

## Whiteness and Ambiguous Canadianization: The Boy Scouts Association and the Canadian Cadet Organization

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[See table of contents](#)

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### Article abstract

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KEVIN WOODGER

## *Abstract*

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## *Résumé*

*Entre les années 1920 et la fin des années 1960, l'Association des Boy Scouts du Canada et le Mouvement canadien des Cadets ont fait la preuve de leur ambiguïté en tant qu'institutions vouées à la canadienisation de certaines minorités ethniques. Tandis que, au niveau national, en tant qu'agents du conformisme anglo-saxon et du colonialisme, ces mouvements restaient enracinés dans une identité britto-canadienne, au niveau local ils se sont montrés progressivement plus accommodants avec certaines iden-*

*tités ethniques blanches ; mais pas avec les cadets et les scouts non blancs, en particulier les garçons autochtones, que l'on voulait voir s'assimiler au courant majoritaire anglo-canadien. Pour cette raison, il s'agit ici en partie d'une étude de la « blancheur » anglo-canadienne et de la façon dont les définitions mouvantes de la blancheur et de l'identité nationale peuvent se laisser voir à travers les temporisations faites au niveau local par deux mouvements de jeunesse anglo-canadiens. Les jeunes Autochtones étaient ciblés par des programmes d'assimilation au sein des unités de cadets et de scouts, mais, au niveau local, ces deux mouvements nationaux procuraient davantage d'accommodements culturels aux minorités ethniques et religieuses blanches, surtout grâce à l'intervention d'institutions ethniques et religieuses qui parrainaient leurs propres unités de cadets ou de scouts. Cela avait commencé dans l'entre-deux-guerres avec deux des plus importants groupes minoritaires linguistiques et religieux, les catholiques canadiens français et les juifs canadiens, avant de s'étendre au groupe ethnique blanc des Européens de l'Est durant l'après-guerre.*

Between the 1920s and late 1960s, the Boy Scouts Association of Canada and the Canadian Cadet Organization, which comprises the Royal Canadian Sea, Army, and Air Cadets, proved to be ambiguous institutions for the Canadianization of certain ethnic minorities. While nationally, as agents of Anglo-conformity and settler colonialism, these movements remained rooted in a British Canadian identity in their training materials and citizenship activities; at the local level, they gradually became more accommodating of particular white ethnic identities. Local ethnic and religious organizations used these national movements to promote an identity that embraced the specific ethnic or religious backgrounds of their memberships. However, this did not extend to non-white cadets and scouts, especially Aboriginal boys, who were targets for assimilation into the larger Anglo-Canadian mainstream. As such, this is in part a study of Anglo-Canadian whiteness and the ways in which shifting definitions of whiteness can be viewed through the local accommodations made by two Anglo-Canadian youth movements. At the local level, both national movements provided greater cultural accommodation to white ethnic and religious minorities, primarily through the

intervention of ethnic and religious institutions that sponsored their own Cadet or Scout units, often in large urban centres. Such accommodations began during the interwar years with two of the largest white linguistic and religious minority groups: French Canadian Catholics in Québec and Jewish-Canadians. The process of local accommodations spread to white ethnic Eastern Europeans during the postwar period. These accommodations must be understood within the context of changing notions of Canadian identity and definitions of whiteness, particularly after World War II.

While the Canadian Boy Scouts have been studied to a greater extent than the Cadet program, both of these uniformed youth movements remain understudied in the Canadian context. Moving roughly chronologically, this article will explore these organizations' treatment of French Canadians, Jews, and Eastern Europeans, alongside Indigenous and other non-white youths to shed light on the complex interplay of nationally endorsed and locally expressed identities in Canada as well as the role whiteness played in this process. In examining the role whiteness played in the complex interplay of identities in Canada, this article analyzes sources from both organizations' national leaderships, including minutes of annual meetings, official publications, and the speeches of national leaders, and contrasts them with sources produced by local unit and community leaders, as well as periodicals that detail the activities undertaken by white ethnic Cadet and Scout units that did not quite match the Anglo-conformist discourses of the national leaderships, or, in the case of Indigenous boys, demonstrate the ways in which these movements pursued their colonialist agendas.

It should be noted, however, that although national identities could be negotiated, constructions of gender remained comparatively fixed. While the Scouts focused on "character building" through its outdoor training and strong emphasis on religion, and the Cadets promoted a much more militarized masculinity through the inculcation of military discipline and rudimentary military training, both organizations shared a similar goal of forming appropriately gendered men who would readily assume

their duties as citizens (particularly the case for white cadets and scouts) and breadwinners upon reaching adulthood.<sup>1</sup> Both organizations, while ostensibly classless, were committed to inculcating middle-class values in their members. The Scouts, while founded in part as a way to bring unruly working-class boys in line, primarily attracted middle-class boys due to the expenses associated with Scouting. In addition, Tammy Proctor has demonstrated that while the Scouts did attract working-class members, a number of markers, such as the different quality fabrics available for uniforms, could serve as class distinctions, undermining Scouting's claims to classlessness.<sup>2</sup> The Cadet Organization also claimed to be a classless youth movement. However, the majority of Army Cadet Corps were formed in, and drew their members from, high schools, which, as Cynthia Comacchio has shown, were still very much Anglo-Canadian middle-class institutions up to the mid-twentieth century, despite provincial laws raising compulsory attendance to age sixteen in many cases.<sup>3</sup> The Sea and Air Cadets, however, were often independent of the public high schools and could be somewhat more class (and ethnically) heterogeneous. Recalling his time as a cadet with the Sea Cadet Corps "UNDAUNTED" in Calgary during the 1930s, Latham B. (Yogi) Jenson observed that the cadets were much different than the boys at his high school. While Jenson lived in an Anglo-Saxon Protestant part of Calgary, the "boys in the Sea Cadets were a mixture of all the [white] races and religions of southern Alberta: English, German, Ukrainian, Rumanian, Greek and so on."<sup>4</sup>

The Boy Scouts Association, from its founding in Britain just before World War I and into the interwar period, was a heavily Protestant (though officially non-denominational) and white imperialist movement with militaristic undertones.<sup>5</sup> Even its turn towards internationalism during the interwar period was a slow, tentative, and far from deliberate process.<sup>6</sup> Canadian Scout ceremonies, particularly before World War II, were heavily inflected with imperial and Protestant religious overtones. In May 1935, for example, Scouts across Canada organized a chain of flaming beacons from coast to coast to mark the King's Silver

