, they raised awareness about broader social issues and, finally, they promoted good citizenship and "self-respect." The concept of health and well-being applied to the organization in two ways: first in the functionality of the group, such as in their teachings and how they engaged the children in their organization such as fundraising; and second, in how the organization chose to

³³ PAS, W.M. Martins Fonds M4 I. "Memo for Mr. Blacklock" February 27, 1918, p. 16326.

³⁴ Gleason, 7-8, 23-6.

³⁵ Glassford, 156.

spend the funds they raised, all of which went to the health of other children such as the Crippled Children's fund and specific dental and nursing services in the prairies.

Health was a primary focus at the weekly JRC meetings. Conducted in a parliamentary fashion and organized by the children, they summarized previous minutes, handled correspondence, and discussed fundraising activities. However, the most important meeting activity was the discussion period. The senior members were expected to prepare the material and could present it in a variety of ways, such as through a play, essay, or story. The JRC magazine, distributed to all to the branches listed a number of discussion topics including:

- 1) Why soldiers must be physically fit
- 2) The Work of the Red Cross in Peace and War.
- 3) Eating and Drinking-Healthful Habits.
- 4) Relations of height and weight to good health
- 5) Eyes and Eyesight- Red Cross work or the blind
- 6) The need of fresh air.
- 7) Junior Red Cross cases at Fort Qu'Appelle.
- 8) Ventilation and cleanliness of the school room.
- 9) Adenoids- Enemies of the health and beauty
- 10) Care of the teeth.
- 11) Infection of the teeth.
- 12) Why teeth decay
- 13) The story of the tonsils
- 14) Disease "carrier."
- 15) How we may avoid infectious diseases.
- 16) The need and value of sleep.
- 17) Nutritious foods
- 18) How the school garden may provide variety in school lunches
- 19) The need and kind of exercises
- 20) Work of Junior Red Cross for the crippled children
- 21) First Aid for children³⁶

This list provides insight into the JRC's motivations, concerns and practices. The very first item, "Why soldiers must be physically fit," reveals the traction of this issue three years

³⁶ PAS, Pamphlet Collection, G279.2 "The Junior Red Cross in Saskatchewan" April 30, 1921, p. 11.

after the war's end. Of the 21 topics for discussion, 15 focussed on understanding hygiene practices such as dental care, nutrition, and rest. The others focused on work the JRC was doing. Clearly, the discussions were to be educational and not entertainment. The list also reveals a gender bias in whom the JRC imagined would be discussing these topics. Item number nine, for example, "Adenoids- Enemies of the health and beauty" is an attempt to engage girls in a discussion of health by appealing to their assumed vanity, enforcing the Red Cross officials' view that girls will take health more seriously if they can be convinced it will affect their looks.³⁷

Citizenship and the Junior Red Cross

The emphasis on health at the meetings was connected directly to the ideal of citizenship, and the desire to protect the next generation of Canadians. Girls were included in this ideal of citizenship and national responsibility, but still within the confines of traditional notions of femininity. JRC girls were taught not only to care for themselves but others as well, since caretaking was clearly regarded as an inherently feminine quality. Moreover, it was assumed that the girls would carry these habits into motherhood.³⁸ This view was reinforced with the growth of scientific methods of parenting in the later 1920s and 1930s.³⁹ Much of the girls' education was based on reason and academic principles of the time, and the lessons included medical knowledge about the functions of organs, the causes of disease, the role of germs, etc.

The transition for the Red Cross from a war-centered to a peacetime organization was not easy. The JRC had to design a new purpose for itself, but not stray too far from its original goals. For the Western provinces, the JRC extended its mandate and established a Crippled Children's

³⁷ Gleason, 97-8.

³⁸ Gleason, 88.

³⁹ Veronica Strong-Boag, *The New Day Recalled: Lives of Girls and Women in English Canada 1919-1939*, (New York: Penguin Books, 1988).

Fund. Until its formation, no other program of that type had existed. The funds, unlike the administrative costs of the JRC, were raised by the children themselves, mostly through the 25 cent membership fee, but also through other fundraising efforts, such as plays, recitals, and sales.⁴⁰ The fund served children ranging from infants to teenagers, but financial and medical need determined the children selected for treatment; priority, however, was given to children of ex-servicemen.⁴¹ At first, Saskatchewan children with tonsillitis and tuberculosis were accepted as patients, but the budget was quickly depleted, and for the following year, they were excluded.⁴² The group then focused on children with club feet, tuberculosis of hips, other orthopedic issues, and eye or vision problems. The cases were often identified by school nurses and approved by a committee, which included Jean Browne, who continued to be closely involved with the organization.⁴³

The end of the war also signaled a shift in the JRC's understanding of what was appropriate knowledge for children. During the war, children had to deal with many adult issues. For example, although it was controversial, the war and news about the war was taught in public classrooms themselves.⁴⁴ As a result, children were often "witnesses" to the war and exposed to its horrors. However, in the post-war period, there was a desire to keep children away from adult matters, and choosing to have children caring for other children was a practical way to achieve this goal.⁴⁵ In particular, the JRC thought that its members could develop empathy and care for "crippled children." Since many of the cases were treatable, and many of the JRC members

⁴⁰"The Junior Red Cross in Saskatchewan," 3-5.

⁴¹"The Junior Red Cross in Saskatchewan," 3-5.

⁴² PAS, Reginal Rimmer Fonds R87 R104-2F Committee Reports 1917-1923, "Report of the Junior Red Cross Committee," September 5, 1922.

⁴³ "The Junior Red Cross in Saskatchewan," 3-5.

⁴⁴ Susan Fisher, *Boys and Girls in No Man's Land: English-Canadian Children and the First World War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011)

⁴⁵ Fisher, 51-78.

corresponded with the patients, friendships were formed. The health issues of the JRC patients were also easier for children to understand and these experiences enabled them to see the effects of their work.

Views on disability and disability in children in this period were complicated, especially with so many soldiers returning from the war with permanent injuries. At that time, children's disabilities were classified into two categories by doctors and society, "normal" and "abnormal."⁴⁶ "Normal" disabilities were either medical issues that children would "outgrow" when they became adults, or issues that could be fixed before they reached adulthood.⁴⁷ So-called "normal" conditions included cleft palates or other medical issues that could be corrected with surgery. These "corrections" were an important determinant of belonging to the "normal" category, as gaining control over one's body predicated "successful adulthood."⁴⁸ "Abnormal" was a vague category, but it was presumed that a child could not outgrow these conditions.⁴⁹ These children were subject to the most discrimination by society. As historian Mona Gleason discusses in her book *Small Matters*, "a failed body" signaled "a failed nation."⁵⁰ This notion applied to both soldiers and children. For soldiers, there were significant concerns about how to return to their former roles in both society and at home.⁵¹ It was widely believed that if the soldiers could heal after the war, then the nation would as well.⁵² Therefore, in the same way as healing soldiers, by assisting children through their Crippled Children's Fund, the JRC believed

⁴⁶ Gleason, 135.

⁴⁷ Gleason, 135.

⁴⁸ Gleason, 34.

⁴⁹ Gleason, 135.

⁵⁰ Gleason, 133.

⁵¹ Amy Tector, "'Mother, Lover, Nurse' The Reassertion of Conventional Gender Norms in Representations of Disability in Canadian Novels of the First World War," In *A Sisterhood of Suffering and Service: Women and Girls of Canada and Newfoundland During the First World War*, ed. by Sarah Glassford and Amy Shaw, 293-315. (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011), 293-5.

⁵² Tector, 295-303.

they were creating a healthy society for the future. However, when either a soldier or child was unable to make a full recovery, these organizations faulted the individuals or their families. In the case of children, parents were blamed, while the soldiers' failure to recover was attributed to pre-existing conditions.⁵³

The JRC supported other initiatives that shared their goals of encouraging children's health. For example, the Robertson Fresh Air Camp, which was started at the turn of the century was like many other camps of the time, in that it was designed to serve the perceived needs of urban working-class children.⁵⁴ Middle-class reformers feared that these children were being morally and physically damaged by their lives in the city.⁵⁵ The object of the camp was not only to improve children's health but also to help them conform to middle-class values; part of that conformity included instilling notions of citizenship, education, and independence. The Red Cross approved funds for \$500 for the salary of a nurse to attend the camp to give demonstrations and teach the children about hygiene and health issues.⁵⁶

The Red Cross was not the only organization that sought to improve the health of children. The Canadian Girls in Training (CGIT) was a Christian organization formed in the later war years, and although not active in fundraising for the war (an action for which they were criticized) their goal was to improve the lives of children. The most successful of their initiatives was a summer camp program, which was first held in 1918 at Lumsden Saskatchewan. The camp

⁵³ Gleason, 135. For a discussion of returning soldiers and some of the issues they faced see Mark Humphries, "War's Long Shadow: Masculinity, Medicine, and the Gendered Politics of Trauma, 1914-1939." *The Canadian Historical Review* 91, no. 3 (September 2010): 503-531.

⁵⁴ AM, Canadian Red Cross Society Division Executive Committee and miscellaneous committee minutes and reports., Q 22128 file 4. Minutes of the Child Welfare Committee May 25, 1923 p.2.

⁵⁵ Kristine Alexander, *Guiding Modern Girls: Girlhood, Empire, and Internationalism in the 1920s and 1930s*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2017), 153.

⁵⁶ "Minutes of the Child Welfare Committee", 2.

was a way to offer the girls a greater sense of independence and freedom.⁵⁷ For example, their open discussion in periods of Bible study was intended to encourage the girls to think critically and spend time in nature.⁵⁸ Both the Boy Scouts and the Girl Guides also held similar camps during and after the war. These camps, on paper, provided highly gendered activities for youth. As historian Kristine Alexander discusses in her work, although both boys and girls during these camps were sent to the same place and participated in similar activities, the goals for each were very different. For boys, their time in nature was meant to be a “thrilling adventure,”⁵⁹ and as a way to escape the damaging effects of their urban environment, which was seen to be making them “soft.”⁶⁰ Girls, on the other hand, were thought to have been made too tough by their urban environment, were sent to camp to reconnect with nature, spiritually, and to learn useful domestic skills.⁶¹

The Provision of Dental Services

One significant component of the JRC’s work was its dental services, which were offered in both Saskatchewan and Manitoba where care was provided to all children, whether they were members of the JRC or not. The service would travel to a smaller town with a school or two in the area and ideally inspect the schools and recommend to the children who needed it, to come for treatment the following day. The dentist would only remain for a short time, maybe a week, then move on. The service originally operated in the summer, but later expanded into the fall and spring to accommodate the growing need. Saskatchewan had two dental travel units that

⁵⁷ Margaret Prang, "The Girl God Would Have Me Be': The Canadian Girls in Training, 1915-39," *Canadian Historical Review*, LXVI, 2 (1985) 164.

⁵⁸ Prang, 164.

⁵⁹ Alexander, 170.

⁶⁰ Alexander, 153.

⁶¹ Alexander, 153,170.

circulated in the summer, In Manitoba, two dentists were in charge of the program, one for the rural areas, a male dentist, Dr. R.H. Murdoch, and one for urban and suburban Winnipeg, Dr. Annie S. Mackenzie, who ran the program on Sunday afternoons, and hoped to expand to Saturday as well.⁶²

The dental service was one of the most successful programs of the JRC due to the demonstrable need for dental care. For many, especially in rural areas, access to dentists was extremely limited and often for most families, simply unaffordable. Most dentists existed in urban areas at the time, and even if parents could afford the travel expenses to get their children to the dentist, the services were still very costly. Additional costs were incurred through the loss of labour time when farm families went to the city or town to visit the dentist.⁶³

In many ways, the dental service contributed to the popularity of the JRC and its programs. In Manitoba, this program was a victim of its own success; originally the service went to as many rural areas as possible; however, in its second year, due to financial and time constraints, dental services were restricted to towns and communities where JRC branches were located.⁶⁴ Dr. Murdoch reported monthly to the Red Cross and Junior Red Cross committee. In his reports, he was fairly enthusiastic about his work, even though he had a difficult task. Often when he arrived in a new place, there would be a line up of people to see him, as many came from the surrounding area. Some came on foot from 10-12 miles away, seeking his services.⁶⁵

The procedures would often take place in make-shift rooms, such as someone's living room or a

⁶² AM, Canadian Red Cross Society Manitoba Branch Minutes Q 22128 file 4, Superintendent's Report to the Junior Red Cross Advisory Committee September 29th.

