

#1431 Stealing Native Children and Their Future

JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT: [00:00:00] Welcome to this episode of the award-winning Best of the Left Podcast, in which we shall take a look at the legacy of residential schools for native children in the US and Canada. We hear from some of the voices of the victims from, those establishing truth and reconciliation commissions or something similar, and thoughts on what it would really take to get a full accounting of this genocide and its impact through generations.

Clips today are from the *Native American Rights Fund*, *Intercepted*, *Vox*, *Code Switch*, the *PBS NewsHour*, *The Red Nation Podcast*, *Let's Talk Native*, and *Future Hindsight*.

Boarding School Healing - Native American Rights Fund - Air Date 1-25-17

JERYLIN DECOTEAU: [00:00:37] The boarding school policy was far-reaching and devastating as any, maybe more than any, because of the complete and utter destruction of the culture.

SEAN FAHRLANDER: [00:00:50] I couldn't stop it from happening. So they would take them from further away and make it harder for them children to leave and go home.

SUSIE SILVERSMITH: [00:01:09] It was my first haircut. I cried when I saw my hair on the floor. Tears fill, well up in my eyes, and I remember the way it laid on the floor. Without my Navajo language, I was broken and unable to celebrate my heritage, to express myself.

Taking my identity from me made me very powerless.

BESSIE SMITH: [00:01:51] I managed to learn how to stuff all the uh -- I'm sorry-- the loneliness that came, because I could not talk to my mother or my father, and we were not comforted by the boarding school matrons or teachers. The pain and the loneliness and the anger will always be with me.

SARAH EAGLEHART: [00:02:47] We are dealing with the erasure of our people.

JERYLIN DECOTEAU: [00:02:51] The government has been working on destroying tribal societies and institutions for 500 years.

ELECIA GOODSOLDIER: [00:02:59] I work with youth on the Pine Ridge Indian reservation quite often. And so many of them tell me that they walk around with like a heavy load on their shoulders. They feel heavy all the time. And I truly believe that what that is is they're carrying the traumas of their ancestors and they're carrying the traumas of their parents and their grandparents. And then they have to carry their own traumas.

BROOKE AMMAN: [00:03:30] It's like our great, beautiful blanket kind of got all chopped into pieces during that boarding school time, where that time when we were trying to assimilate. And we have a lot of the pieces left and now we're trying to put them all back together. And we're putting them all back together, but it's probably never going to look exactly like our blanket was before. So, but it will still keep us warm. It'll still help us. It will still sustain us.

JERYLIN DECOTEAU: [00:04:07] And it hurts to know that I can't give them the things that my parents could have given me, if not for boarding school.

BRETT SHELTON: [00:04:22] Only by bringing it into the light can we begin to heal from it. That's the first step that we're moving.

JERYLIN DECOTEAU: [00:04:29] If our tribal cultures are going to stay alive, other than existing as pockets of poverty and sadness, we have to heal. And telling the story and then help finding resources to turn things around, that's what the coalition wants to do.

JOHN ECHOHAWK: [00:04:53] The eventual outcomes we would hope would come out of the boarding school healing project would be healing programs that are put together by our own Indian people in their own Indian communities.

SEAN FAHRLANDER: [00:05:06] We are changing the paradigm of education each day. We are saving the language one child at a time.

How do you preserve a language? You create a speaker.

SARAH EAGLEHART: [00:05:18] This healing is not just happening on the native side. It's not just for us that needs to heal over this history. It's also the non-native community that's really struggling with this healing.

BRETT SHELTON: [00:05:28] Much more, more important that we share with our children that we tell them stories.

It's not a very easy thing to do, but the strong people my age need to be strong and just think about where we've been and teach it to our children.

Stealing Children to Steal the Land - Intercepted - Air Date 6-16-21

NAOMI KLEIN: [00:06:06] It was not a shock that residential schools were violent, twisted, sinister places. Canadians knew this already, because we have been told many times. A massive class action lawsuit against the government by 86,000 residential school survivors ended in a settlement agreement, a settlement that included the creation of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 2008. In 2015, the TRC issued its final report.

