

as the names of those featured in the archival fonds, but as Beattie points out, subject access is also critical to the successful use of a guide.

Thus it is likely that although historians and general users will continue to consult archivists and colleagues for tips on where to find materials, a thematic guide to the holdings on women contained in the fonds of the Saskatchewan Archives Board will likely be consulted, possibly as much by archivists as by researchers. One hopes that the next effort by the authors of this guide will include a subject index as well as a name index. Where human resources do not permit undertaking the compilation of a thorough subject index, perhaps the publication of such a thematic guide on a CD-ROM will address the problem. If the guide were relatively slender, as this one is, full-text searching would be possible, and would provide multiple provenancial and subject access points. It is an intriguing area for the Canadian Plains Research Center to consider in publishing future efforts.

All in all, Powell and Williams are to be commended for their efforts. As researchers themselves, they no doubt felt the need for such a tool, and it is hoped that further guides on the subject of women's history will be prepared. Archivists, in the meantime, can do their part by being more conscientious about collecting the papers created by and about women, all women, to add a few more pieces to the quilt.

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Shingwauk's Vision: A History of Native Residential Schools, by J.R. Miller.
Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996. Pp. 582.

There is a sex abuse scandal unfolding in this province that has the potential to become our Mount Cashel. But where there were 38 victims of abuse at the Newfoundland orphanage, the federal government has received lawsuits from more than 100 former students who attended the Gordon Indian Residential School during the late 1960s and early 1970s (Cuthand 1997: A3).

The above quotation from Doug Cuthand's article in the 10 February 1997 edition of the *Regina Leader Post* typifies the alarming number of reports that have come to light regarding the experience that First Nations people were forced to endure during the latter half of the nineteenth century and most of the twentieth century. J.R. Miller in his book *Shingwauk's Vision*, attempts to illustrate what effects the residential school system in Canada had on First Nation's people and their communities. Miller breaks down his lengthy study into three main sections. The first section examines the evolution of Indian residential school policy in Canada in a more or less

chronological manner. The second section of the book attempts to illustrate what the residential school experience held for those who entered into the system. The final section of the book discusses the winding down of the residential school system and an assessment of the system by Miller.

The first section which analyzes the evolution of Indian residential school policy in Canada is well researched and thoroughly documented. Miller by way of introduction provides examples of traditional forms of education from various First Nations across Canada. This is done in order for the reader to have some comprehension of the totally different approach that residential schools administrators would take in their approach to the educating of First Nations children. Miller examines the early attempts by both the French in New France and the British in British North America to implement schools that were to begin to serve Indian people living in these territories. As Miller points out these early schools often received the support of Indian groups:

A variety of Indian groups, especially Ojibwa, in those regions where immigration was greatest had come to recognize their inability to maintain a traditional hunting gathering economy. They acquiesced in the schooling of their young as the way to acquire the skills needed to deal with the invading society and to survive economically alongside it (83-84).

For the most part these early ventures did not meet with much success.

By 1830 it became clear that "assimilation through evangelization, education, and agriculture would have to be the policy" (75) adopted by the government. Miller suggests that this approach was necessary because, as the American experience had illustrated, efforts to force Indians off the land were "inimical, expensive and politically dangerous" (75). Miller concludes this first section by examining the evolution of the residential school system as it evolved to serve the assimilationist goals that the Canadian government had planned for Indian people. Both the government and missionaries had decided that the assimilation of Indian people could best be accomplished by removing children from the influence of their parents. It was the residential school system that was chosen to accomplish this goal.

The most moving and captivating portion of Miller's book is the second section which examines the impact that the assimilationist agenda of the schools had on Indian children and their families. Miller examines how classroom and class, race and assimilation, gender, work and play, child care, abuse, and resistance all played roles in the assimilation attempts of the residential schools. Miller draws examples from interviews and oral histories as well as archival materials to illustrate very vividly the conditions under which Indian children were forced to live. It was in this section that the reviewer found some shortcomings. Miller alludes to the ideas of scientific racism and how these were part of the social evolutionary thinking of Victorian Canada. His discussion of Victorian thinking in the opinion of this reviewer is not as complete as it might have been. It was Victorian thinking and the ideas of social evolution and progress that were driving

the assimilationist approach in Indian Affairs during the heyday of residential schools. Miller makes mention of Victorian thinking in chapters four, six and seven, but only in abbreviated forms. This reviewer would suggest that a better presentation of the concepts regarding Victorian thinking would have allowed readers the opportunity to come to a better understanding of the policies that developed regarding the residential schools. Without an understanding of the thinking driving policies one can fall into the trap of pointing fingers at officials and accusing them of racism. This is not to suggest that many of these individuals did not take very racist approaches to their work but at the same time these people were also products of their time. The approach and thinking was not out of the ordinary. Miller is aware of this and addresses this issue in his concluding section, however, a more complete discussion of Victorian thinking with respect to Indian people and race in general would give readers a greater understanding of both government and missionary approaches to Indian people in Canada.