⁶³AM, Canadian Red Cross Society Manitoba Branch. Q 22128 file 4. "Report of Dr. R.H. Murdoch to the Junior Red Cross Advisory Committee, July 23, 1923.

⁶⁴AM, Canadian Red Cross Society- Manitoba Branch Committee minute 1923 Q 22128 file 4, "Report of the Junior Red Cross Committee, April 3, 1923."

⁶⁵AM, Canadian Red Cross Society Manitoba Branch. Q 22128 file 4, "Report of Dr. R.H. Murdoch to the Junior Red Cross Advisory Committee" July 23, 1923.

local hotel if the town had one. He often worked into the night, sometimes as late as 1:30 a.m. He usually had to turn people away, and because the service was financed by donations, he could not say for sure when he would return.⁶⁶

His arrival was usually spread by word of mouth, but if it was a town with a JRC branch, it organized publicity for him. In one case the announcement of his arrival had somehow been lost and when he arrived no one knew he was there. However, a young girl who was the president of her JRC branch, understanding the necessity of his service to the community, rode her pony throughout the area to gather patients.⁶⁷

Inspection of the school children was his priority, and he was often shocked at the results. In many instances, there would be only six or seven cases out of a whole school who did not have “defective teeth.”⁶⁸ In his inspection of eight schools in 1923, he stated that 90% of the students had dental issues, and because of the lack of dental services available, many children had to go months in pain.⁶⁹ As a result, and due to a lack of time, their teeth were usually extracted instead of filled. Dr. Murdoch stated that “although not ideal it in some way relieves the pain.” One girl who had several decaying teeth had actually burned her own arm in hopes that new pain would relieve the old.⁷⁰

⁶⁶AM, Canadian Red Cross Society Manitoba Branch. Q 22128 file 4. “Report of Dr. R.H. Murdoch to the Junior Red Cross Advisory Committee” Willowview July 24, 1923.

⁶⁷AM, Canadian Red Cross Society Manitoba Branch. Q 22128 file 4 “Report of Dr. R.H. Murdoch to the Junior Red Cross Advisory Committee” August 4, 1923.

⁶⁸AM, Canadian Red Cross Society Manitoba Branch. Q 22128 file 4, “Report of Dr. R.H. Murdoch to the Junior Red Cross Advisory Committee,” August 4, 1923.

⁶⁹ AM, Canadian Red Cross Society Manitoba Branch. Q 22128 file 4, “Report of Dr. R.H. Murdoch to the Junior Red Cross Advisory Committee” Eriksdale September 4, 1923.

⁷⁰ AM, Canadian Red Cross Society Manitoba Branch. Q 22128 file 4, “Report of Dr. R.H. Murdoch to the Junior Red Cross Advisory Committee” Silver Bay July 21, 1921.

Eligibility for the service varied depending on the location. In the rural areas Dr. Murdoch treated whoever came to see him with the expectation that if they could pay for the service, even only in part, they would.⁷¹ He always took special note of the children of ex-soldiers as an example of how much good the program was doing. However, these children only constituted a small portion of those treated, and the worthiness of the others was rarely, if ever, questioned. Many adults also showed up for the services just in case Murdoch might be able to assist them. However, children took priority. The delivery of care offered in the rural areas sharply contrasted with those provided in the urban areas where the worthiness of the patients was an important criteria. Those who came for treatment were expected to prove they did not have the financial means to pay for the service.⁷² Extenuating circumstances, such as families with a large number of children, widowed parents, and relations of ex-servicemen, were considered a priority. In part, this difference in the provision of services between the rural and urban areas can be attributed to the fact there were more dentists in the urban areas to meet the demand. Therefore, they had more time to check into their patients. However, this discrepancy between urban and rural programs could also be because of the perception at the time that people in rural areas were more honest than their urban counterparts.⁷³ However, for dentists and nurses, the JRC was an important part of raising the profile of their professions.

The Establishment of Outpost Nursing by the Red Cross

The war changed the status of nursing in Canada. Before 1914, the establishment and recruitment of nurses for the Canadian Nursing Sisters was not as successful as it had been in

⁷¹ AM, Canadian Red Cross Society Manitoba Branch. Q 22128 file 4, "Report of Dr. R.H. Murdoch to the Junior Red Cross Advisory Committee Visit to Polsen," 1923.

⁷²AM, Canadian Red Cross Society Manitoba Branch. Q 22128 file 4, "Superintendent's Report to the Junior Red Cross Advisory Committee." September 29, 1922.

⁷³ Sutherland, 79.

England. In Canada, the army had their own nurses, who had stratified ranks and higher pay.⁷⁴ The nurses associated with the Red Cross were thought to be military nurses during the war, since many of the women wore the Red Cross symbol. They were, in fact, VADs (voluntary aid detachments),⁷⁵ who were civilians usually from middle-class, white, Protestant backgrounds.⁷⁶ Some historians have argued these women could be considered Canada's "first female soldiers," and by the end of the war, over two thousand women had participated in the program.⁷⁷

The other notable service the Red Cross provided was the establishment of outpost hospitals that were started as a direct reaction to the war. The goal was to provide health care to all citizens living in rural areas. However, the reality of having a doctor readily available, particularly in areas where many of the residents would be unable to afford the fees, was simply not practical. Therefore, the Red Cross decided to station nurses in remote areas for both emergency and minor incidents. Depending on the area, the venture was a joint effort between the Victorian Order of Nurses, the local public health department and the Red Cross.⁷⁸ Outpost nurses were first tried in Alberta during the 1920s and quickly spread throughout the country.⁷⁹ These nurses were often the only medical help available for miles and handled a variety of medical cases and services, from assisting with births to performing funeral services.⁸⁰ In

⁷⁴ Glassford, 98-9. For a first hand account of a nurse in the army corps see Clare Gass, *The War Diary of Clare Gass 1915-1918*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000),

⁷⁵ Glassford, 98-9.

⁷⁶ Linda J. Quiney, "Gendering Patriotism: Canadian Volunteer Nurses as the Female "Soldiers" of the Great War," In *A Sisterhood of Suffering and Service: Women and Girls of Canada and Newfoundland During the First World War*, ed. by Sarah Glassford and Amy Shaw, 103-26. (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011), 103.

⁷⁷ Quiney, 103.

⁷⁸ AM, Canadian Red Cross Society Manitoba Branch Financial Report for 1920, Report of the Provincial Nursing Committee. And Report of Nursing Service in Suburban districts, 1920, p.36-40.

⁷⁹ Glassford, 152.

⁸⁰ Glassford, 153-5-4. For more information on outpost nurses see *Caregiving on the Periphery: Historical Perspectives on Nursing and Midwifery in Canada*. Ed. Myra Rutherford (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010)

Manitoba, there were four such nursing stations.⁸¹ Each included a small house with both living accommodations for the nurse and a small emergency room for patients that needed to stay the night or to wait to catch the train for a hospital.⁸² Some of the more fortunate branches had a horse and car, so the nurse did not have to walk several kilometers to some of the cases in the surrounding areas.⁸³ As always, special care was always to be given to former soldiers and their families.⁸⁴

A large portion of the cases were for maternity, but the other significant portion was for children.⁸⁵ The service was incredibly valuable in the remote areas where there was not only a lack of access but also a lack of knowledge regarding first aid and medical issues. The nurses in these areas made a real difference to the communities. For example, one nurse recounted in her report to the Manitoba Red Cross Executive Committee and members, that she had been attending to three children who had gone berry picking one very hot day and came home to their parents in a very “bad condition,” a combination, the nurse claimed, of heat exhaustion and having accidentally eaten poison berries.⁸⁶ Under normal circumstances, the children could have been in serious danger. However, the nurse came every day to treat them, and eventually, they recovered. What is revealing about this incident is that the nurse later reported her time with the children was a “golden opportunity for teaching and the making of good citizens.”⁸⁷

⁸¹ AM, Canadian Red Cross Society Manitoba Branch Financial Report for 1920. Q 22132 file 6 Report of Nursing Service in Suburban districts, 1920, p.37.

⁸²AM, Canadian Red Cross Society Manitoba Branch Financial Report for 1920. Q 22132 file 6 Report of Nursing Service in Suburban districts, 1920, p.37.

⁸³ AM, Canadian Red Cross Society Manitoba Branch Financial Report for 1920. Q 22132 file 6 Report of Nursing Service in Suburban districts, 1920, p.37.

⁸⁴ “Report of Nursing Service in Suburban districts,” p.36.

⁸⁵ Glassford, 153.

⁸⁶ “Report of Nursing Service in Suburban districts,” p.40.

⁸⁷ “Report of Nursing Service in Suburban districts,” p.40.

Nursing was seen as an extension of domestic labour and was framed through traditional feminine discourses. Much of the work was mentally and physically demanding; the nurses not only provided nursing/medical care, but they also fed patients and maintained the hospital, while visiting patients miles away. The Red Cross expected nurses to be “Angels of Mercy,” providing care to all who needed it, while often sacrificing their own needs. In addition, nurses were agents of the state. Their work was shaped by the ideals of science and reason and were regarded as a “potent force” in “the venues of education, citizenship, and material progress.”⁸⁸ Thus, nurses were considered to be driving the world forward. At the same time, their work was undervalued; the nurses were paid a small salary by the Red Cross, but unlike the doctors, whom patients knew must be paid a “small fee,” patients were not expected to pay for their use of nursing services.⁸⁹

The war provided women without a nursing degree an opportunity to participate more directly in the war effort and fulfill their patriotic duty. But nursing and being part of the VADs meant that these women navigated a desire for independence and autonomy within the boundaries of traditional notions of femininity. For many, women’s participation in the Red Cross proved their capabilities, but their accomplishments were framed through the language of nurturing and mothering, which was used by both the women themselves and others.⁹⁰ Women

⁸⁸ “Peace Time Policy: Provincial Nursing Committee,” 17.

⁸⁹ AM, Canadian Red Cross Society Manitoba Branch 1922. Q 22132 file 6, Peace Time Policy: Provincial Nursing Committee, 1922 p. 17.

⁹⁰Henriette Donner, “Under the Cross: Why V.A.s Performed the Filthiest Task in the Dirtiest War: Red Cross Women Volunteers, 1914-1918.” *Journal of Social History* 30, no. 3 (Spring 1997): 687-704 and Sarah Glassford, ““The Greatest Mother in the World”: Carework and the Discourse of Mothering in the Canadian Red Cross Society during the First World War,” *Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering* Vol 10, No 1 :(2008).

in hospitals would often refer to their patients as “boys”⁹¹ Red cross nursing after the war kept these maternalistic notions which translated into outpost nursing as well.

The outpost nursing service occasionally worked directly with the JRC by providing health and disease information for JRC conventions, treating patients through the Crippled Children Fund, and making home visits to those patients. The two projects were ultimately joined by the overarching goals of the Red Cross to provide better healthcare and education to Canadians and their children. The hope for the future of the nursing service was that some of the JRC members would take over nursing duties in the future when encouraged to participate in programs in “Home Nurse Training” and in competitions to show their competence.⁹²

Relations between Provincial Governments and the Red Cross

On a federal level, the Red Cross provided valuable services to the government, especially during the war, such as supplying clothing and comfort items for soldiers that the government simply could not provide. Therefore, it is not surprising that the constructive impacts continued on a provincial level. The provincial government simply did not have the funds to provide dental services or outpost nurses. Various ministers both supported the Red Cross and were actively involved. The provincial governments’ reliance on this voluntary agency allowed them to help improve the lives of their citizens, while for the Red Cross, this relationship and the support they received from the government, allowed them to transition into a peacetime organization.

⁹¹Glassford, “The Greatest Mother in the World.”

⁹²“Peace Time Policy: Provincial Nursing Committee,” 19.