The findings were harrowing, and we heard all about it

SEN. MURRAY SINCLAIR: [00:06:40] Over the time of our mandate, the commission heard statements from survivors, gathered documents, and worked to create a number of calls to action aimed at addressing the damage that was done. The calls to action are centered around a core challenge in Canadian society, a broad lack of understanding of the unjust and violent circumstances from which modern Canada has emerged, and how the legacy of residential schools is part of that history, and of our country today,

NAOMI KLEIN: [00:07:12] we heard about Indigenous children ripped from their parents, separated from siblings and relatives, beaten and whipped for speaking their language.

We heard about priests and nuns who told children that their ceremonies, their art forms, their parents, their grandparents, their ways of knowing, were not just wrong, but Satanic, a sure route to hell.

The TRC report told of young bodies ravaged by starvation-level rations, of days filled with forced manual labor, of braids of hair chopped off on arrival, of thin school uniforms, wholly inadequate for frigid Canadian winters.

It told of TB and other infectious diseases left to rampage through the schools.

We heard about the systemic sexual violence, the rapes by priests, catholic brothers, and nuns.

One school, St. Anne's, in Ontario, had a crank-operated electric chair.

Now, this did not take place in a few dark corners where no one was looking. It took place on an industrial scale.

150,000 Indigenous children went through Canada's residential school system over a century and half. And this was official state policy. Enrollment in the schools became mandatory in 1920.

When the TRC issued that final report, it described this deliberate attempt by church and state to destroy Indigenous peoples' culture and group coherence as cultural genocide. But Murray Sinclair, the respected Indigenous judge who chaired the TRC, insisted that he had not actually been able to do his job; that being, to uncover the full truth. Indeed he had only scratched the surface.

SEN. MURRAY SINCLAIR: [00:09:06] The one aspect of residential schools that really proved to be quite shocking, to me, personally, was the stories that we began to gather of the children who died in the schools, of the children who died, sometimes deliberately, at the hands of others who were there. And, in such large numbers.

Survivors talked about, during the time that they were there, about children who suddenly went missing. Some of the survivors talked about witnessing children being buried in large numbers, into mass burial sites.

NAOMI KLEIN: [00:09:49] The survivors kept saying it. The trouble was, proving it.

The TRC's mandate was to document the abuses at the schools, and to chart a path towards reconciliation. It was not set up to investigate potential mass murder, or negligent homicide of children, nor did it have the financial resources or legal powers for such an undertaking.

Yet that is precisely where the testimonies of survivors were leading. To crimes against humanity, under cover of education.

In 2009, one year into the commission's work, sinclair and his colleagues requested \$1.5 million to follow the leads about the existence of mass burial sites on school grounds. The government of Canada, then headed by Prime Minister, Stephen Harper, shut them down, actively choosing to keep the nation's crimes buried.

Here is Murray Sinclair, again,

SEN. MURRAY SINCLAIR: [00:10:46] We had no expectation that this would be a part of the work that we were doing. So we asked the government to allow us to conduct a fuller inquiry into that part of the work of the TRC, in order to explore that, on behalf of the survivors and Canadian public. We submitted a proposal, because it was not within our mandate, and we asked that it be funded by the government. And that request was denied.

And so, largely, we did what we could, but it was not anywhere near what we needed to accomplish, and what we needed to investigate.

NAOMI KLEIN: [00:11:31] The fourth volume of the final TRC report is entitled "Missing Children and Unmarked Burials." And it contains many more questions than answers. That's because so many children died inside these institutions, at many times, the rates outside of them that the religious orders who ran them stopped keeping official count, the ultimate expression of their disdain for indigenous life.

The TRC was able to identify 4,100 children who died while attending the schools. But Sinclair now estimates that the true number could be 15,000 or even more. Unable to uncover the full truth, which is, after all, the purpose of a truth commission, the TRC called for a full investigation of potential burial sites, as well as efforts to identify remains.

And it called on religious orders and all branches of governments to unseal their records relating to these deaths.

When he took office in 2015, Justin Trudeau promised to make justice for First Nations his government's top priority. And when he issued an apology to survivors of residential schools, he wept.

PRIME MINISTER JUSTIN TRUDEAU: [00:12:40] On behalf of the government of Canada, and of all Canadians, that this burden is one that you no longer have to carry alone.

NAOMI KLEIN: [00:12:58] And yet, in the six years since the TRC's report years, the Trudeau Liberals have been in continuous power, only 10 of its 94 calls to action have been completed, and virtually no actions have been taken to get at the truth of those missing children: how many, where they are, who they were, and how they died.