Jubilee. The undertaking was described as a “venture in providing expression for a phase of Scout training — Loyalty.”<sup>7</sup>

The Canadian Cadet Organization, which has received less scholarly attention, particularly in its post-World War II manifestations, was even more explicit in its devotion to the British Empire and especially to the monarchy.<sup>8</sup> While Scout training found room for the study of what made Canada distinct, Cadet leaders often spoke of a Canada subsumed within the Empire. The Navy League of Canada, the founder and co-sponsor of the Royal Canadian Sea Cadets, was, for example, ardently imperialist and Anglophilic during the interwar years.<sup>9</sup> In one of its promotional pamphlets from 1919 the Navy League proclaimed: “We believe that the true significance of Canadian citizenship can be expressed most eloquently in the story of Britain on the sea.”<sup>10</sup> The League envisioned Canadian citizenship during the interwar years as fully integrated with, and subordinate to, a transatlantic British-imperial identity, one that often promoted the concept of the white imperial protector of racialized others. In the 1920s the Navy League of Canada sponsored student essay competitions on such topics as “why it is good to be British;” with responses meant to be framed around one of the exploits of the nineteenth century Royal Navy; such as the suppression of the Algerian slave trade, the saving of India and Egypt, the safety of Canada’s coasts, or the “protection of the Greeks from Turkish murderers.”<sup>11</sup> By the postwar period, however, both the Cadet and Boy Scout movements had shed many of their Anglo-imperial overtones. They did so in response to the rapidly changing ethnic makeup of Canada and the slow extension of the privileges of whiteness to non-Anglo white minorities as well as to the declining fortunes of the British Empire and to the growth of American continental hegemony. They promoted a more domestically oriented conception of Canadian nationalism and citizenship, one that made space for cultural accommodation and hybrid identities.

Defining a “Canadian identity” is a difficult task. While a number of historians have posited an overarching ethnic Britishness as a central feature of Canadian identity during the first half

of the twentieth century, others, such as Ramsay Cook, caution that “identities are multiple rather than single,” they are contingent, constructed, value-laden, relational, and they change over time. No one region, Cook argues, has a single, essential identity, and to assume it does, causes “violence to the reality of historical experience.”<sup>12</sup> During the 1960s, as argued by José Igartua, English Canada shed its ethnic Britishness in favour of a civic Canadian identity. Igartua argues that, rather than a process of slow decline after World War II, the shedding of English Canada’s ethnic Britishness was a rapid occurrence, taking place simultaneously with Québec’s Quiet Revolution, though hardly noticed by English Canadians.<sup>13</sup> Both Iguartua and Bryan Palmer argue that while Canada’s British identity fell away in the 1960s, it was, according to Palmer, “replaced only with uncertainty.”<sup>14</sup>

Much of what can be considered Canadian identity as an imagined community of British inheritance is directly predicated upon the Canadian project of settler colonialism, which pursued the systematic marginalization and assimilation of Indigenous peoples in order to dispossess them of their lands and facilitate the re-settlement of Canada.<sup>15</sup> As an agency of settler colonialism that was steeped in the discourses of anti-modernism, the Canadian Boy Scout movement was not above “playing Indian,” appropriating Indigenous technologies and cultural practices, particularly the idea of the camp fire, or training boys in woodcraft techniques with romanticized Indigenous origins.<sup>16</sup> The movement could also contribute to popular perceptions of Indigenous peoples’ place in the settlement project, as did the Boy Scouts of Montréal during a Scouting exhibition in May of 1926, which featured scouts staging a “pageant of an Indian attack on white settlers.”<sup>17</sup> Kristine Alexander, in her trans-imperial study of the Girl Guides, notes that “Indian play,” amongst both Girl Guides and Boy Scouts in Canada, encompassed notions of national identity characterized as a “part of implicitly white Canadian children’s national inheritance.”<sup>18</sup>

As alluded to above, the use of whiteness as a racial category expanded after World War II, as Eastern and Southern Europeans, previously regarded as less desirable than northern

Europeans, became increasingly accepted as “white,” a process which historians have argued further marginalized people of colour. According to Matthew Frye Jacobson, in the West by the mid-twentieth century, the idea of racial difference among the various caucasian “races” was largely replaced with the cultural category of “ethnicity.” He notes that this was part of a process whereby increasing emphasis was placed on skin colour as a marker of race. This eroded the differences between the so-called “white races,” and Jacobson argues that “the racial characteristics of Jewishness or Irishness or Greekness were emphatically revised away as a matter of sober, war-chastened ‘tolerance’” after World War II and the revelations of Nazi atrocities.<sup>19</sup> Race, as a social construct, as Laura Madokoro and Francine McKenzie argue, contributes to the creation of “others” against which the majority can define itself, thereby justifying the “selective inclusion” of people within the imagined community. They note that studying race allows historians to “excavate the ideologies that informed Eurocentric and ethnocentric notions of Canada’s national identity (both British and French).”<sup>20</sup>

Joan Sangster argues that in the postwar period, Eastern Europeans were no longer depicted as backward peasants but as “modern, cultured immigrants.” She notes that this was partly influenced by their symbolic status as “refugees from communism,” but also by the increased awareness of human rights brought on by the war as well as by conscious attempts to represent Canada as a more tolerant and accepting nation, particularly towards immigrants. Sangster also notes that ideas of ethnicity and “whiteness” were shifting in Canada, reflective of “long-term postwar shifts in the cultural and political approval of continental European immigration.” However, this process also enforced rigid categories of exclusion directed towards immigrants of colour. According to Sangster, while the privileges of whiteness were slowly being extended to European immigrants, many Canadians sought to distance themselves from “the non-preferred immigrants of colour.”<sup>21</sup> Indeed, as Bryan Palmer argues, while whiteness as a category expanded throughout the 1950s and 1960s, and “white ethnics” found themselves no longer



marginalized and isolated, racialized Canadians “remained very much outsiders.”<sup>22</sup> Aya Fujiwara, for example, demonstrates the way in which Ukrainians, largely outside the mainstream prior to World War II, were perceived as racially acceptable due to their white skin and European origins after the war, as opposed to Japanese-Canadians due to their race, and non-Christian culture and traditions.<sup>23</sup>

### Two-founding nations: French Canadian Scouts and Cadets in the Interwar and Postwar periods

In francophone Québec, French-speaking Cadet Corps and Scout Troops were often accepted by these movements’ national leaderships as representative of the “two founding peoples,” a conceptualization of Canada that was growing in popularity with English Canadians throughout the first half of the twentieth century. In both movements, however, there were frictions between Anglophones and Francophones over a number of issues, including religion among the Scouts as well as language, militarism, and federal-provincial jurisdictions among the Cadets.