Saskatchewan's school nursing service was run by the provincial government through the Department of School Hygiene and was primarily offered within the public school systems, mainly due to Jean Browne's work. The school nursing system was proposed in 1916.⁹³ With the approval of Jean Browne, the department of education developed a curriculum for young women to be trained specifically as school nurses.⁹⁴ By 1920 there were twelve school nurses working throughout the province.⁹⁵ Between January and September of 1920, the nurses visited 720 schools and inspected 22,103 students. With each "inspection" the nurses would send the child home with a card stating what that they had been examined and what they were "probably suffering from." The parents were encouraged to then follow up with their family physician or dentist. Out of the 22,103 students examined only 2,678 had "no defect found."⁹⁶

Although the service did the best that it could, it was not without criticism. Several letters were written to the Premier about the flaws of the program and the need for more nurses. For example, Mrs. Burley of Driscoll Lake, a northern community, took issue with the nurses inspecting the children and yet not being able to provide them with further medical treatment.⁹⁷ This problem was especially pressing since the nurse in her community had found that all but three children needed medical care, and the unfortunate reality was that many parents could simply not afford, or even find a place, to access medical treatment. In response to her letter, the office of Premier W.M. Martin said they understood her concerns, and although they ultimately

⁹³PAS, W.M. Martin Fonds, M4 I. 46 Education: Hygiene. Memo for Mr. Scott, July 19, 1916 p. 16335.

⁹⁴ PAS, W.M. Martin Fonds, M4 I. 46 Education: Hygiene. Letter from J.H. Cunningham secretary of the Public School Board to W.M. Martin. April 22, 1918 p. 16340.

⁹⁵ PAS, W.M. Martin Fonds, M4 I. 46 Education: Hygiene. Report School Hygiene Branch Jan 1 to Sept. 30., 1920, p. 16372.

⁹⁶ PAS, W.M. Martin Fonds, M4 I. 46 Education: Hygiene. Report School Hygiene Branch Jan 1 to Sept. 30., 1920, p. 16374.

⁹⁷ PAS, W.M. Martin Fonds M4 I. 46 Education: Hygiene. Letter to Premier W.M. Martin from Miss. G.E. Burley, November 23, 1920, p.16376.

would like school nursing in all areas of the province, the government simply could not afford it.⁹⁸ Martin recommended that Burley write to A.H. Ball, the Deputy Minister of Education and a member of the JRC committee, see if the JRC could assist her community instead.⁹⁹

This incident demonstrates that a close relationship existed between the government and the Red Cross. Ultimately, many Red Cross members also worked for the government; thus, there was an easy exchange of skills and knowledge between the government and the voluntary health sector. Moreover, in the absence of funding, the government could use the JRC as a way to share the responsibility of children's health in the province. For example, in response to the 1919 influenza epidemic,¹⁰⁰ the Red Cross was able to enlist the support of the Saskatchewan government to fund the Red Cross' Nurses' Aide program. Working with municipal hospitals, young women would receive training that ultimately led to a certificate as a nurse's aid.¹⁰¹ As a result, these girls would be able to assist with minor medical issues in rural communities, thereby releasing regular nurses from routine problems so that they could provide care for more complicated cases.¹⁰² The program attempted to recruit girls from the Red Cross branches who were perceived to be "especially adapted for the work."¹⁰³ Since they were members of the Red Cross, it was expected that they had a "moral" character; that they had learned values of citizenship and empathy from the organization and therefore were suited to the work. Girls from "foreign" districts were particularly targeted since they would not be deterred by the lower wages and hard work. Scholarships were made available to many of these girls.

⁹⁸ PAS, W.M. Martin Fonds M4 I. 46 Education: Hygiene. Reply to Miss. G.E. Burley December 6, 1920.

⁹⁹ "Reply to Miss. G.E. Burley," December 6, 1920, p.16382.

¹⁰⁰ "Letter to Saskatchewan Red Cross Branch."

¹⁰¹ PAS, CRCS Reginal Rimmer Fonds R87 1918-9 R-104 2C, Letter to Saskatchewan Red Cross Branch, July 21, 1919.

¹⁰² "Letter to Saskatchewan Red Cross Branch."

¹⁰³ "Letter to Saskatchewan Red Cross Branch."

The Social Service and the Child Welfare Departments in Manitoba, which were mandated to improve the health of children, also coordinated services between the government and the Red Cross. The Social Service Department's main mission was to assist with home care, particularly for patients after they had left the hospital. With a budget of only \$10,000 per year for the whole province of Manitoba, the department's nurses were able to deliver a wide-range of services; they had 2,770 cases, made 1,371 home visits, and provided 1,762 books in order to increase their patients' health knowledge, and a variety of medical supplies to aid in their recovery.¹⁰⁴ Each of the Western Canadian provinces had a department of child welfare. In Manitoba, the department primarily worked with the Winnipeg's children's hospital, particularly its physiotherapy. Many of the cases handled by the department were fractures that had not healed properly, so patients were facing permanent damage, or young babies and toddlers who had infant paralysis.¹⁰⁵ The head matron, Helen H. Ross, had several techniques for improving the motion of the babies, such as tying their good hands, thereby forcing them to exercise their weak ones.¹⁰⁶ Despite Ross' requests for a higher budget, she made significant improvements with the children under her care and many were sent home in apparently much better condition than before.¹⁰⁷

Like the other provinces, the Alberta branch originally decided that the resources raised by their younger members should go toward a Crippled Children's Fund. However, Alberta found the cost to pay an establishment, usually the general hospital, to care for the patients was

¹⁰⁴ AM, Canadian Red Cross Society Manitoba Branch Financial Report for 1920. Q 22132 file 6, Report on Development of Social Services, p.47.

¹⁰⁵AM, Manitoba Division Executive Committee and miscellaneous committee minutes and reports Q 22128 file 3, Nursing Service- Children's hospital of Winnipeg- Physiotherapy Department. November 2, 1922.

¹⁰⁶ AM Manitoba Division Executive Committee and miscellaneous committee minutes and reports Q 22128 file 3. "Nursing Service- Children's hospital of Winnipeg- Physiotherapy Department." November 2, 1922.

too expensive. The Alberta branch of the JRC was not able to motivate its members or recruiters to take action until they decided to establish a JRC hospital, the first in Canada.¹⁰⁸ It was a far better idea to have their own establishment where patients could rest and recover after surgery.¹⁰⁹ The JRC took over a former nursing home for convalescent soldiers with 23 rooms and space for 35 children.¹¹⁰ JRC funds covered part of the rent and equipment rental. The total cost was between \$1600 and \$1700 a month, which were covered by JRC children's donations, in particular, the membership fees.¹¹¹ The initiative was led by Mary Wageen and the unit was run by a female nurse, L.B. Pea who had international training, including serving in the War¹¹²

The establishment of the children's hospital was the JRC's way of shifting from a wartime to peacetime organization. During the war, the Alberta Red Cross used its resources to care for the orphans or the sick children of soldiers. However, after the war, their focus quickly became the health and welfare of children, particularly rural children, which was consistent with the focus of moral reform movements of the time.¹¹³ At the Alberta Red Cross convention in 1921, Miss Crosbie, the Provincial District Nurse and president of the branch in Grand Prairie spoke about her own personal experience with both the Red Cross and Junior Red Cross.¹¹⁴ In her view, the nursing service was essential to the "Pioneer" women in Alberta because they were "no longer at the mercy[of] ignorance and carelessness."¹¹⁵ Her reaction reveals a class bias and

¹⁰⁸ Glenbow Library, Alberta Red Cross, Newspaper clippings "A League of Youth for Health" by Mrs. H.M. Speech in Grain Grower Guide November 8, 1922.

¹⁰⁹ GA, Canadian Red Cross Society Alberta Branch. Alberta-NWT Division Minutes M-8228-17- 1921.

¹¹⁰ "Alberta-NWT Division Minutes."

¹¹¹ "Alberta-NWT Division Minutes". The remaining rent was covered by the provincial government.

¹¹² Glenbow Library, Alberta Red Cross, Newspaper clippings "A League of Youth for Health" by Mrs. H.M. Speech in Grain Grower Guide November 8, 1922.

¹¹³ Sheehan, Nancy. "The Junior Red Cross Movement in Saskatchewan, 1919-1929; Rural Improvement Through the Schools" in *Building Beyond the Homestead* ed David C. Jones and Ian MacPherson. (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1988).

¹¹⁴ GA, Alberta-NWT Division Minutes, M-8228-17- 1920- 1922, Alberta Red Cross Convention, Saturday Morning Session- Miss Crosbie. January 21-2, 1921.

¹¹⁵ "Alberta Red Cross Convention, Saturday Morning Session- Miss Crosbie."

underlining assumption of rural parents being neglectful of their children. The Red Cross saw its service to children as a sign of universal progress.¹¹⁶

In addition to its nursing service, the JRC established “Better Baby clinics” in order to improve the health of mothers and babies in Alberta.¹¹⁷ As was true of other health issues, the nurses’ views of infant health were quite prescriptive. For example, infants were often subjected to standardized feeding schedules. These clinics were applying the principles of scientific mothering provided by “expert care.” Experts were beginning to focus on early development in children, and any “flaws” seen in the children later in life were attributed to the failing of the parents, usually the mother.¹¹⁸

These attitudes were evident in a story recounted by Miss Crosbie, Provincial District Nurse and Secretary of the Grande Prairie Red Cross, at an Alberta Red Cross conference. Crosbie recalled how a of a “pioneer” woman who was unable to get her baby to stop crying and had been spending around \$19 a month on medicine to help it.¹¹⁹ The clinic said they were able to make the infant “a better baby” in “less than a week.”¹²⁰ They did not heal the baby, or fix any medical issues, but rather made it “better” through “expert” care. The story reveals that professional nurses’ judgment of and mistrust towards women in rural communities was widespread. And even though immigrant mothers were particularly susceptible to blame, the woman in this story was English. (In her letter, she claimed she wished to return to her family in England until the child was older in order to seek their help.) Thus, it was not only non-English

¹¹⁶ Gleason, 41.

¹¹⁷ These clinics may have been part of the eugenics movement in Alberta, however, these sources do not have any direct evidence to connect them.

¹¹⁸ Veronica Strong-Boag, “Intruders in the Nursery: Childcare Professionals Reshape the Years One to Five,” in *Childhood and Family in Canadian History*. Ed by Joy Parr. 160-79 (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1982) also see Strong-Boag “The New Day Recalled.”

¹¹⁹ “Alberta Red Cross Convention, Saturday Morning Session- Miss Crosbie.”

¹²⁰ “Alberta Red Cross Convention, Saturday Morning Session- Miss Crosbie.”

speaking immigrants who were regarded as unfit mothers. Nor could the woman's inadequate mothering skills could be attributed to poverty, since she was paying \$19.00 per month on medications alone. Rather her ignorance and lack of knowledge were to blame, but the health of her baby could be improved with the expert knowledge of professionally trained nurses.

“The Defenders,” a sculpture by famed Canadian artist Walter Allward resides on the bottom left side of the memorial at Vimy Ridge. The young classical style figure breaking a sword over a stone was meant to symbolize the journey and experience of Canada after the war. Prior to the First World War, Canada had little military experience, but built a sizable and effective army, especially for a country of its size and age; yet, as soon as the war ended, it was dismantled. Most Canadians returned home between February and May of 1919.¹²¹ Throughout the war the Canadian Red Cross had positioned itself as a type of auxiliary to the Canadian military, but this Red Cross “army” did not “demobilize.” The public health crusade they started during the war continued. The Red Cross attempted to “heal the nation” by establishing outpost hospitals and nurses, mobile dental clinics, and children’s hospitals that greatly improved the lives of both children and adults living in rural communities while its health and hygiene educational programs greatly improved the condition of schools and helped slow the spread of fatal diseases. The JRC and the Red Cross goal was to create a healthier “better” Canada in the post-war period. Unfortunately, that “better” Canada was based on a narrow vision that prioritized middle-class Anglo-Protestants values. This vision would lead to discriminatory policies and the JRC being used as a form of assimilation programming for new immigrant children.

¹²¹ Cook, 596.

