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‘Richard W. Hill Sr et al. (Editors), Behind the Bricks: The Life and Times of the Mohawk Institute, Canada’s Longest-Running Residential School’

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Richard W. Hill Sr., Alison Norman, Thomas Peace, and Jennifer Pettit (Editors), *Behind the Bricks: The Life and Times of the Mohawk Institute, Canada's Longest-Running Residential School* (University of Calgary Press, 2025), 508pp. Paperback. C\$42.99. ISBN: 978-1-7738-5652-0.

'When we are always afraid, we comply or resist. When the terror is great enough and the power overwhelming enough, we give ourselves up as a means of survival.' (p. 411)

I begin this book review with the above quote from Wendy Fletcher, the author of 'Chapter 15: Collective Trauma and the Role of Religion in the Mohawk Institute Experience,' as it not only sums up understanding of the majority of survivors of Canada's Residential School system, but for those forced to attend the Mohawk Institute especially.

Fletcher's chapter is but one within the edited collection of *Behind the Bricks: The Life and Times of the Mohawk Institute, Canada's Longest-Running Residential School* – edited by Richard W. Hill Sr., Alison Norman, Thomas Peace, and Jennifer Pettit. The entirety of the book is a collection of not only first-hand accounts from those forced behind the bricks of the Mohawk Institute, but also those with expertise in understanding the land the institution was built upon, its history, architecture, the policy of 'Indian' education, colonization, survival, and perseverance. More specifically, *Behind the Bricks* breaks away from pan-Indigenous mentality and brings forth its relationship, and imposition, amongst the Haudenosaunee connected to the territory and community of Six Nations of the Grand River.

As a researcher and academic whose areas of expertise include Indigenous politics and Canadian/Indigenous relations, the avoidance of pan-Indigenization is key when considering the importance of learning, education, and reconciliation between Canadians and Indigenous peoples. This is further accomplished with the breakdown of the edited collection which divides the book into six different sections:

1. Historical Overview and Context of the Mohawk Institute
2. Teachers, Curriculum, and the Tools of Control
3. The Building, the Grounds, and the Commemoration
4. Survival and Resistance
5. The New England Company and the Mohawk Institute
6. Student Experiences and Voices

Through each section, the reader has a chance to not only grasp the long history of colonization in relation to Canada, but also that such mentality and policy is not just historic but contemporary; that despite such actions the Haudenosaunee are still here – those of the Six Nations of the Grand River, and other communities, and nations, continue to exist.

Through writing by Jennifer Pettit, Thomas Peace, and William Acres the reader traces the long history, planning, and policy put in place to establish the Mohawk Institute. Through authors such as Alison Norman, Evan Habkirk, and Alexandra Giancarlo, one follows the movement away from forms of education as learning to control and 'killing the Indian' within the child. The specific architecture and transformation of the land in which the institution is situated upon, as highlighted by Magdalena Milosz and Cody Groat, is done in a manner to purposely mimic the English/Western construct of civilization, obedience, and military academies. Lastly,

work by Diane Castillo, Thomas Peace, Wendy Fletcher, and others, showcases and details the experiences and understandings of multiple generations of students – including some still alive today.

Such work by the many authors of this collection requires the reader to think of the experience of not only Indigenous peoples, but especially of the community of Six Nations. Thus, I suggest this book not only for those in the social sciences and humanities, but also day-to-day Canadians within, and outside, of the Grand River area, to take time and read – to visit the Woodland Cultural Centre¹ today. Additionally, as someone from a Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg community who also had its youth sent to the Mohawk Institution, this collection has assisted me in connecting further with my roots and the sheer amount of perseverance that is not only showcased by Six Nations today but also my own community.

History and decisions made in the past impact our existence today – if we seek to move forward together, understanding is needed to break the cycle. *Behind the Bricks: The Life and Times of the Mohawk Institute, Canada's Longest-Running Residential School* showcases this and I for one am appreciative of this – Canadians should be too.

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¹ Note: The Woodland Cultural Centre utilizes the former Mohawk Institution building today.