**Truth and Reconciliation Assignment**

1. *Identify a significant corpus (body of texts, or singular text) of searchable****educational history-related documents in your own locale or one you are most interested in (i.e. B.C., Ontario, South Africa).****You can choose a fictionalized account, non-fiction narrative, historical text, a set of related documents, a report, etc. Briefly explain why you selected this as ‘raw material’ to search for how Indigeneity and Indigenous people are represented in texts that make up our knowledge about and understanding of the history of education in the locale you chose. Explain how this text might have impacted either educational history or Teacher Professional Development.*

Coming from a background in mathematics and comic cartoons, I tried searching up some comics that were created in the past on First Nations Peoples. However, my search for “searchable educational history-related documents” of comics came up empty because documents are not available in an online format where text can be easily searched. Instead, I googled some more and settled on something that is familiar in popular culture.

**Ten Little Indians**

One little two little three little IndiansFour little five little six little Indians,Seven little eight little nine little IndiansTen little Indian boys.Ten little, nine little, eight little IndiansSeven little six little five little IndiansFour little three little two little IndiansOne little Indian boy.

This modern version refers to Indigenous People using the now outdated “Indian” term. Researching further into the origins of this nursery rhyme, the lyrics were far more appalling. It was written in 1868 by Septimus Winner, for a minstrel show that was a popular form of burlesque at the time showcasing mainly white men and women in blackface that appeared in comic routines based on stereotyped depictions of black Americans.

**Ten Little Injuns (Septimus Winner,** **1868)**

*Ten little Injuns standin' in a line,  
One toddled home and then there were nine;  
  
Nine little Injuns swingin' on a gate,  
One tumbled off and then there were eight.  
  
Eight little Injuns gayest under heav'n.  
One went to sleep and then there were seven;  
  
Seven little Injuns cuttin' up their tricks,  
One broke his neck and then there were six.  
  
Six little Injuns all alive,  
One kicked the bucket and then there were five;  
  
Five little Injuns on a cellar door,  
One tumbled in and then there were four.  
  
Four little Injuns up on a spree,  
One got fuddled and then there were three;  
  
Three little Injuns out on a canoe,  
One tumbled overboard and then there were two  
  
Two little Injuns foolin' with a gun,  
One shot t'other and then there was one;  
  
One little Injun livin' all alone,  
He got married and then there were none.*

Although originally written by an American, the content is not lost on the applicability to Canadian Indigenous People. This particular song had a lot of impact as it went through various revisions and adaptations over the years that were equally as offensive including “Ten Little Niggers” by Frank J. Green and Agatha Christie’s book renamed “And Then There Were None”. The original title’s use of “Injun” in itself is quite offensive as it openly mocks the pronunciation of “Indian” by the Indigenous People. Although perhaps written with light-hearted intention, the popular nursery rhyme is a sad reflection of the cultural insensitivity, pervasive stereotypes and the genocide of the Indigenous People. From a professional development perspective, this marks where we once were as a society and serves as a learning tool in how we can progress towards being more understanding, inclusive, respectful and culturally sensitive to our First Nations People.

1. ***Identify a specific question you want to answer by selecting and searching this text. What is your search intended (or hoping) to illuminate?***

How many times do they refer to First Nations as other than First Nations? What term(s) were used in 1868? The aim of the question is to see how First Nations People were addressed.

In this particular text, First Nations People were only referred to as “Injuns” which is a dated and offensive term for North American Indians.

1. *Identify and explain the search terms you will use (any****additional to the 5 identified in the example provided (Indian; Indigenous; Aboriginal; First Nations; Native****). And before you do that, read*[*Indigenous Foundation Terminology,*](https://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/terminology/)*which will help you think about language as a tool and how terminology works in searching.*

Given that “Ten Little Injuns” was written in 1868, more politically correct terms for Aboriginals were not used. As such, I could only search “Indians” or “Injuns”. I found that the entire song was written with one derogatory term for First Nations People.

1. *Create a****new question****, and any additional search term/terms you think might be illuminating.*

Of the ten lines in “Ten Little Injuns”, how many depicted harm to First Nations People?

1. Search and document what you find.

I categorized the outcomes for each Indigenous person in the song as positive, negative or neutral. With the exception of two instances where one got married and another went home, the remaining eight suffered falls, a broken neck, intoxication or death. It is no wonder that these offensive lyrics underwent significant revisions over time, eventually leading to an exclusion of references to harm on the Aboriginal people and leaving only the counting aspect of the original rhyme intact.

1. Report the results (and limitations) of your search and your analysis of those results.

It is clear that even in a child’s nursery rhyme written in the late 19th Century, the harsh discrimination and prejudice that our First Nations Peoples experienced were very evident. The song itself demonstrated the Eurocentric values of the time and failed to provide any meaningful insights into Indigenous cultures, histories or contributions. The lyrics were extremely offensive as they detailed various scenarios of demise or implied similar misfortunes upon young aboriginals. Looking back, this is particularly heart-breaking considering the tragic reality of mass graves of Aboriginal children who suffered at the hands of residential schools.

Something as seemingly innocent as a child’s catchy nursery rhyme has the ability to perpetuate harmful stereotypes and prejudices through successive generations without taking much time to ponder its lyrics. It is crucial to reflect upon and question the lyrics of such folk songs, recognizing their unacceptable nature and actively work to counter their influence. This includes educating children about the importance of cultural respect and understanding towards Indigenous People as well as ensuring popular culture promotes inclusivity rather than perpetuating harmful narratives. Fortunately, as a collective nation we have since recognized the egregious acts of racism and genocide committed against First Nations People. We now possess a valuable resource in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s 94 Calls to Action which provides us with a guide to pursue the essential work of rebuilding trust and respect that Indigenous peoples rightly deserve. It is our responsibility as educators then to lead the charge in promoting culturally sensitive, understanding and respectful language and attitudes towards First Nations Peopple. By doing so, we can positively contribute to the healing process that needs to extend across generations.