Chapter Three: Canadianizing the “New Canadians”

“It is particularly gratifying in this connection to note that several of these new societies have been organized in the so-called “foreign” districts with youthful officers having almost unpronounceable names. Surely in this feature of Junior Red Cross work alone there is to be found a valuable aid in [the] all important work of Canadianizing these New Canadians.”¹

The secretary of the Saskatchewan Branch of the Red Cross society made this statement while reporting on the growth of the Junior Red Cross (JRC) within the province. The organization had gained a number of new groups that month, but clearly, as can be seen from this quotation, one of its most important accomplishments was the process of Canadianization. However, what does “Canadianization” mean, and what did it mean to the JRC? Canada was a relatively young country in the early 20th century. Between 1911 and 1921, 1.8 million people immigrated to Canada, and many went West.² By the beginning of the First World War half of the Prairie population had been born in another country.³ Western Canada’s diverse ethnic make-up formed much of its identity and culture, and shaped all residents’ experiences. Each province had a different ethnic make-up that resulted in a range of policies, attitudes, and experiences. For example, Manitoba had a large immigrant population, but the provincial government had encouraged the settlement of Icelandic citizens. Icelanders were considerable “desirable” because they had common ancestors with Anglo-Saxons.⁴ Therefore they were seen as less threatening than immigrants from Ukraine and Germany. Certain groups, such as

¹ Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, Reginald Rimmer Fonds, R-87 R468 2F. Canadian Red Cross Society- Saskatchewan Branch Minutes of the Executive, July 1920.

² Gerald Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 248.

³ Friesen, 244.

⁴ Ryan Eyford, *White Settler Reserve: New Iceland and the Colonization of the Canadian West*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2016), 27-30, 43-4.

immigrants from Ukraine and Germany were thought to compromise the “ideal” vision of Canada.

Immigration in the late 19th and early 20th century led to tensions between those who were British born or of Anglo descent and non-English speaking Europeans, especially those from eastern and southern Europe. Canada was envisioned as an Anglo-Canadian country, and there were fears from both the public and the government that new immigrants would fail to assimilate to “Canadian” ways.⁵ Although these sentiments could be found across Canada, they were particularly felt in the West, which had the highest percentage of immigrants in the country. In 1901, 31.5% of the population in the three prairie provinces were immigrants; by 1921, this ratio had increased to 54%.⁶ In addition to having a high percentage of immigrants, the prairies were experiencing harsh economic conditions and high rates of unemployment, which many Anglo-Canadians blamed on immigration. Tensions only worsened after the start of the war. Hostilities towards those nationalities who were now at war with Canada increased, primarily those of German (n=393,320) and Austrian descent (n=129,103).⁷

Medical Care and Assimilation

Red Cross nurses had similar attitudes when it came to immigrants and new Canadians assimilation. Often due to poverty and their remote situation, Red Cross nursing stations were situated in what the Red Cross called “foreign” districts.⁸ The hope with these stations was they would be temporary (lasting a year or two) and then the community would somehow manage on

⁵ Waiser, *Saskatchewan, A New History*, 64-79.

⁶ Donald Avery “Ethnic and Class Relations in Western Canada during the First World War: A Case Study of European Immigrants and Anglo-Canadians Nativism.” In *Canada and the First World War: Essays in Honour of Robert Craig Brown*, ed. David Mackenzie (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 275.

⁷ Avery, 276.

⁸ In the title of the minutes these particular districts (Reynolds, Kinisota, Grahamdale, and Fisher Branch) are referred to as “unorganized,” however in the contents of their report they refer to these communities as “foreign.”

their own. One of the greatest fears of the Red Cross in this endeavor, according to one Manitoba chairman, was that those using the service would become dependant upon it for their healthcare. He felt it was the fault of the ethnic background of the individuals of the community, whom he stated were mostly from southern Europe, that the system had developed “along the lines of a purely charitable organization.”⁹ Some believed the program was “getting gradually away from the fundamental idea of educating these communities” even though “the general standard of these communities from the standpoint of health, hygiene and sanitation [was] being raised.”¹⁰ Thus, the ethnicity and race of these communities, not their poverty, pre-disposed them to require more healthcare. For example, in Reynolds, Manitoba, they felt they had “been trained along the ideas of a paternal government” and they had “lost that initiative so necessary to carry on even the smallest community work by themselves.”¹¹ Classically, Anglo, middle-class notions of respectability, self reliance, independence, and resourcefulness were the goals of the Red Cross in health educations. However, they then went on to state that even if certain individuals wanted to help themselves, they would be unable to so, due to their poverty.¹² Essentially, some within the organization feared helping vulnerable communities for too long would make them dependent on the organization’s charity, rather than equipping them with the education and skills for self reliance.

At the same time, the Red Cross acknowledged that many rural communities were poor and were unable to support themselves medically. As we have seen, the Red Cross nurses

⁹ Manitoba Archives. Canadian Red Cross - Manitoba Division Executive Committee and miscellaneous committee minutes and reports Q 22128 file 3. “Report of the Provincial Nursing Committee- Nursing stations in unorganized districts, 1922.

¹⁰ “Report of the Provincial Nursing Committee- Nursing stations in unorganized districts.”

¹¹ “Report of the Provincial Nursing Committee- Nursing stations in unorganized districts.”

¹² “Report of the Provincial Nursing Committee- Nursing stations in unorganized districts.”

provided their care through the lens of “Canadianization.”¹³ One instrument in this process involved the nurses’ monthly reports. Their patients were categorized not only by gender and nature of the case (maternity, surgical, etc.), but also by “race”—whether they were “British Born” or “Foreign Born.” This categorization and the accompanying comment section enabled the nurses to distinguish between the two groups by translating a seemingly biological difference—the immigrants were born in particular social-geographical places—into social differences that affirmed the racial superiority of the “British Born.”¹⁴ Moreover, the categories enabled the nurses to interpret the behaviour of the “British” and “Foreign Born” differently. For example, the nurses described the stubbornness of a Russian man who refused to go to a hospital even though the attending nurse thought he was suffering from gangrene in his lungs. He would only consent to see the free Red Cross doctor next time he came to the district.¹⁵ There was still concern that the foreign-born were deliberately taking advantage of the free care when they were truly supposed to be finding their own way of paying for medical attention. In contrast, the nurses presumed that English-Canadian patients would pay for medical care, and not cheat the system.

Like the senior organization nursing outpost program, the JRC, especially the Manitoba and Saskatchewan branches, were proud of their work with new Canadians. The JRC was directly involved in “foreign” districts including Kerrobert and Fisher, which were home to Russian and Icelandic settlers respectively. Indeed, the Fisher Branch was part of an experiment

¹³ Canadianization was a popular term of the time. It describes the process of assimilating new immigrants to what were perceived as Canadian values and/or characteristics.

¹⁴ AM. Canadian Red Cross - Manitoba Division Executive Committee and miscellaneous committee minutes and reports Q 22128 file 3. Nursing Service monthly reports, 1922.

¹⁵ AM. Canadian Red Cross - Manitoba Division Executive Committee and miscellaneous committee minutes and reports Q 22128 file 3. Nursing Service monthly reports, July 1922.

by the Canadian government to give non-Indigenous settlers land reserves.¹⁶ The JRC feared that the number of immigrants would overwhelm the British born both numerically and socially and they desired to “maintain” a British Canada.¹⁷ The JRC’s documents illustrate that their education and hygiene programs were used as a tool for assimilation.¹⁸

Despite some members’ attitudes and prejudice towards immigrants, immigrant parents and children became involved in organizations such as the JRC. These families drew on much-needed health benefits offered by the JRC. New immigrant children joined the JRC for similar reasons to other children, the social and health aspects, but we can only speculate about how the organization’s assimilationist goals affected them.

The JRC and the Education of Ukrainian Settlers: A Case Study

The federal government’s goal for Western Canada was that it would be settled by British settlers. However, by the early 1890s, that vision was compromised. Previous attempts at selling land to settlement companies had failed to attract the necessary numbers, and several companies failed to attract anyone. Immigration had slowed, and it was only with the appointment of the new Minister of the Interior, Clifford Sifton, that recruitment efforts were revived.¹⁹ Sifton is famous for his aggressive advertising campaign to encourage settlement in the Canadian West. Unlike previous recruitment agents, Sifton believed the salvation of the West was with immigrants from Ukraine, whom he believed were experienced farmers, and therefore would be

¹⁶ Eyford 1-3.

¹⁷ Waiser *Saskatchewan: A New History*, 65.

¹⁸ Glassford, 146. Unfortunately, the historical record for teachers involved in the JRC is sparse. Utilizing accounts of teachers from the same time period in similar regions, provides impressions of their prejudice and disdain for new Canadians, which JRC teachers would have displayed too. Their attitudes range from contempt to patronizing affection, but all regarded education as a solution to assimilate newcomers to Anglo-Canadian standards of hygiene and healthcare.

¹⁹ Friesen, 245-6.

able and willing to endure hardships.²⁰ However, in the minds of British-Canadians, their presence was tolerated on the assumption they would be quickly assimilated to “Canadian” ways. The Red Cross was one of the key organizations involved in that process. According to historian Bill Waiser, the Ukrainians were expected to understand this expectation.²¹

Sifton’s measures, intended to stimulate immigration, were successful. The population of Saskatchewan alone more than doubled in ten years from 41,522 in 1891 to 91,279 in 1901 and then 257,763 in 1906.²² Not all immigrants came from Ukraine; many came from other European countries including, Hungary, Russia, Scandinavia, France, China, and Germany. A large number of new immigrants also came from the United States, lured by advertising campaigns that presented Saskatchewan as the “Last Best West.” Sifton's administration also boosted immigration from England as the Canadian government advertised there more aggressively than elsewhere. What Sifton and the provincial governments had not anticipated was that much of the West was settled in ethnic blocks because families and communities often wished to emigrate together. Moreover, they found that settling as groups was often necessary for survival, especially in the first few years, as communities had to adapt to various challenges including the weather, isolation, and lack of farming experience. The result of this type of settlement was whole communities with different languages, customs, and cultures spreading throughout the prairies.

Even though Sifton believed that Ukrainians would make “good” settlers, Anglo-Canadians feared their “foreignness.” The majority of Ukrainians immigrants, approximately

²⁰ Friesen, 246.

²¹ Bill Waiser. *Saskatchewan: A New History*. (Calgary: Fifth House, 2005) 66.

²² Waiser, 64.

170,000, mostly from the so-called “peasant” class, came to Canada between 1891-1914.²³ The reasons for the Ukrainians migration are well-known. In the late 19th and early 20th century Ukraine experienced a number of political, social, and economic changes. In the mid-19th century serfdom was abolished, and the result was a “self-conscious nation” seeking reform.²⁴ Over the early 20th century, the geographic lines of the country were redrawn, and new political parties such as the United Ukrainian People’s Republic were formed.²⁵ Therefore, as historian Frances Swyripa has found, many Ukrainian Canadians immigrated to Canada at a time when Ukraine and Ukrainian identity were just beginning to form. As a result, Ukrainian Canadians in the West had a far stronger sense of identity and culture, and a determination to retain their culture, language and identity, than many of the other European settlers.²⁶

The bloc settlements created a deep sense of community among Ukrainians, which was reinforced by the isolation of these rural communities. Contact with outside groups was rare. The federal government, however, feared Ukrainians’ strong sense of cultural identity and as a result, the government focused its attention on children, and in particular, their schooling. This work was spearheaded by the director of New Canadians for the Saskatchewan provincial government, J.T.M. Anderson, (working closely with A.H. Ball) whose treatise, ‘Educating the New Canadians’ was presented to various communities around the province. Anderson’s philosophy and methods not only affected the Saskatchewan government, but also the JRC. Anderson’s close work with A.H. Ball meant that many of his philosophies were transferred to the JRC. Teachers were inspired by his talks and were determined to find teaching placements in so-called

²³ Frances Swyripa, *Wedded to the Cause: Ukrainian-Canadian Women and Ethnic Identity 1891-1991*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 5.

²⁴ Swyripa, 4.

²⁵ Swyripa, 4, 6.

²⁶ Swyripa, 5.