It was in that torturous context that some indigenous communities took matters into their own hands. Tired of waiting the tk'emlúps te Secwépemc First Nation hired experts in ground-penetrating radar to examine the land surrounding the former Kamloops residential school.

That's how it found evidence of those 215 children's remains. The search of the property is ongoing, which means there may well be more macabre discoveries in store. And not only in this one community in British Columbia. With federal funding finally flowing, other first nations have begun their own searches.

The Kamloops school, after all, was just one of 139 residential schools investigated by the TRC. And Murray Sinclair says that there were actually 1300 such institutions across the country, many of them privately run.

Here is Sinclair again.

SEN. MURRAY SINCLAIR: [00:14:17] We know that there were probably lots of sites, similar to Kamloops that are going to come to light in the future. And we need to begin to prepare ourselves for that.

Those who are survivors of the residential schools, including the intergenerational survivors, need to understand that this evidence is important to make available to Canada, so that Canada can understand the magnitude of what it is that they did, and what it is that they contributed to.

Since the revelation of what was discovered at Kamloops has come to light, I have been inundated with phone calls from survivors by the dozens, if not hundreds, now, they've called me. Often just to cry just to tell us, "I told you, so I told you that this had happened and now we're beginning to see it."

And in their voices, I can hear, not only the pain and the anguish, but also the anger that they were feeling about the fact that nobody believed them when they told those stories,

NAOMI KLEIN: [00:15:31] That anguish is surfacing across Canada, this nation that sits atop so many First Nations. The anguish can be heard in ceremonies in cities, towns, and reserves.

[sounds of a mass drumming circle] In a mass drumming circle, held on the Canada-U.S. .

[sounds of horns honking] In convoys honking as they drive past the Kamloops school.

It can be seen in the mountains of Teddy bears, flowers, and in rows of tiny shoes lined up in front of government houses and on the sites of former residential schools.

And there is plenty of rage. The Trudeau government is under fire, and so is the Vatican. Ahead of the July 1 holiday weekend, #CancelCanadaDay has been trending, and hundreds of professors at Toronto's Ryerson university named after a key architect of the residential school system have begun referring to their institution as X University.

Last week, protestors pulled a monument of Ryerson to the ground, and the statue's head showed up on a stick on an indigenous blockade called "1492 Land Back Lane."

In short Canada, the Good, the Benign, the Smug, is having an identity crisis. As well it should.

[The

STEVE PAIKIN: [00:16:53] Agenda] If Canada was able to look away about the tragic legacy of the Indigenous residential schools in this country, that's clearly no longer true.

NAOMI KLEIN: [00:17:02] The question is how deep will it go.

During these weeks of hand-wringing, one topic that has received less attention is, "Why? Why did the state and church collaborate in these machineries designed to break the spirit, and unmake the identities, of 150,000 children? What did that cruelty serve?"

The surface answer is uncontested. In the infamous words of former Canadian Prime Minister, John A. MacDonald, the role of the residential school was to "Take the Indian out of the child."

Father Carion, an early principal of the Kamloops Indian residential school definitely got that memo. He wrote, "We keep constantly before the mind of the pupils the object which the government has in view, which is, to civilize the Indians and to make them good, useful, and law-abiding members of society."

But is that the whole story? Did all of this violence really flow from the idea that Indigenous people needed to be "civilized" in order to save their souls? Or did that racism, that White Supremacy, serve some other purpose as well?

There is one sentence in the multiple-volume Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report that provides an answer, an explanation for the deeper "Why," behind these sinister schools.

It says this: "The Canadian government pursued this policy of cultural genocide because it wished to divest itself of its legal and financial obligations to Aboriginal people and gain control over their land and resources."

In other words, we are back where we started: with land. This was not just about one culture thinking itself superior to another, and imposing its ways through brutality, though it was certainly about that too. Underneath that supremacist logic, it was also all about land. About a fervent drive by European settlers to gain control over lands that were rich with precious metals they wanted to mine, and profitable trees they wanted to fell, and fertile soil they wanted to farm.

Lands that, at least in British Columbia, had never been ceded.

Lands that, in other parts of the country, were covered by treaties that agreed to share the territory with settlers, not surrender it for limitless development and extraction.

And one way to gain control over land that is occupied by other people is to shatter the social and familial structures of those people, alienate them from their languages, cultures, and traditional knowledge, all of which are intimately land based.