French Canadians, while initially critical of, if not downright hostile towards, the Scouts because of its heavily Protestant, Imperialist, and militaristic overtones, especially before World War I, grew to embrace the Scout movement as it gradually softened its tone and embraced internationalism during the interwar period.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, the appeal of the Boy Scouts to French Canadian leaders increased during the 1920s, as the movement’s emphasis on discipline, physical fitness, and outdoor survival appealed to nationalist concerns for the creation of young men better able to adapt to the modern world.<sup>25</sup>

However, the predominantly Catholic French Canadians desired an organization separate from the English Canadian branch of Scouting wherein they could preserve their distinct religious and linguistic traditions without fear of English domination. French Canadians operated their own unofficial Scout programs, including *La Fédération des scouts catholiques de la province du Québec* which, in 1934, approached the Boy Scouts

Association of Canada with the proposal of an affiliation whereby *La Fédération* would join the Boy Scouts while maintaining “its own particular organization,” potentially creating two distinct Scout bodies in Canada separated by language.<sup>26</sup>

The proposal of separate sections produced ambivalent reactions among English-Canadian Scout leaders. A common argument against allowing *La Fédération* to affiliate was that “instead of cementing good fellowship and citizenship of the offspring of the two nations, which make up the citizens of Canada,” the scheme was “likely to build up antagonism in training by having a separate Roman Catholic Organization.”<sup>27</sup> Some English Canadian Scouters also believed that “the French-Canadian mentality is not adapted to Scouting on account of home training and the influence of the Church.”<sup>28</sup> Arguments such as these demonstrate that despite the drift towards internationalism within the global Scout movement, a number of English-Canadian Scouters during the interwar period still viewed their organization as an assimilationist tool that could lessen the differences between French and English Canada, but only if the backward religion and child-rearing techniques of the French Canadians were not allowed to interfere with this project. Such hostility, however, does not appear to have been the majority opinion among English-Canadian Scouters. For example, William Wood, a Scout Commissioner representing English-speaking Quebeckers argued that “language, more especially in an officially bilingual country like Canada, is ... guaranteed and safeguarded in everything connected with true Scouting.”<sup>29</sup> The Executive Committee of the Canadian General Council of the Boy Scouts Association “recognized ... that French Canadian culture and mentality demand and are entitled to a Scouting mechanism in harmony with that culture and mentality.”<sup>30</sup> In welcoming the founding of *La Fédération*, Canadian Scouting’s national magazine for Scout Leaders, aptly named *The Scout Leader*, characterized French-Canadian boys as “the descendants of the famous voyageurs and coureur-de-bois of early Canada,” and believed that their affiliation would “contribute importantly to a better mutual understanding and appreciation of viewpoints,

historic, racial, and religious, between the two great parent races of Canada.”<sup>31</sup> Thus English-Canadian Scout leaders framed their acceptance of a distinct French-Canadian Scout body within the increasingly popular conception of Canada as founded and populated by two dominant nations, with two distinct linguistic and cultural traditions.<sup>32</sup>

*La Fédération* signed an affiliation agreement with the Boy Scouts Association of Canada in 1935, wherein they agreed not to form French-speaking Scout Troops outside of the Province of Québec. In agreeing to this, the Boy Scouts Association acknowledged French Canadians’ rights to educate their youth in their own language and religion. For French Canadian Catholics, such as the Archbishop of Montréal, Cardinal Villeneuve, the agreement reached with the Boy Scouts Association allowed *La Fédération* to provide “the benefits of Scouting to our youth in perfect conformity with our religious faith and ethnical character, on behalf of the Catholic Hierarchy of the whole province.”<sup>33</sup> However, while acknowledging *Québécois* rights, this agreement simultaneously denied French Canadians outside of Québec a similar Scouting mechanism by limiting the geographic reach of the agreement to Québec alone.<sup>34</sup>

French-Canadian autonomy within the Scouts did have its limits as, for example, much of the program still adhered to what was laid out by Scouting’s British founder Lord Robert Baden-Powell. However, *La Fédération’s* version of the Scout Promise added allegiance to the Church and placed it and God before both King and Country, reminding the boys where their first loyalties should lie: “*Sur mon honneur, avec la grâce de Dieu, je m’engage à servir de mon mieux Dieu et l’Eglise, le Canada et le Roi.*” *La Fédération* also emphasized to their boys that they should consider themselves sons of Canada and urged them to be proud of, and conform to, their faith throughout their lives.<sup>35</sup> The camps of *La Fédération*, one of which was called Dollard, while another was named Radisson, two figures from French Canada’s colonial past, besides carrying out Scouting’s woodcraft and camping programs featured heavy doses of French-Canadian heritage, such as a historical pageant put on as part of *La Fédération’s* first

jamboree in 1937, as well as sermons on Catholic spirituality and community service.<sup>36</sup>

Thus, by the mid-1930s French Canadians had carved out a semi-autonomous space within the Anglo-Canadian-dominated Boy Scout Association, promoting a French, Catholic, and Canadian identity among their Boy Scouts that attempted to reduce the importance placed on loyalty to the British Crown by their English-Canadian counterparts. However, the two linguistic branches of Canadian Scouting would have an uneasy relationship over the subsequent decades and were forced to renegotiate the terms of their association in the 1960s. This rocky relationship becomes clear through the example of Edras Minville, a provincial commissioner for *La Fédération*. Minville was accused of inciting religious hatred in 1948 when he told of group of French-Canadian Catholic Boy Scouts and Girl Guides that “Protestantism is the greatest menace facing the Roman Catholic population of Quebec” and that he “was not at all surprised that a small group of Catholics living among a mass of Anglo-Protestants easily is influenced by the latter’s ‘materialistic way of thinking.’” The Montréal *Daily Star* picked up the story, which led to demands from Protestants that the Canadian General Council in Ottawa lodge a formal complaint with Québec Premier Maurice Duplessis.<sup>37</sup>