“foreign districts.”²⁷ As one Junior Red Cross chairman from Alberta remarked “we must not permit the creation of “little Polands and little Russians in this country.”²⁸

Education as a Strategy for “Canadianization”

Racial and ethnic tensions shaped many of the public school policies throughout Western Canada, including attendance, language, and curriculum. Schools were seen as the primary place New Canadians could be assimilated. The Saskatchewan government’s greatest fear was an uneducated “peasant” class among their citizens, and therefore in 1917, they introduced a mandatory school attendance act. Children ages 6-14 were obligated to attend school regularly, or their parents would face fines.²⁹ School terms were to be lengthened to at least six months of the year--although most closed over the winter months and during the harvest season. At many of the ratepayer meetings, the parents’ were critical of the legislation, with their main concern being the fines assessed if their children were absent. Ultimately, the new law had the desired effect and immigrant parents sent their children to school. It also prompted the building of more schools, as in order to attend school, children had to be able to reach them, and communities were, therefore, more inclined to put money towards new school buildings. Schools were also thought to be the main place to teach the children English. During school hours, English was the only language allowed and children were encouraged to speak it at home as well, although there was no way to police this.³⁰ The JRC was an important part of many schools, and they considered themselves central to the Canadianization process.³¹ For the JRC that process

²⁷ PAS, Primer William Melville Martin Fonds, M4 I, 56 (1) Education: New Canadians Correspondence between F.C Stephenson and J.T.M. Anderson March 29th, 1919. 19139.

²⁸ Glenbow Archives, Canadian Red Cross Society Alberta North-West Territories Division Fond. Minutes 1920-1922. M-8228-17. Chairman, Opening Session. Alberta Red Cross Convention. Edmonton January 21-22, 1921.

²⁹ Waiser *Saskatchewan: A New History*, 200.

³⁰ Waiser *Saskatchewan: A New History*, 200.

³¹ Glassford, 146.

including education about health and hygiene, as this kind of education, it was believed, would create Canadian citizens.³² The JRC focussed its efforts on education and assimilation rather than on fund-raising in the “foreign”³³ districts, areas where the population did not speak English, and were often poor and isolated.

Many teachers regarded their role in the “foreign districts” as mission work. For example, one teacher wrote “there is room for many earnest workers among our foreigners. It is not necessary to go to Japan to do mission work”³⁴ Unlike missionaries whose intent was to convert their charges to Christianity, the goal of these teachers was to assimilate non-Anglo immigrants into British culture. In the teachers’ view, of course, British or American settlers did not require this form of socialization; indeed, they were seen as having a pioneering or adventurous spirit rather being than viewed as “less advanced,” “different,” and in need of changing. Although the teachers were enthusiastic about teaching in the “foreign districts,” many found the conditions of work difficult once they arrived. The pay was low, making it difficult to attract teachers while the living conditions were notoriously poor. Many teachers, both male and female, expressed these difficulties in letters to the Premier of Saskatchewan. For example, one teacher described having to board with some of her pupils when she first arrived. The single room house where she boarded was home to ten children and she had nothing to sleep on but boards and straw.³⁵ Still, as good missionaries, the teachers viewed their sacrifices as worthwhile.

The teachers were able to justify their “missionary” work by constructing social and cultural differences between themselves and the Ukrainian settlers. Food was a relatively easy

³² Glassford, 146.

³³ This is a term used by the JRC in their minutes.

³⁴ “Teacher from Battleford,” 19164, 19168.

³⁵ PAS, Primer William Melville Martin Fonds, M4 I, 56 (1) Education: New Canadians, Teacher from Battleford, May 13th, 1920, p.19164.

and tangible target. The diet of the Ukrainian Canadians seemed to highlight their “foreignness.” For example, in a revealing account of her efforts to instruct and “Canadianize” Ukrainian children, one teacher complained that she washed the children multiple times, but still failed to remove the odor of garlic from their bodies. In their letters to the government, teachers harshly criticized the food provided at Ukrainian wedding ceremonies. The teachers objected to the presence and quantity of saurkraut, as well as the amount of beer consumed, and the Ukrainians’ preference for dark rye bread.³⁶ They viewed this food, which was different from their own, as a sign of their foreignness and resistance to assimilation. Since the teachers were working so hard to achieve assimilation, the presence of this food could be seen as a sign of their failure. The Anglo-Saxon guests also lamented the lack of food stuffs such as sugar, butter, and tea, foods often associated with a British diet. The teacher framed their concerns as “health” concerns, but really it was cultural and class-based fears. Anything unfamiliar to her was labeled “unhealthy” or “immoral.”

Food was not the only focus of the teachers’ criticism of Ukraine wedding ceremonies. One teacher found them “odd” because they did not conform to the teacher’s expectations of somber and formal rituals associated with “British” weddings.³⁷ In contrast, Ukrainian nuptials were often marked by dancing and music that often began the night before the wedding, before the vows were exchanged. Another teacher objected to the ritual of the bridal party entering the house leading each other by handkerchiefs. Ominously, the other ceremonies the teacher thought too odd to describe.³⁸ For the Ukrainian community, however, the ceremonies and music were a celebration of their culture, a reminder of home, and a break from hard work. To the teachers,

³⁶ “Teacher from Battleford,” p. 19166.

³⁷ PAS, Primer William Melville Martin Fonds, M4 I, 56 (1) Education: New Canadians, Elsie Bishop “Some of my experiences among the new Canadians” 1919-1922, p. 19430-1

³⁸ “Some of my experiences among the New Canadians,” p. 19430-1.

however, these cultural practices were a clear sign of what they derisively labeled ‘peasant culture,’ which needed to be eliminated.

Not surprisingly, in some cases, teachers were greatly disliked in their districts. For example, one young teacher, Mrs. Bynchinsky, who taught in the Poplar Springs school district, nearly incited an uproar.³⁹ In 1920, she gave a rather unflattering speech about her district at a homemakers’ talk at the University of Saskatchewan.⁴⁰ The school board members and others, upon learning of her comments, came in a mob-like fashion to her residence and demanded that she leave.⁴¹ Although Bynchinsky was Ukrainian, the men in the community accused her of being a traitor to her race. They accused her of being “a traitor to her own people” because she was “not working hard for a living, but teaching.”⁴² The event was fairly traumatic for her and her family. A month later, she wrote to Saskatchewan’s Director of Education for New Canadians complaining that the incident had a long-term health effect on her and her son. She later decided to move to Winnipeg, writing “it leads me to draw the conclusion that work among the Ruthenians⁴³ is still in its infancy and that a great amount of work is needed to build up the majority of them into approachable citizens.”⁴⁴ As for the community itself, they wrote to the provincial government to demand that they never be assigned a Ukrainian teacher again.

This incident reveals the tension that can occur between immigrants who were assimilated into Anglo-Canadian culture and values and those who wished to retain unique

³⁹ PAS, Primer William Melville Martin Fonds, M4 I, 56 (1) Education: New Canadians, Correspondences between Mr and Mrs. Bynchinsky and Dr. J.T.M. Anderson. 19219-22, p. 19264.

Poplar Springs school district was located near Canora, Saskatchewan in the south eastern part of the province.

⁴⁰ Unfortunately, there is no copy of Mrs. Bynchinsky speech in the files.

⁴¹ “Correspondences between Mr and Mrs. Bynchinsky and Dr. J.T.M. Anderson,”p.19219-22, 19264-8.

⁴² “Correspondences between Mr and Mrs. Bynchinsky and Dr. J.T.M. Anderson,”19265.

⁴³ “Ruthenian” is a term used to describe East Slavic people, including Ukraine and Polish individuals, the name comes from a region in what today is Ukraine.

⁴⁴ “Correspondences between Mr and Mrs. Bynchinsky and Dr. J.T.M. Anderson,” p. 19268.

cultural identities. Mrs. Bynchinsky had internalized the dominant groups' views of Ukrainians as "backwards," while her work as a teacher situated her in a "class above" her compatriots. In the men's view, the performance of mental labour—teaching—was not "real" work compared to the manual labour that they did.

Despite their patronizing attitudes towards their pupils and their families, many teachers were still welcomed by the community and appreciated for their service. For example, before a teacher's residence was established, teachers were welcomed into the homes of the members of the communities. One family purchased a special oil lamp to make their teacher feel more at home.⁴⁵ The children were even instructed to play a tune while the teacher ate.⁴⁶ Such attempts to include and befriend teachers were widespread. In fact, members of the Ukrainian community recognized that the teachers were from a different cultural background and tried to accommodate these differences. For example, at one wedding, the teachers were given a specially prepared plate because the host assumed they would not partake in the usual wedding feast.⁴⁷ Members of the community realized the importance of teachers to the future of their children and desired to stay on good terms with them.

Ukrainian women often had a different interaction with the teachers and were viewed differently both by the government and society at the time. Ukrainian women and their perceived "shortcomings" were often sensationalized in order to convey urgency in reform and/or assimilation of the settler community as a whole.⁴⁸ They were portrayed as "backward," sloppy and unkempt in appearances, unconcerned with cleanliness, unconcerned with their children who

⁴⁵ PAS, Premier William Melville Martin Fonds, M4 I, 56 (1) Education: New Canadians, letter from female teacher, May 13, 1920, p. 19164.

⁴⁶ "letter from female teacher, May 13, 1920" p. 19164.

⁴⁷ "Some of my experiences among the New Canadians" p. 19431.

⁴⁸ Swyripa, 35.

were treated like livestock (especially daughters whose early marriages were often presented erroneously as child brides).⁴⁹ One prejudiced teacher described Ukrainian “ideas of marriage” as the “most deplorable thing” about Ukrainian culture.⁵⁰ Although Anglo women had little control or legal authority in their own homes, Ukrainian women were still seen by comparison to be completely dominated by their husbands and with no control.⁵¹ However, in reality, Ukrainian women were often more isolated than the men. They mostly interacted with members of their own community and therefore were more likely to retain their identities.⁵² Descriptions of the Ukrainian women were often contrasted to English women and were presented as not “measuring up.” Women were perceived as the greatest issue in the assimilation process (by virtue of their role as mothers), since they were regarded as the most deficient in language, education and the most backward, but also the hardest to access because of their higher levels of isolation.

The provincial and federal governments that had recruited Ukrainians and the immigrant families, now, after the war, activity discriminated against their customs,’ stating that the greatest threat to the “character” of the country meant their many deficiencies needed quick action. The most efficient way, and often the only way, due to the isolation of rural communities, was to “reform” them via campaigns in the schools. However, there were many challenges to this goal. Their challenge was finding a teacher, preferably English, with proper certifications, training, and experience. It was even harder to find those who would remain more than a year or two, as the work (while seemingly vital) was poorly paid. Teachers were paid, depending on the district

⁴⁹ Swyripa, 35.

⁵⁰ “letter from female teacher, May 13, 1920,” p. 19165.

⁵¹ Swyripa, 34-6.

⁵² Swyripa, 34.

around \$1200 a year plus living accommodation.⁵³ In 1926 in Saskatchewan teachers in urban areas made on average over \$200 more annually than those in rural communities. In British Columbia teachers were making \$375 more a year than Saskatchewan teachers in rural areas.⁵⁴ Depending on the district, accommodation meant a multi-room cottage or a “shack,” such as the female teacher previously mentioned, who was left to board with a Ukrainian family in the mud-floored house of her non-English speaking students.⁵⁵ The official trustee who brought her to the district pleaded that she “stick it out as long as possible.”⁵⁶ Another teacher discovered that there was no coal for heating the school in the fall and winter, and that the children were so cold that they were turning blue. Even though she complained the official trustee who was in charge of purchasing the materials refused to buy them more coal. The school had to be closed for thirteen days as a result.⁵⁷ Many places that already had schools had teachers instructing in the language of the district. This non-English instruction was considered extremely dangerous to the provincial government. Some districts wanted new, more qualified teachers, but others fought hard to keep those teachers they had, who were usually respected members of the communities.

Even if there was already a school built in the district, and a “suitable” teacher had been found, the school would still remain empty, and attendance was often low. The reasons varied from poor weather, to the distance to the school, to poverty, which meant that the children lacked the essential items for school such as clothing and books. Many parents needed their children at home to help maintain the farm and the family and were, therefore, reluctant to send them to

⁵³ PAS, Premier William Melville Martin Fonds, M4 I, 56 (1) Education: New Canadians, Memo for Mr. Martin, July 10, 1919, p. 19124.