Oh, and another way, maybe the most effective way to get the job done, is through sexual violence, because nothing spreads shame, trauma, and substance abuse more effectively, and these schools were rape mines, generation after generation.

Another way of thinking about it is this: the torture at the schools was not sadism for its own sake, but sadism in service of a broader, highly profitable purpose: land theft on a grand scale. The schools cleared the land more effectively than any bulldozer could.

How the US stole thousands of Native American children - Vox - Air Date 10-14-19

SANDY WHITE HAWK: [00:20:37] I was adopted by a white missionary couple.

JANE HARSTAD: [00:20:41] I was adopted...

ANN HAINES - HOLY EAGLE: [00:20:43] immediately placed for adoption.

DANIEL/NELSON FOX: [00:20:44] I was on foster care with one family for 18 years. They were white.

JANE HARSTAD: [00:20:51] My parents loved us and I understand that. But at the same time,

ANN HAINES - HOLY EAGLE: [00:20:56] they took the idea that they were saving me,

JANE HARSTAD: [00:21:01] saving us from ourselves.

SANDY WHITE HAWK: [00:21:03] Being saved. And I should be grateful for the life that I've been given, because any child on the reservation would give anything to live as I was living.

DANIEL/NELSON FOX: [00:21:11] They took us away from our mom. They came marching right in and literally took us and thousands of other children from their home.

SANDY WHITE HAWK: [00:21:22] It's a way to eradicate us. And to go to a nation's children is one of the sure ways to do that.

RANAJANI CHAKRABORTY - HOST, VOX: [00:21:36] The US has a long and brutal legacy of attempting to eradicate Native Americans. For centuries, they colonized Native American lands and murdered their populations. They forced them west and pushed them into small confined patches of land. But Native Americans resisted. A Board of Indian Commissioner's report said, "Instead of dying out under the light and contact of civilization, the Indian population is steadily increasing." And that was an obstacle to total American expansion. So the US found a new solution: to absorb and assimilate them.

It all started with an experiment, and a man named Richard Henry Pratt.

CHRISTINE DIINDIISI MCCLEAVE: [00:22:23] He had in his charge some prisoners of war. And he taught these men how to speak English, how to read and write and how to do labor. He dressed them in military uniforms and basically ran an assimilation experiment. And then he took his results to the federal government and said they're capable of being civilized. So he was able to get this project funded.

RANAJANI CHAKRABORTY - HOST, VOX: [00:22:52] In 1879, the government funded Pratt's project, the first ever off-reservation boarding school for Native American children. His motto was "to kill the Indian and save the man."

What started there at the Carlisle Indian Industrial School was nothing short of genocide disguised as American education. Children were forcibly taken from reservations and placed into the school, hundreds, even thousands of miles away from their families. They were stripped of their traditional clothing, their hair was cut short. They were given new names and forbidden from speaking their native languages.

CHRISTINE DIINDIISI MCCLEAVE: [00:23:35] To take our children and to indoctrinate them into Western society, to take away their identity as indigenous peoples, their tribal identity. I think it's one of the most effective and insidious ways that the US did do harm to indigenous peoples here, because it targeted our children, our most vulnerable. And they tried to make us ashamed for being Indian. And they tried to make us something other than Indian.

RANAJANI CHAKRABORTY - HOST, VOX: [00:24:05] There are also accounts of mental, physical, and sexual abuse, of forced manual labor, neglect, starvation, and death.

CHRISTINE DIINDIISI MCCLEAVE: [00:24:15] My great-grandfather went to Carlisle and nobody in my family ever talked about it. So if you Google "Indian boarding schools," the majority of the pictures that you will see will be actually from Carlyle. Colonel Pratt created propaganda. He hired a photographer to create those before-and-after photos to show that his experiment was working. So it was intentional propaganda.

RANAJANI CHAKRABORTY - HOST, VOX: [00:24:39] And it worked.

The Carlisle model of education swept the country and led to the creation of over 350 boarding schools to assimilate Native American children.

ARCHIVE FOOTAGE: [00:24:51] On the one hand, we have a Navajo as we find him in the desert. Few of these boys and girls have ever seen a white man. Yet through the agencies of the government they are being rapidly brought from their state of comparative savagery and barbarism to one of civilization.

RANAJANI CHAKRABORTY - HOST, VOX: [00:25:13] In 1900, there were about 20,000 Native American children in these schools. By 1925, that number more than tripled. Families that refuse to send their kids to these schools faced consequences, like incarceration at Alcatraz or the withholding of food rations.