Another shortcomings that this reviewer found with the work deals with the chapter regarding child care. In this chapter Miller outlines the harsh and adverse conditions under which the residential students were forced to live. He discusses the poor quality of food, the problems with disease, the lack of companionship with adults, and deplorable sleeping arrangements to name but a few. A discussion of how parental guidance was lacking at the schools and how this affected the parenting skills of those who lived through the residential school experience would have improved the quality of this chapter. A discussion along these lines would have reinforced the harmful effects that residential schools had on people even years after they had left them. Miller in his chapter on abuse identifies the emotional stress of not being able to be with one's family as the thing that most former students remember as being the worst. A discussion of the impact this must have had on the parents who lost their children to the schools would have added to the discussion of the emotional abuse suffered. It is evident that the residential school experience affected not just those who attended.

The above mentioned shortcomings, however, are minor. They are more topics for further study than actual criticisms. This is the real strong point of the book. By covering such a huge topic in both informational and geographic senses Miller has opened an important window for future study. I would recommend this book to anyone interested in the Indian history of Canada. It is well thought out and very well organized. Miller should be commended for his use of oral interviews as well as archival materials to tell his story. Very often historians are not willing to make use of oral histories or give them the same authority as the written archival materials. Miller is very conscious of the importance of oral history and his extensive use of it demonstrates his willingness to accept it. In fact most of Miller's conclusions are based on oral history rather than the written archival record. Finally, Miller makes use of endnotes in his book. This reviewer found this somewhat distracting as the book is well documented and this meant flipping to the back of the book again and again. Notes at the bottom of the page would have made the reading of the book more enjoyable. But this is

a moot point as it is more a matter of personal preference than it is content. *Shingwauk's Vision* is destined to become the new reference work on residential schools in Canada.

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Letters to a Friend

Union of Opposites: Letters from Rit Svane Wengel, edited by Craig W. Miller. Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1996. Pp. 207.

Women's autobiographies sometimes take unconventional forms, especially if, for reasons of class or social situation, the writers have not had the desire or the ability to write their lives as stories of adventure and achievement. Many women, however, do keep records of their lives for themselves in their diaries or for their families in their personal letters, never imagining such records, edited after their deaths, would ever become their official autobiographies. Craig Miller, in *Union of Opposites: Letters from Rit Svane Wengel*, has edited a collection of letters to create autobiographies of both the letter writer and, in a way, himself. The book is primarily about a "union of opposites," or the marriage between Danish, university-educated governess Rit Svane and her childhood sweetheart Paul Wengel, who had emigrated to a farm near Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. The tale of this match not made in heaven is told primarily through Rit Svane Wengel's letters over the years to her friend Mrs. Miller, the mother of Craig W. Miller. The letters to Mrs. Miller span the years 1926 to 1959, and are supplemented by letters Mrs. Wengel wrote to others, including Craig Miller, her husband Paul, and her friend Dorothy Barritt McCutcheon.

One-sided correspondence always presents a mystery for the reader, since letters are usually intended for a very limited audience of one. Mrs. Wengel's letters to her friend Mrs. Miller are even more special, because they are a correspondence between two women who were close friends throughout their adult years. Mrs. Wengel says things in her letters to Mrs. Miller that she may not have been able to tell anyone else. We as readers, however, see only her needs and desires in this friendship, since the collection does not include Mrs. Miller's half of the correspondence. We can see how much Mrs. Miller's friendship meant to Mrs. Wengel as she struggled through years of a difficult and abusive marriage. But we have no idea what this friendship meant to Mrs. Miller.

Mrs. Wengel needed a friend like Mrs. Miller to whom she could tell anything. Paul Wengel drank too much, left his wife for flings with other women, refused Mrs. Wengel financial support when she needed it, and