⁵⁴ Statistic Canada. *Canada Year Book, 1937*. Annual salaries of school teachers, by provinces, 1926, 1930, 1935, or latest year reported. https://www65.statcan.gc.ca/acyb02/1937/acyb02_19370965005-eng.htm

⁵⁵ PAS, Primer William Melville Martin Fonds, M4 I, 56 (1) Education: New Canadians, Teacher from Battleford, May 13th, p.19164.

⁵⁶ “letter from female teacher, May 13, 1920,” 19164.

⁵⁷“Correspondences between Mr and Mrs. Bynchinsky and Dr. J.T.M. Anderson,” 19266-8.

school. The increase in the number of schools as well as the attendance rates directly affected the JRC and their attempts at assimilation. The JRCs were run through the schools and without mandatory attendance, there would have been far fewer members and branches. The missions of the schools and the JRC often overlapped. Both had the goal of assimilation and regulations within the education system attempted to meet both institutions' goals.

Language in Schools

The Saskatchewan government regarded children speaking their native language as one of the greatest impediments to the assimilation process. One official said the use of English in schools was “essential to the survival of democracy, the empire, and the nation.”⁵⁸ Teachers not only taught English in the schools, but strongly discouraged or even forbade children to speak their mother tongue at home. But these edicts were quite often unsuccessful. Not surprisingly, parents spoke their own language. In some districts, where the parents were particularly insistent, the students were taught in their own language, but only after 3 pm, when the regular school day had ended. According to the School Act of 1917, English had to be the language of instruction during school hours, with the possible exception of one hour of French.⁵⁹

Many of the schools also attempted to establish what was referred to as “night” school for children who were past school age or for adults who wanted to learn or improve their English. This program was strongly encouraged by the education department but unlike language education for school-age children, it could not be enforced or regulated. The main purpose of the night schools was to teach incoming groups how to function in Anglo-Canadian society. Adults were never meant to be the primary targets for assimilation. In his 1918 book, Dr. J.T.M.

⁵⁸ Waiser *Saskatchewan: A New History*, 200.

⁵⁹ Waiser *Saskatchewan: A New History*, 200.

Anderson, the province of Saskatchewan's Director of the Education for New Canadians, stated that there was very little point in trying to assimilate the adults; in his mind, they were too far gone.⁶⁰ According to Anderson, the purpose of night school was to teach "the language, laws, and government; but it will be practically impossible to wean them away from many of the habits and customs of their native lands."⁶¹ In the eyes of the government, assimilation of children was the only effective method of creating the "ideal" Anglo- Canadian province; "there is an important duty to perform in seeing that the children of these new-comers are given every opportunity to receive intelligent citizenship."⁶² Anderson was an important figure in the world of education (and a future Premier). His book not only accurately reflects the attitudes and beliefs regarding new Canadian children; it also served as an inspiration to other teachers, even encouraging them to take up positions in the lower paid rural areas.

Immigration and Discrimination

Although east European immigrants were considered undesirable from the earliest days of their arrival, the onset of the First World War signaled a hardening of attitudes, particularly towards those considered enemy aliens, such as those of Austrians or German descent. Even when the war began, many people were careful to separate Germany and the war from the "German people." Before the war, there had been an attitude of "patience" regarding newcomers, with most Anglo-Canadians believing that it was just a matter of time before the assimilation process was complete, but the war made that patience obsolete and fears of enemy aliens very real.⁶³ In contrast, although Sifton believed that Ukrainians would make good farmers, they were

⁶⁰ J.T.M Anderson, *The Education of the New-Canadian: A Treatise on Canada's Greatest Educational Problem*, (Toronto: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1918) 8-9. Dr Anderson was premier of Saskatchewan from 1929-1934.

⁶¹ Anderson, 9.

⁶² Anderson, 9.

⁶³ Waiser *Saskatchewan: A New History*, 197.

never preferred immigrants.⁶⁴ Therefore, attitudes towards them did not necessarily change but rather were channeled into both “official” and “unofficial” forms of discrimination during the war.⁶⁵

The official discrimination came in three major forms of policy.⁶⁶ Believing that “enemy aliens” were potential spies and communicating with the enemy, the dominion government took steps to suppress the “foreign” press. In 1915, the federal government banned publications that were produced outside Canada. By 1918, any periodical in a language other than English had to have a translation alongside it.⁶⁷ The second act of official discrimination was the disenfranchisement of so called ‘enemy aliens under the War Time Election Act of 1917,⁶⁸ which included citizens who had been naturalized since 1902, but whose country of origin included those now waging war against Britain.⁶⁹ Many measures of the War Time Elections Act were undertaken to ensure a Conservative victory, which along with the disenfranchised citizens of German and Ukraine origin, enfranchised women with relatives serving overseas. In so doing, the union government was elected and conscription was enforced.

The third form of official discrimination was the internment of Ukrainian and German Canadians. Initially, they were required to register and report to the police monthly. Failure to do so resulted in internment.⁷⁰ The official justification for internment was fear of espionage. However, internment practices reflected the anti-foreign sentiments in the West. Most of the labour camps were located in Western Canada, although some were established in British

⁶⁴ Waiser *Saskatchewan: A New History*, 61-3.

⁶⁵ Thompson 78.

⁶⁶ Thompson, 78.

⁶⁷ Thompson, 79.

⁶⁸ Thompson, 80.

⁶⁹ Thompson, 80.

⁷⁰ Waiser *Saskatchewan: A New History*, 195-6.

Columbia and Northern Ontario. Here internees worked in forestry and lumber, as well as the construction of federal parks. Internment did not, like disenfranchisement, apply to naturalized citizens, and was for the most part concerned with so-called enemy aliens living in urban rather than rural areas. The majority of internees were primarily unemployed single men whom government officials and the public feared because many were impoverished and potentially desperate. This fear proved to be wrong since no case of sabotage was ever discovered.⁷¹ These war time labour tensions contributed to even greater resentment of immigrants in the post-war period, as epitomized by the Winnipeg General Strike in 1919.⁷² Immigrants were blamed for most societal issues, such as crime rates, land shortages, for destroying the ‘character’ of the provinces and, most significantly, taking jobs away from former soldiers.⁷³

The Memory of War and New Canadians

Since the war, the time of tolerance for immigrants had passed. The Prairie Provinces, home to a large number of immigrants, became viewed as a place for missionary-like work to assimilate newcomers to the west. One former soldier, along with his wife, a former nurse, decided to take a teaching position in one of the “foreign districts,” between 1919-1921, when demand for teachers was high and qualified teachers were rare. This couple channelled war-time mentality and rhetoric into their new peacetime occupation. The wife, upon arrival, named their project “Glory Hole” referring to a military term that described “a very difficult situation in battle.”⁷⁴ Whoever emerged from such a situation usually received a “decoration.”⁷⁵ The article

⁷¹ Bill Waiser, *Park Prisoners: The Untold Story of western Canada's National Parks, 1915-1946* (Markham, ON: Fifth House Ltd, 1995), 6-7.

⁷² Waiser *Saskatchewan: A New History*, 233-4. And PAS, Primer William Melville Martin Fonds, M4 I, 56 (1) Education: New Canadians, p. 19431

⁷³ Waiser *Saskatchewan: A New History*, 244, 248-9.

⁷⁴ PAS, Primer William Melville Martin Fonds, M4 I, 56 (2) Education: New Canadians, Teacher to Mr. Martin “Christmas in “Glory Hole””, 1919-1922, p. 19419.

⁷⁵ “Christmas in “Glory Hole,”” p.19419.

recounted by the former soldier teacher told of their first Christmas party for the children who were treated to a visit from Santa, presents, and singing. According to the author, the evening ended with the singing of “God Save the King” and after the teacher left, they continued singing some songs in English, which he felt was a sign of progress.⁷⁶ In the minds of both the teacher and the school attendees, they had emerged from this battleground victorious. The children’s reception of Santa was regarded as a joyous occasion and they, according to the teacher-soldier, regarded Santa with “superstitious awe.”⁷⁷

Although there is no doubt the couple truly cared about the children, their achievement was framed through the lens of “Canadianization;” they viewed the children as “backward.” The signing of “God Save the King” was an attempt to enforce their mission. In addition, although the children are excited by Santa, their “superstitious awe” implied to the teacher, that they have not fully come to understand Canadian ways or customs. Therefore, they believed the children would have a way to go before they can be considered fully assimilated. The teacher might not have known the children were likely already familiar with Santa Claus and thought they were introducing this concept for first time.

Wartime rhetoric also informed the decision of some female teachers who chose to teach in the “foreign districts” in the post-war period. For example, Elsie M. Bishop, a young teacher who took a position in a Ukrainian district, believed that it was her patriotic duty, as part of the Canadianizing process, to teach children in these areas. She wrote:

“felt badly because circumstances had prevented me from “doing my bit” during the war. I consoled myself with the thought that by taking part in this work of Canadianizing the

⁷⁶ “Christmas in “Glory Hole,” p. 19419.

⁷⁷ “Christmas in “Glory Hole,”” p.19419.

foreigners I could do a little to help my country now. Besides this I felt it was my duty to do what I could in this great task before us...”⁷⁸

For Bishop, this decision entailed great sacrifice. She taught fifty Ukrainian and three Danish children in a single room school built for about thirty children. She also openly acknowledged that she was lonely, but that she was best suited for this occupation because she could handle it better than some others.⁷⁹ Bishop lived in difficult conditions in order to serve her country by helping to create “new Canadians.”⁸⁰

The history of the west and its racial tension created tensions within the Junior Red Cross, particularly in the post-war period. While originally designed to serve the war effort, peacetime efforts expanded to include education and health practices, which took on a new meaning when it came to the so-called “new Canadians.” Pre-existing racial notions lead to targeted children being considered a special project, giving the organization a renewed purpose. Many adult organizers believed their greatest work was with “foreign” children and therefore justified the group’s continued existence after the war. Working with immigrant children, like the teacher above demonstrates, would be seen as an extension of wartime duties, as a service to the nation, despite the fact that their racialized ideas diminished a variety of cultures. The organization placed “new Canadian” children, much like the child patients from their “Crippled Children’s Fund” in a position where they were viewed as the receivers of charity, instead of a group that could meaningfully contribute to the JRC. The JRC’s attitude and treatment of “new

⁷⁸ “Some of my experiences among the New Canadians,” p. 19431.

⁷⁹ “Some of my experiences among the New Canadians,” p. 19423-19431.

⁸⁰ “Some of my experiences among the New Canadians,” p. 19423-19431.

Canadian” children in many ways mirrored how both the provincial government and people treated them as well.

Chapter Four: “Enthusiastic Supporters” The File Hills Farm Colony and the Junior Red Cross

In 1916 Moo-che-we-in-es a Cree man from Onion Lake, Saskatchewan made a donation of \$1.50 on behalf of his household to the Canadian Patriotic Fund. Although not an uncommon act, especially for 1916, his gesture caught the attention of Sir Hubert Armes of the Indian Affairs department. Armes contacted Moo-che-we-is-es and asked to write a letter explaining his motivation. Both the gesture and the letter were turned into a propaganda poster, featuring a stereotyped Indigenous man with the slogan: “My skin is dark, but my heart is white for I also give to Canadian Patriotic Fund.”³⁶² Moo-che-we-in-e’s gesture was not unique; in Saskatchewan alone, Indigenous people donated over \$17,000 to various wartime funds, and their efforts were often utilized as a propaganda tool to shame or guilt Anglo-Canadians into contributing more.³⁶³ This attitude extended not only to adults, but children as well. The JRC also employed this strategy, by showcasing its branch located at the File Hills residential school. Similar to the “foreign-born” children, the JRC at File Hills was used both as a method of assimilation and as propaganda for the Red Cross.

Indigenous men and people supported all aspects of the First World War; they were among the many individuals who flocked to recruitment offices in 1914, as well as to the Red Cross and Junior Red Cross. Like other Canadians, Indigenous men supported or participated in the war for many reasons; some joined for excitement and adventure, some for financial reasons, and others to further equality.³⁶⁴ But Indigenous participation in the war effort was complicated

³⁶² LAC, Online MIKAN no. 2837711 “Canadian Patriotic Fund, 1916. Moo-che-we-in-es. Pale Face, My skin is dark but my heart is white for I also give to Canadian patriotic fund,” 1916, reproduction copy number C-098670.