Some parents who did lose their children to the schools, even camped outside to be close to them. Many students ran away. Some found ways to hold on to their languages and cultures. Others though, could no longer communicate with family members.

And some never returned home at all.

By stripping the children of their Native American identities, the US government had found a way to disconnect them from their lands. And that was part of the US strategy. During the same era in which thousands of children were sent away to boarding schools, a number of US policies infringed on their tribal lands back home. In less than five decades, two thirds of Native American lands had been taken away.

CHRISTINE DIINDIISI MCCLEAVE: [00:26:19] The whole thing was purposeful. And the fact that it has been buried in the history books and not acknowledged is also intentional. And in fact, the same tactics were used in New Zealand, Australia, Canada, all of these countries have acknowledged, apologized or reconciled in some way, except for the United States.

RANAJANI CHAKRABORTY - HOST, VOX: [00:26:39] Over time, the brutality of boarding schools started to surface. And after a 1928 report detailed the horrific conditions at some schools, many began to close. In the 1960s, indigenous activism rose alongside the civil rights movement. And by the 1970s, that activism forced more schools to shut down. The government handed over control of the remaining boarding schools to tribes, to be run in partnership with the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

But just as the boarding school era started fading, another assimilation project took shape: adoption. The main goal of this pilot project was to stimulate the adoption of American Indian children to primarily non-Indian adoptive homes. They claimed it was to promote the adoption of the forgotten child, but it was essentially a continuation of the boarding school assimilation tactics.

And the strategy came with a financial advantage for the government too: adoption was cheaper than running boarding schools. But first, adoption officials had to sell white America on the idea of adopting Native American children. Feature stories like this one in *Good Housekeeping* marketed them to white families.

They were described as unwanted and adoption gave them a chance at new lives. In the end, their media campaign worked. White families wanted Indian adoption. But the problem was many of these children were not orphans that nobody wanted. They were kids often ripped apart from families that wanted to keep them.

TERRI YELLOWHAMMER: [00:28:21] You still will hear stories today of people, you know, my age, older, saying I remember as a child, the social worker was coming and people would hide their children.

RANAJANI CHAKRABORTY - HOST, VOX: [00:28:34] On reservations, social workers used catch-all phrases like "child neglect" or "unfit parenting" as evidence for removal. But their criteria was often questionable. Some accounts described children being taken away for living with too many family members in the same household.

TERRI YELLOWHAMMER: [00:28:51] An extended family is a big thing for native people. And that means being judged for being in a house that's overcrowded. So it's always the whiteness is the standard for success. And that everything else is judged by that standard.

RANAJANI CHAKRABORTY - HOST, VOX: [00:29:09] By the 1960s, about one in four native children were living apart from their families. The official Indian adoption project placed 395 Native American children into mostly white homes. But it was just one of many in an era of Native American adoptions. Other state agencies and private religious organizations began increasingly making placements for Native American children too.

JANE HARSTAD: [00:29:37] My mother giving me up was a white person telling her if she didn't, she would never see her other kids again.

DANIEL/NELSON FOX: [00:29:45] In one of the documents I have it's addressed to my biological father, Victor Fox, that he was trying to look us up to get a hold of us, but Hennepin County wrote, "Daniel and Douglas are adapting very well in their new family." This was totally, it was a false statement.

JANE HARSTAD: [00:30:12] When you're adopted, you know, you're missing something. I think I've likened it to when someone has a 500-piece puzzle and they have all the pieces to make this pretty picture, except one.

SANDY WHITE HAWK: [00:30:25] My adoptive mother was not well, verbally, physically and sexually and spiritually abusive. So by the time I was 14, I started drinking. 15, drugs were added, and I became an addict to numb. I didn't realize I was numbing pain.

DANIEL/NELSON FOX: [00:30:42] I tried suicide, tried slicing my wrist one time.

JANE HARSTAD: [00:30:47] Children were taken and believed like I believed for a long time, that there was something wrong with me,

versus something wrong with the system.

RANAJANI CHAKRABORTY - HOST, VOX: [00:31:05] The Indian Adoption Project was considered a success by the people who set it in motion. Officials claimed, "Generally speaking, we believe the Indian people have accepted the adoption of their children by Caucasian families and have been pleased to learn the protection afforded these children."

But the truth was unsettling.