The conception of two founding peoples carried over to the Cadet movement as well. For French-Canadian Catholic leaders, cadet training reinforced the values of the Church, particularly discipline and the acceptance of one’s place in the social order. A teaching brother in the early 1940s, who was also an Army Cadet instructor, believed that cadet training: “*c’est une école qui apprend à sacrifier vos intérêts personnels pour assurer le succès du corps, de la semaine, ou du pays.*”<sup>38</sup>

However, this did not mean that French Canada wholeheartedly accepted the paramilitary Cadet program. Just after World War II, for example, French-Canadian nationalists, including members of the *Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste* (SSJB), denounced Army Cadet training in schools as unwelcomed federal interference in a provincial jurisdiction and demanded its

removal from Catholic schools.<sup>39</sup> Raymond Cossette, a SSJB member, argued that cadet training was “bad for the future peace of our Nation and the World because it instills a love of militarism and a lust of war in our youth.”<sup>40</sup> Circulars spread throughout Québec City informing French Canadians that at ceremonial parades francophone boys were forced to give and listen to orders in English, or else their school would lose federal cadet subsidies. People were also warned that the federal government was usurping the rights of parents and insulting the provincial government, and that teaching brothers training to be cadet instructors were being corrupted by militarism.<sup>41</sup> In this way, French-Canadian nationalists in the early post-war period framed their opposition to cadet training through attacks on the movement’s purported militarism, its forcing of the English language on French-Canadian boys, its negative influence on the religious life of the province, and the way in which it allowed the federal government to co-opt both provincial affairs and home life.

Both the Scouts and the Cadets thus displayed a degree of linguistic and cultural accommodation with French Québec, as one of Canada’s two (white) founding nations. However, for both of these Anglo-dominated uniformed youth movements, assimilationist tendencies could surface, leading to conflict along linguistic or religious lines. This tension between assimilation and accommodation was also evident in the ways in which these movements engaged with immigrant and ethnic youth, particularly during the postwar period.

### White minority youth between the Interwar and Postwar periods

The official policy of Cadet and Scout administrators was to use their programs as tools to Canadianize immigrant and ethnic youth, and both movements actively courted “new” Canadian boys for membership where possible.<sup>42</sup> This was the case both before and after World War II. In March 1923 the founder of the Boy Scouts, Lord Robert Baden-Powell, addressing the Canadian General Council of the Boy Scouts Association, noted that

“a great many immigrants are coming to this country, many of whom would be boys,” and believed that it was a “a great opportunity for the Scout Movement. We should get in touch with these boys and teach them to play our games; it would not be long before they would become Canadianized.”<sup>43</sup> A few years prior to this, in February 1920, the Executive Committee of the Canadian General Scout Council declared that while “we put no obstacle in the way of alien boys becoming members of Scout Troops,” non-naturalized men were deemed ineligible to be “Scoutmasters or other officers in the Association.”<sup>44</sup> Only British subjects, by birth or naturalization, were considered fit to be Scout leaders. Cadet leaders articulated a similar assimilationist rationale. For example, in a 1946 speech in Sherbrooke, Québec, the Director of the Army Cadets, Colonel C.G.M. Grier, espoused his belief that because of the “parochial” nature of Canada, a nation-wide youth organization such as the Army Cadets, whose members all wore the same uniform sporting the Canadian national symbol of a red maple leaf on each shoulder, was necessary to help foster national feeling, especially among “‘new’ Canadians, of whom there are many in the West.”<sup>45</sup>

In local cadet or scout units sponsored and led by members of a particular white ethnic or religious community or institution, however, these movements’ assimilative tendencies could be tempered, though not muted altogether. The leaders of such local groups could promote the expression of the predominant ethnic or religious identities of their memberships, in combination with activities that encouraged the Canadianization desired by the national leadership. This was especially the case in larger urban centres with significant immigrant populations and community support structures and institutions, such as Toronto, Montréal, or Winnipeg. This process, which was evident before World War II, was particularly visible in the decades following the war,<sup>46</sup> as concepts of whiteness, Canadian citizenship, and national identity began to shift in response to an increasingly diverse pool of immigration, the rapid postwar decline of the British Empire, and the equally rapid rise of American hegemony in North America.

## Jewish youth in the Interwar period and during World War II

Taking advantage of the importance Scouting placed on religion, as well as its insistence that it was a non-denominational youth movement, Jewish religious and community organizations were able to organize their own Scout Troops and camps by the early 1920s in Toronto and Montréal. The 59<sup>th</sup> Troop was organized in Toronto in 1921 as Ontario's first Jewish Scout troop, and a camp, Camp Tamarack, was founded for these boys a year later.<sup>47</sup> Toronto's Zionist Institute sponsored the Troop's second anniversary celebrations, and the festivities included the investiture of Rabbi Julius Siegel as the Troop's chaplain.<sup>48</sup> In Montréal, six Jewish Scout troops were active by the late 1920s, such as the 62<sup>nd</sup> Troop sponsored by the Young Men's Hebrew Association (YMHA) and the 75<sup>th</sup> Temple Emanu-El Troop.<sup>49</sup> These troops also had their own camp, Camp Tamaracouta, which featured a Jewish theological student placed in camp to hold Sabbath services and ensure the kitchen was kept kosher.<sup>50</sup> By 1930, the B'nai B'rith had organized a Jewish Scout troop in Vancouver, the 1<sup>st</sup> B'nai B'rith Troop.<sup>51</sup>

These Jewish Scout troops were taught the standard Scout curriculum and regularly participated in events with Anglo-Canadian troops. The primary difference between Jewish and Anglo-Canadian troops was the different religious training provided. Jewish troops still embodied the imperial patriotism espoused by the wider Scout movement. For example, in 1927, Montréal's 67<sup>th</sup> Troop, sponsored by the Shaar Hashomayim Synagogue, had their new flag, a Union Jack emblazoned with the Scout *fleur-dis-lis*, blessed on an altar of drums and saluted by the call of a bugle. After the flag was blessed, the synagogue's Rabbi preached on the topic of "Loyalty to the British Empire and its flag."<sup>52</sup> Jewish Scouts, until at least after World War II, also had to make do with the national movement's Christian symbols in the awards they earned. When a pair of Jewish Scouts from Winnipeg rescued two children from a burning house in 1922, they were awarded the Silver Cross of the Boy Scouts Association. The boys had to be granted special permission by their Rabbi to wear

the cross, who noted that, “it was unusual for Jews to wear the cross, but as these stood for bravery ... an exception should be made.”<sup>53</sup> Unlike the French-Canadians, who wished to be segregated into a separate Scout body by virtue of their language and perceptions of French Canadians as a founding people, these Jewish troops were fully integrated into the larger Anglo-Canadian Scout Association.