³⁶³ Timothy C. Winegard, *For King and Kanata: Canadian Indians and the First World War*, (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2012): 146.

³⁶⁴ Winegard, 48.

due to discriminatory policies, and romanticized or patronizing views of Indigenous peoples by Canadian society and its institutions.

Indigenous Enlistment

Indigenous involvement in the First World War differed from other conflicts. Indigenous people were considered British subjects and had fought with Canadian and British soldiers in the past--such as the war of 1812. Contrary to other historians, Jim Miller argued that Indigenous groups participated in this war due to commercial rather than patriotic reasons.³⁶⁵ Even though there was a long history of Indigenous newcomer military alliances, for many wars,³⁶⁶ including the First World War, Indigenous peoples who participated in these wars were denied many rights of citizenship enjoyed by other Canadians. For this reason, both Indigenous groups and others questioned whether they should have to take on patriotic responsibility.³⁶⁷

In 1914/1915, enlistment was initially very high, and the belief that the war was going to be short persisted. It was believed by the recruitment offices that there were more than enough Euro-Canadian recruits. As a general policy, Indigenous men were discouraged from enlisting early in the war. The government listed many reasons for their exclusion. One justification was the concern that if they were captured, the Germans would not treat Indigenous men according to prisoner of war standards.³⁶⁸ Ironically, the government was also concerned that if Indigenous troops gained military capacity, they would rebel, a recognition, ironically, that Indigenous

³⁶⁵ Jim Miller, *Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens: A History of Indian-White Relation in Canada*. 3rd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989) 76.

³⁶⁶ See Miller 72-103 and Winegard 12-23.

³⁶⁷ Winegard, 39-40.

³⁶⁸ R. Scott Sheffield, "Indifference, Difference and Assimilation: Aboriginal People in Canadian Military Practices, 1900-1945," in *Aboriginal Peoples and the Canadian Military: Historical Perspectives*, ed by P. Whitney Lackenbauer and Craig Leslie Mantle (Kingston: Canadian Defense Academy Press, 2007), 61.

people were second-class citizens in their own country.³⁶⁹ Some scholars in the past have argued that the early policy of Indigenous exclusion was official; however, more recent scholarship has shown the implementation of the policy varied by location and circumstances.³⁷⁰ Many Indigenous communities were divided about enlistment and participation; some felt loyalty to the crown while for others, it was not their war. Some were told that during the original signing of the treaties Indigenous people would never be asked to go to war.

Despite these barriers, some Indigenous men made it through the recruitment process and served overseas. Indigenous peoples had the same enlistment rates as Euro-Canadian, about 35% of the eligible male population.³⁷¹ By 1916 the need for soldiers was so great that even the unofficial ban was lifted, and Indigenous men were included under the Conscription Act even though many, including the government and the public, felt Indigenous men should be excluded.³⁷² In justifying these decisions, recruitment officials drew on many racial stereotypes based on the image of Indigenous men as warriors. Some worried that the ideals of the “warrior type” had been corrupted by modern society.³⁷³ The argument was that although Indigenous peoples had once been great warriors, their interaction with the modern world (i.e. with settlers) had ruined their perceived natural ability.³⁷⁴ Several Indigenous battalions were formed, although they were later divided, including the 114th Battalions, which was formed in late 1915 but disbanded by 1917.³⁷⁵

³⁶⁹ Winegard, 7.

³⁷⁰ Winegard, 41-53.

³⁷¹ Winegard, 6.

³⁷² Winegard, 39-40, 93-4.

³⁷³ Winegard, 29 and Scott, 63.

³⁷⁴ Winegard 29.

³⁷⁵ Winegard, 31 and D.C. Scott, “The Indians and the Great War (1919)” in *Aboriginal Peoples and the Canadian Military: Historical Perspectives*, ed by P. Whitney Lackenbauer and Craig Leslie Mantle (Kingston: Canadian Defense Academy Press, 2007), 62-3.

Even with the complications of enlistment and varying opinions, the government saw Indigenous participation in the war as an opportunity for assimilation. For example, Duncan Campbell Scott believed that Indigenous men, after participating in the war, would see “the benefits of civilized society,” and they would not be content to return to their former circumstances.³⁷⁶ For similar reasons, the high-ranking officials, such as Arthur Currie opposed all French units.³⁷⁷ One place where the goal of assimilation was made very clear was the farming colony of File Hills, Saskatchewan. Established in 1898 by William Morris Graham,³⁷⁸ the Colony drew on former Indigenous pupils of the File Hills boarding school and the Qu'Appelle Industrial School.³⁷⁹ Located in Southern Saskatchewan in the Qu'Appelle Valley, the Colony was situated on the Peepeekisis reserve without the permission of the band.³⁸⁰ This action would later become a source of conflict when European settlers took over Peepeekisis' land, thus violating Treaty 4.³⁸¹

File Hills Colony

Fearing that the ex-pupils would revert to their traditional ways of living after leaving the school,³⁸² Graham fashioned the colony as an “experiment,” demonstrating that Indigenous people could be “civilized.” The male students were given a loan of \$125 to buy oxen and other materials for farming, including money to purchase two new thrasher machines.³⁸³ The former

³⁷⁶ Winegard, 41.

³⁷⁷ Winegard, 83. Arthur Currie was commander of the Canadian Corps from 1917 to its disbandment in 1919. He was a key figure in many important Canadian battles including Passchendaele, Hill 70, and Vimy Ridge.

³⁷⁸ Drew C. Bednasek. “Remembering the File Hills Farm Colony” *Historical Geography*. 2009, Vol. 37 (2009): 53.

³⁷⁹ Sarah Carter, “Demonstrating Success: the File Hills Farm Colony,” *Prairie Forum*, 1991, Vol. 16 no 2 (1991): 164.

³⁸⁰ Indian claims commission, “File Hills Colony: A breach of treaty, the Indian Act, and Canada’s Fiduciary Responsibility” *Landmark* (a publication of the Indian Claims Commission) vol 10 no.1 (2004): 2-3.

³⁸¹ Bednasek, 54. The File Hills also was home to Okanese Reserve, Little Black Bear Reserve, and the Star Blanket Reserve, and the Peepeekisis Reserve.

³⁸² Carter “Demonstrating Success,” 164.

³⁸³ Carter, “Demonstrating success”157.

female students of File Hills school were encouraged to marry the former male students and were given a loan to buy “useful” items for maintaining a westernized household, such as sewing machines.³⁸⁴ The first colonist signed up in 1901, and by 1915 there were 36 farmers.³⁸⁵

The File Hills farm colony was unique. No other reserve, for example, received individual loans and money for community equipment. But, as historian Sarah Carter outlines in her article “Demonstrating Success,” the colony was never designed to benefit the Indigenous people living there per se. Rather, the colony was a “showpiece” for the Department of Indian Affairs. Government officials toured dignitaries such as Lord Earl Grey and high ranking government officials through the colony where they were presented with a picturesque image of the ideal village with white houses, fences, gardens, hospital, and churches.³⁸⁶ As one of the main organizers of this “experiment,” Graham’s accomplishments were applauded by newspapers and the government. For example, one 1906 newspaper article stated that “he has probably a greater knowledge of the native character than any other man in that branch of the public service” and that he has “devoted a great deal of time and study” and overall the place is to be considered a success.³⁸⁷ The government shared these views of Graham. As a result of several visits by the Governor-General, the federal government continued funding File Hills as a sign of their faith in this experiment.

One the greatest sources of the colony’s pride was that every man of service age except for one had enlisted in the army. Like other communities, they demonstrated their patriotism by

³⁸⁴ Carter, “Demonstrating Success,” 165.

³⁸⁵ Carter, “Demonstrating Success,” 157.

³⁸⁶ Carter, “Demonstrating Success,” 160.

³⁸⁷ Glenbow Archives, Calgary, William Morris Graham Fonds, Scrapbook, M8097 file 11. Newspaper clipping, paper unknown “Indians at File Hill Reserve Erect Triumphant Wheat Arch for Reception of Earl Grey-Inspector Graham’s Colonization Scheme,” 1906.

hosting charity concerts while the community was involved in the war effort through organizations like the Senior Red Cross where women made various items to raise funds.³⁸⁸ Graham was also a supporter of the war effort and believed in using the colony for this purpose. Using his well-known success with the colony, he landed a position as the Greater Production Commissioner for the three Prairie Provinces.³⁸⁹ This program was intended to help the war effort by increasing grain production on “idle” Indigenous lands.³⁹⁰ For this project, he was given a total of \$362,000 from the War Appropriation.³⁹¹ Although Graham was “successful” in the eyes of the government, the Indigenous’ community regarded Graham as a “dictator.”³⁹² He was remembered as a strict and heartless leader, and his policies were seen as an abuse of power. He implemented a hierarchical form of governance through which he tried to control every aspect of the colony--from farming practices and grain sales to how much the women socialized.³⁹³ As part of the “civilizing process,” and in keeping with government policies, no traditional ceremonies were allowed, or any other social functions such as dances.

The JRC at File Hills

Mrs. Helena Voilette Graham, (who in the records is always referred to as Mrs. W. M. Graham) also sought to use the colony for her own purposes. Like other middle-class women, she used this opportunity to expand her own authority, both by creating a leadership position for herself and by helping her husband’s career by making the experiment more “successful.” She was from a prominent Conservative family, and as the sister of Arthur Meighen's stepfather, she

³⁸⁸ GA, Calgary, William Morris Graham Fonds, Scrapbook, M8097 file 11. Newspaper clipping, paper unknown, “File Hills colony Indian Band.”

³⁸⁹ E.B. Titley, “W. M. Graham: Indian Agent Extraordinaire” *Prairie Forum*, Vol.8 no. 1(1983): 30.

³⁹⁰ Titley: 30.

³⁹¹ Titley, 30.

³⁹² Bednasek, 61.

³⁹³ Carter, “Demonstrating Success,” 165-6.

was an important political connection for Graham.³⁹⁴ She was deeply committed to the JRC and her enthusiasm was a major contributing factor in the establishment of a JRC at File Hills in 1916. At one of the earliest JRC committee meetings, Mrs. Graham was appointed as vice-chairman, with deputy minister A.H. Ball as chairman.³⁹⁵ In the following years, from 1917 to the 1920s, she was one of the few people who attended virtually every committee meeting.³⁹⁶

The children were already familiar with the goals and values of the JRC since they had been involved with the Senior Red Cross since the very start of the war, but according to the article they “went to work with even more energy when they had their own society.”³⁹⁷ The group met at least two nights a week, which provided a great deal of socializing for both children and adults. They raised funds by selling handmade objects such as “bead chains from gaily colored magazine covers, and knitting and crocheting many useful articles”³⁹⁸ One little girl had the ingenuity to knit small doll mittens and sell them for 10 cents each, and ended up raising a “good deal of money for the Red Cross.”³⁹⁹ The children also raised money by stooking sheaves if they were old enough to lift them, and by doing housework and chores. In total, the children raised \$300 for the war effort.

As a shining example of patriotism, the activities of the File Hills branch were highlighted in the first publication of the JRC magazine.⁴⁰⁰ According to the promotional

³⁹⁴ Sarah Carter, ““Infamous proposal:” prairie Indian reserve land and soldier settlement after World War I” *Manitoba History*, 37 (Spring-Summer, 1999):3. Arthur Meighen was Prime Minister of Canada from 1920 to 1921.

³⁹⁵ PAS, Reginald Rimmer Fonds, Canadian Red Cross Society-Saskatchewan Branch Minutes of the Executive, R-87 R486 2F Junior Red Cross Committee, 1917-8.

³⁹⁶ PAS, Reginald Rimmer Fonds, Canadian Red Cross Society-Saskatchewan Branch Minutes of the Executive, R-87 R486 2F Junior Red Cross Committee minutes, from 1917-20.

³⁹⁷“File Hills Indian Junior Red Cross,” 5.

³⁹⁸ “File Hills Indian Junior Red Cross,” 5.

³⁹⁹ “File Hills Indian Junior Red Cross,” 5.