ARCHIVE FOOTAGE: [00:31:25] These hearings on Indian children's welfare is now in session. When I was pregnant with Bobby and the welfare kept coming over there and asked me if I give him up for adoption. Before he was even born? Yeah. They've picked up my children and placed them in a foster home. And I think that they were abused in the foster home.

RANAJANI CHAKRABORTY - HOST, VOX: [00:31:48] Four years after native people organized in this Senate hearing, Congress passed the Indian Child Welfare Act, known as ICWA.

TERRI YELLOWHAMMER: [00:31:57] It gives tribes a place at the table in court.

RANAJANI CHAKRABORTY - HOST, VOX: [00:32:00] States would be required to provide services to families to prevent removal of an Indian child. And in case removal was necessary, they would have to try to keep the child with extended family or another Native American family.

TERRI YELLOWHAMMER: [00:32:13] Without our relatives, we cease to exist. So with native people, part of our wealth is in our family. It's in who we're connected to.

RANAJANI CHAKRABORTY - HOST, VOX: [00:32:25] But the legacy of family separation in native communities has been difficult to fully undo. Today, Native American children are four times more likely to be placed in foster care than white children, even when their families have similar presenting problems.

In these cases, ICWA is often the best legal protection they have. And it's been under attack repeatedly.

ARCHIVE FOOTAGE: [00:32:51] A young girl ripped from her foster family because of the Indian Children Welfare Act.

RANAJANI CHAKRABORTY - HOST, VOX: [00:32:56] White adoptive families, intent on keeping Native American children, have tried to do away with the act. And they're often backed by conservative organizations.

ARCHIVE FOOTAGE: [00:33:06] The Indian Child Welfare Act was dealt a blow earlier this month, the subject of a lawsuit issued on Tuesday by the Goldwater Institute, arguing that preferences given to American Indian families to adopt Indian children is unconstitutional and discriminates based on race. It's a way for these industries, these very powerful industries, to try to attack what Indian identity is.

SANDY WHITE HAWK: [00:33:25] Wanting to overturn ICWA is connected to everything about who we are as a nation. So if we don't have any protections for our families, and if we don't have protections for our treaties, then we have no more Indians.

TERRI YELLOWHAMMER: [00:33:39] We've been under attack. We're going to continue to be under attack. And we have to keep, just keep fighting.

DANIEL/NELSON FOX: [00:33:43] It's in our DNA to survive.

TERRI YELLOWHAMMER: [00:33:47] We are nations that preexist European contact, and we are still here.

What We Inherit - Code Switch - Air Date 6-5-18

SHEREEN MARISOL MERAJI - HOST, CODE SWITCH : [00:33:55] Whether it's trauma that comes from having to leave your country of origin against your will or intergenerational trauma that stems from slavery or the Holocaust, it just seems like something a lot of people can relate to. Is it?

REBECCA HERSHER: [00:34:09] Absolutely, yeah. I think intergenerational trauma - and actually rising to meet it also, like, being resilient - that's just an extremely American story. So you mentioned slavery - I think Jim Crow also applies here. You're talking about generations of people who witnessed violence and were affected by it and then pass that down. We're also talking about immigrants, people who were displaced by war or disaster. You know, anyone who fled a genocide - the Holocaust is included in that. Sam's other side of his family, actually, is Jewish...

GENE DEMBY - HOST, CODE SWITCH: [00:34:38] Wow.

REBECCA HERSHER: [00:34:38] ...And coped with that. Basically, the litmus test here is if your family traditions were interrupted by something violent and traumatic, your family is at risk for intergenerational trauma. And that can also happen on a smaller scale - think addiction in a community, think violent crime in a community. It doesn't have to be a war. So if it feels familiar to people, that's probably because it is.

SHEREEN MARISOL MERAJI - HOST, CODE SWITCH : [00:35:00] Do you have to be physically or emotionally abusing the next generation in order for it to be considered intergenerational trauma?

REBECCA HERSHER: [00:35:10] No. You just have to be at risk for it. It's twofold. One is the behaviors that are elicited by the trauma in the first place. So the mother is sent to boarding school, the daughter is spoken to harshly by that mother, that daughter has trouble expressing her love or being resilient in the face of difficulty, right? The, like, corollary to that is even if the daughter expresses her love to her son, the son is still interacting with the grandmother, right? The son is still hearing...

GENE DEMBY - HOST, CODE SWITCH: [00:35:39] Right.