World War II saw a heightened emphasis on patriotism and imperial solidarity, and led to efforts to ensure the loyalty of ethnic minority communities in Canada.<sup>54</sup> Both the Boy Scouts and Cadets increased their efforts to inculcate a sense of Canadian patriotism in both their majority and minority members and demonstrate this to the public. Despite the increased wartime emphasis on patriotic Canadianism, some white minority communities were able to use organizations like the Cadets and Scouts as conduits for their own youth who may not have been welcome in organizations dominated by the Anglo-Canadian majority. For example, the Montréal YMHA founded and sponsored an Air Cadet Squadron, No. 78 (YMHA) Squadron in 1941. The Squadron was composed “mainly of working boys” who did their cadet training at night in the YMHA.<sup>55</sup> Similarly, the Toronto B’nai B’rith founded No. 219 (B’nai B’rith) Air Cadet Squadron, in 1943 and sponsored it throughout the war.<sup>56</sup> The majority of both squadrons’ adult leaders were Jewish men provided by the YMHA and B’nai B’rith respectively, such as 219 Squadron’s commanding officer, Air Force veteran Flight Lieutenant Montague Raisman. These Jewish Cadet units provided Montréal’s and Toronto’s Jewish boys with a space apart from the other Anglo-Canadian Cadet corps, where these boys may not have been accepted due to their faith, particularly in light of the high degree of anti-Semitism that still permeated Canadian society in this period.<sup>57</sup>

The Toronto B’nai B’rith’s leaders, such as Rabbi Abraham E. Feinberg of the Holy Blossom Temple, praised the Cadet movement, which was officially non-denominational, “as an example of unity of races and creeds,” and Flt. Lt. Raisman noted that it “teaches young Canadians to get along together.”<sup>58</sup> While



No. 219 Squadron itself was made up of boys from various ethnic backgrounds, particularly German and Eastern European, and although the squadron described itself as “nonsectarian,” the majority of its 150 boys were linked by their faith. While the boys were taught the standardized Air Cadet curriculum (as were the boys of No. 78 Squadron), this was interspersed with specifically Jewish activities, such as temple services and parades alongside local Jewish armed forces members.<sup>59</sup> This squadron provided Toronto’s Jewish boys with a space in which to preserve their faith while participating in a nation-wide patriotic organization, thus both affirming their Jewish identity and demonstrating their status as Canadians.

Despite its call for racial unity, however, the boys No. 219 Squadron were not sheltered from the widespread wartime racial propaganda that demonized Asian enemies. During an interdenominational service at the Holy Blossom Temple for the Air Cadets organized by the B’nai B’rith, the visiting Protestant chaplain of No. 1 Training Command, Group Captain J. McNab, told the boys of 219 that “a yellow jackal is in the saddle of Asia.” This Squadron clearly demonstrates the limits of racial tolerance within the wider Cadet movement. Racial tolerance only extended so far. Group Captain McNab also referred to the Germans as “mad dogs,” for example.<sup>60</sup> Enemies of Canada were dehumanized in the eyes of these boys, as they were in the eyes of the wider wartime society.

Thus, throughout the interwar and into World War II, Canada’s urban Jewish communities successfully carved out a space for themselves in these two movements of Anglo-conformity. Jewish boys in the Cadets and Scouts participated in their respective organizations’ training curricula, including those elements that emphasized a British imperial patriotism, while exercising their own faith.

### Eastern European youth in the Postwar period

The slow postwar extension of whiteness beyond Anglo-Saxons (and northern Europeans), as well as the growing conception of a

Canadian civic identity during the 1960s, did manifest themselves in wider changes to what the Scouts and Cadets actually taught their members, as well as the way in which these movements conceptualized Canada. By 1969, the Boy Scout movement had dropped the majority of its invocations of loyalty to the monarch. Scouts (and Cadets) still had to swear allegiance to the Queen as head-of-state on joining the organizations, but Scout training no longer placed the same reverence for the monarch at the centre of its citizenship training and focused instead on Canadian institutions and embraced the increasing ethnic diversity of Canada, although the focus was still on white European-Canadians. Indeed, the 1969 *Canadian Scout Handbook* section on "Canada's National Origins," which purported to outline Canada's contemporary ethnic and racial composition, continued to emphasize the British and French as the two founding nations, while detailing the myriad different national origins of northern, Eastern and Southern European Canadians. By contrast, Canadians of Asian heritage, both South and East Asian, were lumped into the generic category "Asiatics," while African-Canadians were not even listed.<sup>61</sup>

Racialized minority boys were sometimes attracted to the white ethnic, rather than mainstream, Anglo-Canadian Cadet and Scout units. Toronto's No. 219 B'nai B'rith Air Cadet Squadron, for example, included a number of African-Canadian and Chinese-Canadian boys among its membership.<sup>62</sup> For racialized Canadian youth, Cadet and Scout programs could also provide opportunities to achieve a higher degree of social status by succeeding in Anglo-Canadian institutions. For one Japanese-Canadian boy born in British Columbia in 1936 and sent to an internment camp during World War II, joining the Army Cadets with his older brother when his family relocated to Winnipeg after the war provided a path to a career as an officer in the Canadian Army.<sup>63</sup> While no all-African-Canadian Cadet or Scout units existed, by the mid-1950s, African-Canadian boys from Canada's large urban centres were joining and succeeding in white units, as was the case of an African-Canadian Cadet from Montréal who achieved the rank of Warrant Officer (a

grade above sergeant), a rank which gave him authority over any subordinate ranked (including white) Cadets, though the records are silent as to whether the white cadets ostensibly under his command paid him the respect his rank merited or if he had the support of the unit's officers.<sup>64</sup>

