

basic elementary education, and created institutions whose daily life reflected Europe's emerging work discipline. In short, they sought to impose the foreign and transforming world of the residential school.

Colonization was undertaken to meet the perceived needs of the imperial powers. The justification offered for colonialism—the need to bring Christianity and civilization to the Indigenous peoples of the world—may have been a sincerely and firmly held belief, but as a justification for intervening in the lives of other peoples, it does not stand up to legal, moral, or even logical scrutiny. The papacy had no authority to give away lands that belonged to Indigenous people. The Doctrine of Discovery cannot serve as the basis for a legitimate claim to the lands that were colonized, if for no other reason than that the so-called discovered lands were already well known to the Indigenous peoples who had inhabited them for thousands of years. The wars of conquest that took place to strip Indigenous peoples of their lands around the globe were not morally just wars; Indigenous peoples were not, as colonists often claimed, subhuman, and neither were they living in violation of any universally agreed-upon set of values. There was no moral imperative to impose Christianity on the Indigenous peoples of the world. They did not need to be 'civilized'; indeed, there is no hierarchy of societies. Indigenous peoples had systems that were complete unto themselves and met their needs. Those systems were dynamic; they changed over time and were capable of continued change.⁷⁴ Taken as a whole, the colonial process relied for its justification on the sheer presumption of taking a specific set of European beliefs and values and proclaiming them to be universal values that could be imposed upon the peoples of the world. This universalizing of European values—so central to the colonial project—that was extended to North America served as the prime justification and rationale for the imposition of a residential school system on the Indigenous peoples of Canada.

Residential schools in pre-Confederation Canada

In Canada, residential schooling was closely linked to colonization and missionary crusades. The first boarding school for Aboriginal people in what is now Canada was established in the early seventeenth century near the French trading post at the future site of Québec City. At this Roman Catholic school, missionaries hoped to both 'civilize' and 'Christianize' young Aboriginal boys.⁷⁵ The school was a failure: parents were reluctant to send their children, and the students were quick to run away and return home.⁷⁶ Later efforts in New France met with no greater success.⁷⁷ After the British conquest of New France in 1763, the idea of residential schooling lay dormant until the early nineteenth century. In the first decade of that century, the New England Company, a British-based missionary society, funded a boarding school operation in Sussex Vale, New Brunswick. The goals were to teach young Mi'kmaq and Maliseet children trades and to convert them