⁴⁰⁰ Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan. Pamphlet Collection, “The Junior Red Cross” G257.7, April 1920. Page 5. The magazine was sent to its branches and featured articles and information for both teachers and members. The magazine was designed to guide the groups discussion and, share knowledge.

material, the JRC at the File Hills Colony was very active; The article indicated that every pupil of the boarding school (around 70 children) was “enthusiastically” involved, even the youngest children.⁴⁰¹ The JRC magazine boasted that a one-week-old baby, named Keewaytin, was made a JRC member. The baby’s parents paid the 25 cent membership fee for Keewaytin, making them the youngest member in the world.⁴⁰² Other parents also paid the membership fee for their toddlers; but it was made clear that the school-age children had to earn their memberships who, reportedly, “immediately set to work” to earn the fee.⁴⁰³

Although all 70 pupils were involved at the JRC File Hills branch, the girls’ activities and fundraising efforts were highlighted in three images in the JRC’s magazine, one of the school and two of the girls. There are no images of male members. One titled “Junior Red Cross girls at play, File Hills” shows about 15 girls participating in a ball game near a small lake. The second image shows the girls lined up in pairs in front of the school.⁴⁰⁴ In both images, the girls are dressed in western-style uniforms that included calf-length skirts, long sleeves blouses, and hats. These images made visible the JRC’s “good” work at the File Hills Colony, while also demonstrating the JRC’s success in assimilating the girls into British “civilized” culture, as denoted by the uniforms. Their outdoor activity shows a commitment to health as fresh air and exercise were part of the JRC recommendations. At the same time, the girls were socialized into Anglo traditions of femininity through their involvement in beadwork, knitting and crocheting, as well as learning domestic tasks. The notion of the domestic sphere was pushed to include farm labour, since the girls also participated in sheave stoking; but even this task suggests that the JRC

⁴⁰¹ “File Hills Indian Junior Red Cross,” 5.

⁴⁰² “File Hills Indian Junior Red Cross,” 5.

⁴⁰³ “File Hills Indian Junior Red Cross,” 5.

⁴⁰⁴ “File Hills Indian Junior Red Cross,” 5.

anticipated that the girls would marry a farmer, and thus this skill would have been an asset.⁴⁰⁵

Some of the skills that they learned, however, pushed these conventional boundaries since they learned leadership skills

Illustration 4.1 Junior Red Cross Girls, File Hills



Although there are no sources from the perspective of the Indigenous girls at the File Hills JRC, we can speculate that the children would have been involved for many reasons. Although it is likely that joining was compulsory, the children would have had motivation beyond the pressure from the agents running the colony. File Hills had an extremely high enlistment rate; according to one newspaper article, all but one man, who was able to serve, had enlisted. Therefore these children likely would have had friends and family members overseas which would give them a very personal connection to the war. As well, like the senior Red Cross, the JRC had a strong social element, which regardless of assimilationist intentions, would potentially have provided some enjoyable opportunities for the children. Evidence illustrated that

⁴⁰⁵ "File Hills Indian Junior Red Cross," 5.

Graham, known as the “Kaiser of the west” allowed no traditional socializing,⁴⁰⁶ the Red Cross branches could give the colony members an outlet and alternate space to Graham’s tyranny.

It is also difficult to know how the readers of the JRC article “read” the article. The central purpose of magazine was to inspire readers to adopt the values of the JRC and encourage their continued involvement in the organization. In order to achieve this goal, much like the propaganda poster of Moo-che-we-in-es, the strategy was to highlight the achievements of Indigenous children, a group that was clearly under-resourced and who did not meet the criteria of full Canadian citizens. If they could raise funds, the message implied, what could other more privileged, Anglo-Canadians (read ‘civilized’ members) do if they put their minds to it? After the war, the organization worked with “renewed energy” and participated in other JRC projects such as the Crippled Children’s Fund.⁴⁰⁷

End of the Colony

Oral interviews conducted in 2006 with the community reveal that even though the colony ended the 1950s, the legacy of their experiment is still felt. One community member stated to the interviewer that “the colony never ended in the people’s mind.”⁴⁰⁸ Graham was forced to retire in 1932, due to a political scandal in which he tried to buy Indigenous land for his club. Although others had done the same in the past, his political enemies, including D.C. Scott, used the incident as an opportunity to get rid of him, by forcing him to retire.⁴⁰⁹ Since Graham had been the one who imagined and enforced the experiment, his absence was the beginning of the end. The colony officially ended in the 1950s over land disputes. The residents argued that

⁴⁰⁶ Titley, 36.

⁴⁰⁷ “File Hills Indian Junior Red Cross,” 5.

⁴⁰⁸ Bednasek, 61.

⁴⁰⁹ Titley, 34-40.

colonists had been placed on Peepeekisis land illegally, and the forms looked to have been forged. In 1952 the Peepeekisis filed a suit with the federal government to have the colonists removed from the area⁴¹⁰ Two trials were held and ultimately the Judge ruled that the colonists could stay.⁴¹¹ The people of the community knew they were being experimented upon and that Graham had used them to increase his own prestige and wealth.⁴¹² Even into the 2000s community members still equated the colony with Graham's harshness and his abuse of power.⁴¹³ The legacy of the colony extended into the next generation and continues on.

File Hills appears to have been one of the few or possibly the only Indigenous JRC clubs. The File Hills colony was designed to be a "showpiece" for Indigenous reserves, demonstrating that Indigenous people could adapt to the modern world by becoming farmers. As part of this "experiment," the JRC branch at File Hills was used as a tool of assimilation, administered by both the Indian agent Graham and his wife. One strategy was to draw on the children's patriotism, to which they were receptive since all but one of the men in the Colony had enlisted in the war effort. Although participation appears to have been mandatory, the JRC provided opportunities to learn new skills and to socialize with other children. Moreover, with its particular focus on girls, this settler-styled organization provided opportunities for leadership and service. JRC's involvement in promoting health and hygiene reveals the contradictory effect of its assimilation efforts. Those involved with the File Hill JRC believed they were doing good, being good Christians by "helping," and assimilating to "Canadian ways" which were deemed as superior. They viewed the Indigenous people as automatically needing charity because they were

⁴¹⁰ Badnasek, 53, 58.

⁴¹¹ Trelenburg(1952)and McFadden (1956) see Bednasek, 53.

⁴¹² Bednasek,61-2.

⁴¹³ Bednasek, 61-3.

Indigenous. They viewed their work as a service and as valuable to society. Like others who could not serve overseas this type of “service” fell in the category of creating a better society.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

The JRC affected the lives of children in Western Canada in a number of ways. Children were able to make tangible contributions to the war effort. They were able to raise funds and provide goods such as clothing and knitted items. The JRC reveals how age and gender were a factor in individuals' experiences of the war. Girls had unique pressures placed on them because of the war, such as the emphasis on their health so as to create the next generation of soldiers. Girls, even though they had less means in comparison to their adult counter-parts, were expected to contribute to the war effort, and these contributions directly affected their place as citizens and prevailing views of their moral character. The “total war” mentality meant that children were expected to participate in voluntary, patriotic organizations, the same as adults did on the homefront.

The first chapter of this thesis explored the involvement in the JRC, the leadership roles played by girls, and what sorts of activities were encouraged within the local groups. While a co-ed organization, the Junior Red Cross primarily catered explicitly and implicitly to girls. For example, a high number of girls occupied local leadership positions and participated in activities such as the sewing groups that produced homemade items for the men overseas. In many ways, the JRC was able to provide certain Euro-Canadian girls with an expansive notion of what it meant to be female and, in other ways, they reconfirmed normative versions of femininity. Through their programs and fund raising activities, the JRC was able to offer girls independence and leadership roles. They also encouraged citizenship and participation in public life. However, their post-war activities, such as their baby care competitions show that they re-calibrated the message to encourage girls toward traditional roles as wives and mothers. Encouraging this domestic work, the JRC believed, would be good for the nation. Yet it was clear that the ideal

JRC member was not only female but also middle-class and Anglo-Canadian. As later chapters revealed, non-Anglo Canadian girls had a different experience in the JRC than their Anglo counterparts. Indigenous girls and girls from the so-called “foreign” districts became part of an assimilation program run by the JRC. The goal for those girls was to adopt Canadian ways of dress, childcare, food preparation and health and hygiene. But this study of these groups reveals that the Canadian West was not homogenous in their reactions to the war. Some provinces, such as Saskatchewan, had higher participation rates than their neighbours, Alberta and Manitoba.

Chapter two of this thesis examined the organization’s health and hygiene strategies, which were a major focus of the group’s overall philosophy and activities. The poor health of soldiers and the number of returning wounded triggered fears about health and the future of the nation, as embodied by children. Anxieties about poor health (usually caused by poverty) encouraged the JRC to train the next generation to create both better, healthier soldiers and mothers of soldiers. In many ways, these particular goals directly affirmed traditional notions of femininity, such as played out in the roles of nursing and mothering. Women led many of the health initiatives; in particular, Miss Jean Browne, the Health and Hygiene Director, a trained nurse, served as the leader of the Saskatchewan JRC, moving on to national leadership later. In the area of health, the JRC did some of its most meaningful work. The traveling dental service in Saskatchewan and Manitoba provided an invaluable service to the children of the province living in rural areas. Without these services, some children would have had no access to dental care. In addition, the nursing services, Crippled Children’s Fund, as well as the Children’s hospital in Alberta, provided much needed medical care to children whose parents otherwise would not have been able to afford it.

The JRC had branches through Western Canada including what they called the “foreign districts.” Similar to widely held opinions at the time, the JRC viewed non-British children as needing special instruction. In particular, children in the Ukrainian districts came to their attention, triggered in part by ongoing ethnic tensions in the West, which were exacerbated by the war. Fuelled by race and ethnic anxieties, the JRC became a tool for the assimilation of new immigrant and non Anglo-Saxon children. Red Cross chairmen feared “foreign” communities would take advantage of the free medical care, unlike their Anglo-Saxon counterparts. In the nursing documents, race was always reported. Even teachers at the time viewed so-called foreign districts as a place to do missionary work by comparing the values and cultural practices of new Canadians to prevailing Canadian norms of language, hygiene and food.

Chapter four explored the unique branch of the JRC at the File Hills colony, which itself was established as an experiment by William Graham, the Indian agent. Similar to immigrant children, the JRC at File Hills was used as a tool of assimilation, but this time Indigenous children were the target. Furthermore, the wife of the Indian agent was a prominent supporter of the JRC. The children may have had their own motives for participating as many of their own relatives were overseas, and the social aspect would allow them to temporarily escape from the tyranny of Indian Agent, W.M. Graham.

The history of the JRC brings together three important areas of historical literature: 1) the history of the First World War in Canada, with a particular focus on the experiences of Western Canada; 2); the history of childhood and youth, and 3) women’s history. The social history of First World War literature, including the experiences of women and children, have only recently begun to be studied more thoroughly with important scholars such as Kristine Alexander, Amy Shaw, Susan Fisher, and Sarah Glassford. Although historians such as Bill Waiser and John Herd

Thompson have made important contributions, Western Canadian experiences of the First World War are still understudied.

This study contributes to the growing expansion of social histories of Western Canadian boys and girls during the First World War and after. It is part of the literature of groups such as the Canadian Girls in Training, the Young Women's Christian Association, and the Girl Guides. Historians such as Kristine Alexander, have done important work, particularly with the latter organizations, but there is still more research to be undertaken. The voices and experiences of young girls are not often heard in historical works. This project aims to fill in some of the gaps in scholarship that surrounds the history of Canadians in the war and the experiences of Western Canadian girls, including the experiences of immigrant and Indigenous children. This thesis can provide a starting point for further research on several topics, such as the history of File Hills. Due to limited sources, unfortunately, this thesis could not offer great insight into the individual lives of the children living on the colony. There is an opportunity here to expand that story, possibly through oral histories. There is also the option to conduct further research on important, but understudied figures, such as Jean Browne. By studying a group such as the JRC, this project can offer insights into issues such as Canadian female experiences in the early 20th century; a different perspective on war, settlement and immigration from the view of children; and an additional contribution to the growing scholarship on Indigenous – settler histories in Western Canada.

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