Whiteness inflected Cold War concerns as well. As Laura Madokoro and Franca Iacovetta have shown, Canadian commitment to fighting communism was much more apparent in their efforts to prevent Eastern Europeans from succumbing to communist influences by integrating them into the wider Canadian community than in any large-scale concerns for the Cold War in Asia, such as through the acceptance of Chinese refugees after the victory of the Chinese Communist Party in 1949.<sup>65</sup> Both the Cadets and Scouts positioned themselves as Cold War bulwarks against Eastern-European youth falling under the influence of communism, with Canadian Scout leaders denouncing the spread of communism throughout eastern Europe, particularly Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia, and describing Scouting as an example of democracy-in-action, which it believed would serve as a deterrent against the totalitarianism of communism.<sup>66</sup> The Cadets, on the other hand, highlighted their organization's potential to turn Eastern-European immigrant boys into ideal Canadian citizens, such as was the case with a young Estonian refugee who became an Air Cadet after his arrival in Montréal in the 1950s.<sup>67</sup>

While maintaining the prefix Royal for its programs, the Cadet movement also tolerated an increasing array of cultural diversity within its ranks by the 1960s. Cadet units formed around particular ethnic groups also began to appear. These groups were not designed as assimilationist tools but as organizations that allowed European-Canadian boys to explore both their cultural heritage and their Canadian identity. For example, No. 283 Royal Canadian Air Cadet Squadron in Toronto, founded in the 1955, was predominately (though not exclusively) made up of Ukrainian Canadians and sponsored by a Ukrainian Branch (number 360) of the Canadian Legion of the British Empire Service League.<sup>68</sup> Among the Squadron's special activities during the 1950s and 1960s were participation in a variety of North

American sports through Cadet-sponsored leagues made up of multiple units from around the city, such as inter-squadron hockey, basketball, and volleyball leagues.<sup>69</sup> The Squadron also took part in Anglo-Canadian public events such as Empire Youth Sunday, Victoria Day parades, and church parades commemorating the Battle of Britain.<sup>70</sup> Such North-American and Anglo-Canadian activities were also paired with more decidedly hybridized undertakings.

This Squadron existed as part of a larger network of Ukrainian-Canadian Cadet units. In April 1965 No. 573 Squadron, another predominately Ukrainian Air Cadet Squadron, invited the boys of 283 to Winnipeg. Part of the trip included visits to a Ukrainian Cultural Centre and Museum and a dinner hosted by the local branch of the Ukrainian Canadians' Veterans Society. Canadian content included visits to the local Royal Canadian Air Force Station and the Manitoba Legislature, which featured a meeting with the Premier, who was presented with a book about early Ukrainian settlement in western Canada by the Cadets. Such a gift may be viewed as a statement of the perceived deep roots of Ukrainians in Canada, especially in the west. The two Squadrons held a shooting and drill competition, with the result that 283 Squadron was awarded the "Al Simmons (Provincial Chairman of the Manitoba Air Cadet League) Ukrainian Sponsored Air Cadet Squadrons Efficiency Trophy." The trip thus provided Ukrainian-Canadian boys from two different regions of Canada the opportunity to meet and interact on the basis of their Ukrainian and Canadian identities and in the process engage with both of these. According to 283 Squadron's Commanding Officer, Flight Lieutenant Michael Yaniw, through this trip "the Citizenship training which is our main objective has been advanced and more accomplished in five days than could be attained in years of squadron training." He reported that "a lifetime friendship has been established for many Cadets in both Cities."<sup>71</sup> For this squadron at least, the concept of citizenship was broad enough to encompass both an ethnic Ukrainian identity as well as a civic Canadian identity, both of which were within the bounds of the newly expanded concept of racial whiteness.

## Indigenous youth in the Postwar Cadets and Boy Scouts

The local accommodation of minority Scouts and Cadets was, however, limited by race. While whiteness was expanding after World War II, it did so, as noted above, at the expense of racialized minorities. This was no different in the Cadet and Scout programs, as illustrated by the way in which these movements interacted with Indigenous boys in the postwar years.

Heidi Bohaker and Franca Iacovetta have argued that, in the wake of the 1947 Canadian Citizenship Act, postwar European immigrants were met with a limited cultural pluralism by Department of Citizenship and Immigration (DCI) officials and others, which allowed a degree of cultural accommodation, so long as this did not threaten the power of the dominant culture. They note, however, that Indigenous peoples, who were reconceptualized as “immigrants too,” were targets of much more explicit assimilationist programs by the Indian Affairs Branch of the DCI that sought to integrate them into the mainstream white, Canadian working class.<sup>72</sup>

Aboriginal boys were especially targeted for the integration potential of Cadet and Scout programs. In many ways, Cadet and Scout organizations were excellent tools for furthering the assimilationist goals of Canadian residential schools. The residential school system of the early-to-mid-twentieth century was part of the state’s efforts to support colonial relations of domination over Aboriginal peoples.<sup>73</sup> Furthermore, the school system was part of what was (and still is) Canadian settler colonialism’s attempts to erase Indigenous peoples and their histories in order to gain control over their lands and resources.<sup>74</sup>

At residential schools, Cadet and Scout programs put a heavy emphasis on assimilating Aboriginal boys into the larger Anglo-Canadian culture. As agencies of settler colonialism, these programs sought to further the school system’s goal of separating these boys from their own cultural and social practices. For this purpose, mixed-race units were popular among school administrators and often required native boys to be driven from their schools to the nearest urban centre with an Anglo-Can-

dian Cadet unit or Scout troop. Air Cadet Squadrons in Moose Factory, Ontario and Dauphin, Manitoba in the late 1950s were made up of a mix of native and white youth, with boys serving in mixed-race platoons, led by white Cadet non-commissioned officers (NCOs, consisting of corporals, sergeants, and above), and adult officers. "These Air Cadet activities are extremely valuable from the standpoint of integration of Indian boys with white boys," noted Henry G. Cook of the Anglican Church's Indian School Administration. "Even in the case where the actual unit is all-Indian the Indian cadets have a grand opportunity to live and work with the white cadets at Summer Camp and to associate with them at local cadet activities."<sup>75</sup> Unlike the white ethnic Cadet Corps and Scout Troops examined earlier, Indigenous units had white commanding officers, rather than Aboriginal leaders. However, while all Aboriginal Cadet corps did have white officers, they remained dependent upon the Indigenous boys themselves to fill the ranks of cadet NCOs. As peer leaders with a great deal of responsibility in their units, these boys were in a position to subvert the movement's assimilationist messaging.

In the summer of 1970 the Kamloops Air Cadets, which included both white Cadets and Aboriginal students from the Kamloops student residence, and the Kamloops Indian Student Girls' Band, toured the interior of British Columbia with displays of military drill and music. According to one of the tour's organizers, Major W.G. Mercer, the event was meant to both raise the profile of the Air Cadets as well as to "demonstrate a true spirit of integration and cooperation between the two participating groups," concluding that the tour "was a success primarily because both Indians *and* non-Indians were involved." Mercer boasted that "the young people's cooperation went far beyond our expectations. The friendships formed between these young people are lasting ones and this alone made the tour a success." Highlighting the assimilationist potential of the tour, he also stated that "before the tour was over no one thought of them as two groups nor did any think of them as Indian and non-Indian. They thought of them as a group of very fine Canadian teenagers."<sup>76</sup> This tour illustrates the hope of school administrators, as

well as the leaders of these movements, that close interaction with white Cadets or Scouts would lead native boys to embrace mainstream Anglo-Canadian culture.

Besides instilling such traits as obedience and self-discipline, these programs were also promoted as another way for Aboriginal boys to learn the kind of job skills valued by Canada's industrial economy. For this reason, the Air Cadet program in particular was highly valued by residential school administrators, primarily for the technical and mechanical skills that could be acquired by boys at Air Cadet summer camps, such as small engine mechanics and basic aircraft maintenance skills. According to the Commanding Officer of No. 38 Squadron of the Royal Canadian Air Cadets in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, as Cadets, Indigenous boys were "shown new ways of life and many doors of opportunity are opened to them by the [Air Force] and civilian employ[ers]." <sup>77</sup>

Reflecting on his efforts to develop a Scout Troop at the remote native reserve of Jackhead, Manitoba over a ten-month period, one Scoutmaster (Scouter Don) highlighted the citizenship potential of Scouting. While characterizing the reserve as having a poor "moral climate," (for which he blamed the parents) and the native boys as undisciplined with little appreciation for "natural beauty," Scouter Don noted that Scouting could give the Aboriginal boy "the feeling of belonging to something outside his environment, this small piece of land where he has spent all his life."<sup>78</sup> This impulse to get Aboriginal boys from remote areas to familiarize themselves with the more densely settled (conflated with highly developed) regions of Canada was also evident in Scouting's interprovincial exchange program, associated with Canada's centennial celebrations. In 1966 and 1967 the Boy Scouts sought funds from the Centennial Commission's "Indian and Native Peoples Centennial Program" to send northern Indigenous boys to Scout camps in the south in order to "increase their understanding of the way of life in southern Canada."<sup>79</sup> Scouting thus positioned itself as offering a way for Aboriginal boys to learn to identify with a larger, modern Canadian nation rather than with just their own traditional community on their own lands.<sup>80</sup>

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the native boys who were members of Cadet and Scout units were more ambivalent towards these organizations and their value. While Cadet programs at residential schools appear to have been voluntary, they were among the relatively few extracurricular activities available to students. One man who was a Cadet at an Anglican administered school in the 1960s recalled he enjoyed his Cadet experience primarily because it “was something to do...during the week, other than sit around and do nothing.” A boy at the Mohawk Institute in Ontario had a similar opinion about the Boy Scouts. However, another former cadet remembered not doing much more than alternating between endless marching and standing still, with any breach of discipline resulting in physical punishment including kneeling with stretched out arms or running laps around the building used as the drill hall.<sup>81</sup> In addition, Mary Jane McCallum has demonstrated the way in which Indigenous Girl Guides used Guiding and its love of handicrafts and “Indian lore” as a way in which to subvert the movement’s assimilationist program and engage with own their Indigenous traditions.<sup>82</sup>

Some parents also expressed opposition to their boys receiving cadet training at schools. For example, in 1953, W.S. Arneil, the Indian Commissioner for British Columbia, reported that: “some opposition has been expressed by the parents of children, residential school pupils, to their joining groups such as Air Cadets, Sea Cadets, Army Cadets etc.” Arneil wrote to the Indian Affairs Branch asking: “whether or not it is necessary to secure the parents’ permission” before allowing a boy to enroll in a cadet corps.<sup>83</sup> The response of the Superintendent of Education, Philip Phelan, reflects the colonial nature of the schools and their goal to disassociate Aboriginal children from their parents. Phelan noted that “it should not be necessary to secure the parents’ permission” in order to enroll a boy in Cadets. However, reflecting the voluntary nature of the program, Phelan also noted that if “parents expressed an objection to their children belonging to these organizations, the children should be excluded from the group in accordance with the parents’ wishes.”<sup>84</sup> Such a statement offered Aboriginal parents a degree of choice over their



sons' extracurricular activities, and the ability to have their children not take part in voluntary activities they did not agree with.

Cadet and Scout programs at residential schools were thus promoted as important tools for the assimilation of Aboriginal boys into the Anglo-Canadian mainstream. The Department of Indian Affairs and school administrators believed that these programs could foster meaningful interactions between Native and non-Native boys with the ultimate goal of Aboriginal youth embracing Anglo-Canadian culture.

## Conclusion

The Boy Scouts Association of Canada and the Canadian Cadet Organization were ambiguous tools of whiteness and Canadianization during the middle decades of the twentieth century. While there was little ambiguity in the aim of these movements, as agents of settler colonialism, to further state attempts to assimilate and integrate First Nations youth into mainstream Canadian society, the Scout and Cadet programs left more room for hybridized conceptions of Canadian identity among white Canadian boys of non-British origin. This was particularly the case among those who had the backing of entrenched ethnic and religious community leaders and institutions. French Canadians made space for their language, religion and culture through a leveraging of their status as a founding people, while Eastern Europeans benefited from changing conceptions of whiteness as a racial category and of Canadian citizenship after World War II. Non-Indigenous racialized youth, while not accorded the privileges of whiteness, could nevertheless find some success in these Anglo-Canadian programs. For these two uniformed youth movements, cultural assimilation and cultural accommodation could exist simultaneously, bounded by race.

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WHITENESS AND AMBIGUOUS CANADIANIZATION: THE BOY SCOUTS  
ASSOCIATION AND THE CANADIAN CADET ORGANIZATION

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- 64 AO, RG 2-92, Physical Education Branch, file Sea and Air Cadets, “Cadets at Camp,” *The Air Cadet Annual* (1955).
- 65 Laura Madokoro, “‘Slotting’ Chinese Families and Refugees, 1947–1967,” *The Canadian Historical Review* 93 No. 1 (March 2012): 25–56, 27, 46; Franca Iacovetta, *Gatekeepers: Reshaping Immigrant Lives in Cold War Canada* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2006), 6.
- 66 LAC, MG 28 I 73, Boy Scout fonds, vol. 1, file 15, Annual Meeting of the Canadian General Council, 29 April 1949.
- 67 AO, RG 2-92, file Sea and Air Cadets, “The Story of Sannu Molder,” *The Air Cadet Annual* (1955).
- 68 LAC, MG31 D155, Stephen Pawluk Fonds, vol. 5, Royal Canadian Legion Branch 360-General Correspondence, file 9, The Air Cadet League of Canada, Application to Form an Air Cadet Squadron, Canadian Legion Branch No. 360 of the BESL, 5 April 1955.
- 69 Mike Cronin and David Mayall argue that sport can serve as a “vehicle” for the construction of identities, whether they be individual, group, or national. Sport is a significant outlet for the expression of local,

- regional, ethnic, immigrant, and national identities. They note that, among immigrant groups, sport can serve either to help preserve ethnic identities or smooth the path to assimilation. For more on this see their edited volume *Sporting Nationalisms: Identity, Ethnicity, Immigration and Assimilation* (London: F. Cass, 1998).
- 70 LAC, MG31 D155 Stephen Pawluk fonds, vol. 5, file 9, 283 Toronto Squadron, Royal Canadian Air Cadets, 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Inspection Programme; Royal Canadian Air Cadets Annual Inspection Reports, Air Cadet Year Ending August 31, 1958, No. 283 Squadron, 22 May 1958; 283 RCAC Squadron, Special Activities 1959–1960.
- 71 LAC, MG31 D155, Stephen Pawluk Fonds, vol. 5 file, 9, Visit of 283 RCAC Squadron of Toronto to Winnipeg, 20–24 April 1965.
- 72 Heidi Bohaker and Franca Iacovetta, “Making Aboriginal People ‘Immigrants Too’: A Comparison of Citizenship Programs for Newcomers and Indigenous Peoples in Postwar Canada, 1940s–1960s,” *Canadian Historical Review* 90, No. 3 (September 2009): 427–461, 437–446.
- 73 Braden Paora Te Hiwi, “‘Unlike their Playmates of Civilization, the Indian Children’s Recreation must be Cultivated and Developed’: The Administration of Physical Education at Pelican Lake Indian Residential School, 1926–1944,” *Historical Studies in Education* 29, No. 1 (Spring 2017): 99–118, 100. See also J.R. Miller, *Sbingwauk’s Vision: A History of Native Residential Schools* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996); John S. Milloy, *“A National Crime”: The Canadian Government and the Residential School System, 1879–1986* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1999); Andrew Woolford, *This Benevolent Experiment: Indigenous Boarding Schools, Genocide, and Redress in Canada and the United States* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2015); *The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2015).
- 74 Kristine Alexander, “Childhood and Colonialism in Canadian History” *History Compass* 14, No. 9 (2016): 397–406, 398. Alexander also argues that the broad based social forgetting of the depredations of colonialism amongst many settler Canadians has also led to the neglect of the history of Indigenous children and youth in the wider field of the history of childhood and youth in Canada. She notes that many of the foundational works in this field focus exclusively on settler children at the expense of Indigenous children. However, she does note that more recent studies, while still focusing on settler children, do include at least some analysis of Aboriginal youth, such as work by Joan Sangster, Sharon Wall, and later work by Neil Sutherland.
- 75 LAC, RG 10, Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development Fonds, vol. 10245 file 1/25-10, Cadet Training-General, Henry G. Cook, Indian School Administration of the Anglican Church of Canada



- to Colonel H.M. Jones, Director, Indian Affairs Branch, Department of Citizenship and Immigration, 06 October 1958.
- 76 Major W.G. Mercer, "Letter to the Editor," *The Indian News* 13/4 (July 1970).
- 77 "Boys Find Adventure in Air Cadet Work," *The Indian News* 3/3 (March 1959).
- 78 MRBSC, David Joseph Chambers, Boy Scout Collection, "Scouting on and Indian Reservation by Scouter Don," *The Scout Leader* 33/10 (July-August 1956). Scouter Don also noted that the indifferent parents and moral climate were "mere obstacles to be overcome with determination and patience."
- 79 LAC, MG28 I 73, Boy Scout Fonds, vol. 33. file 1, Boy Scouts of Canada, National Council, Application to the Centennial Commission for Financial Assistance under Indian and Native Peoples Centennial Program, 1966.
- 80 Indigenous Scout Troops were in operation by the early 1930s, with the second troop established in 1931 at the Old Sun residential school at Gleichen, Alberta. MRBSC, David Joseph Chambers, Boy Scout Collection, *The Scout Leader* 8/10 (June 1931).
- 81 *The Survivors Speak: A Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015), 197; *Canada's Residential Schools: The History, Part 2 1939 to 2000* ((Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015), 490.
- 82 Mary Jane McCallum, "To Make Good Canadians: Girl Guiding in Indian Residential Schools" (MA Thesis, Trent University, 2002), 156–157.
- 83 LAC, RG 10, Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development Fonds, vol. 10245, file 1/25–10 Cadet Training-General, W.S. Arneil, Indian Commissioner for British Columbia to Indian Affairs Branch, Department of Citizenship and Immigration, 27 July 1953.
- 84 LAC, RG 10, Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development Fonds, vol. 10245, file 1/25-10 Cadet Training-General, Philip Phelan, Superintendent of Education to W.S. Arneil, 10 August 1953.