REBECCA HERSHER: [00:35:39] ...The story of the subjugation and oppression of the people who he's supposed to be part of. So you're still at risk for the passing on of a trauma that didn't occur to the latest generation.

SHEREEN MARISOL MERAJI - HOST, CODE SWITCH : [00:35:49] And you said in your piece that sociologists found that a good way to overcome intergenerational trauma, in the case of Sam, was to reconnect with culture. Is that for all of these various types? You know, could I

reconnect with my Iranian culture and that would help stem some intergenerational trauma or stop me from passing it down to my kids?

REBECCA HERSHER: [00:36:11] Right. And what if you can't physically move back with people who are practicing the culture that you're cut off from? And that's a really big question. So in Sam's case, he could get some of these concrete skills. He could go to Gambell, he could learn to do subsistence hunting, he could hear these stories. But one way around it, if you can't go back, if you can't be around people who are practicing the traditions that you could have grown up with if not for the trauma, is to build new traditions, right?

This is also a very American thing. You have a lot of people coming to a place and saying we're from one place and we're in a new place, what will be our family now? So that can be stuff that's based on old traditions. It can be taking elements of the things that your family has done for a long time and doing them in a new context. But the main thing that you want to be doing for your kids, especially when parents think about this, is connecting them to a bigger idea - putting them in the context of the people who came before them - acknowledging that. Because one thing that happens when traditions get broken down is that young people don't know who they are and who they can be, right?

So one thing that anthropologists say is, like, culture is like a scaffold and like a safety net. So it's a scaffolding that you can attach your dreams, your desires, your vision for the future to it. But then it's also there to fall back on when things get hard. And so that doesn't mean that you have to do things exactly the way your ancestors did it, it just means that you have to have something there. And if culture was destroyed, it needs to be built back up.

SHEREEN MARISOL MERAJI - HOST, CODE SWITCH : [00:37:41] A lot of what I'm hearing puts the onus on the people who have been traumatized, right? Go. Connect with your culture. Figure out a way to create new traditions. Can other people in, quote, unquote, "dominant society" do something to help fix this?

REBECCA HERSHER: [00:37:57] Yeah, absolutely. I think, you know, the road is easier when your differences are being celebrated and there is more freedom to be you. So this is - something we saw with Sam for sure is that one of the things that was good about the transition to private school - and, you know, it wasn't all good.

GENE DEMBY - HOST, CODE SWITCH: [00:38:16] Sure.

REBECCA HERSHER: [00:38:16] There were still a lot of things that were hard and it's definitely still a place that was dominated by a culture that is not his. But one of the things that was good is that the rules bent when he pushed them. You should allow me to learn this way. You should allow me to come to school a week late because that's when the fishing season ends. You should allow me to travel because I'm part of a native youth group. Do the rules bend?

GENE DEMBY - HOST, CODE SWITCH: [00:38:38] So can we talk a little bit about the schools in the story? Because they function sort of as, like, sites of indoctrination of culture and sort of homogenization. On one hand, we have the American Indian boarding schools which inflict all this sort of calamity and trauma onto all these native communities. Then, a couple of generations later, Sam and his mother are in a public school in Seattle. He's a student there, she is the teacher there, and they're both having a really hard time. Do you think

that's for similar reasons - like, if this is the process of indoctrination or assimilation? Did they make that connection when they were telling that story about themselves?

REBECCA HERSHER: [00:39:10] Yeah. Absolutely. It's obvious to them there's a throughline there. And it's in the specifics that things get a little bit messy, right? Obviously, a boarding school in Alaska in the '60s is different from a public school in Seattle in 2005.

GENE DEMBY - HOST, CODE SWITCH: [00:39:25] Absolutely.

REBECCA HERSHER: [00:39:26] But I think, actually, Sam put it best. So one thing he said is he sees the desire and belief for learning to be standardized in schools as a form of indoctrination. What he would say is, basically, that the norms - the average wins, right? So that means in this Seattle public school, the white, non-native norms - they win. It's not from a place of hatred of the person he is, but it has the same effect, basically, of putting him on the outside of the norms and calling him what he is, which is different...

GENE DEMBY - HOST, CODE SWITCH: [00:40:00] Right.

REBECCA HERSHER: [00:40:00] ...Which is very isolating. And it becomes a way of telling him that he should be something else. But another thing is that students like Sam, non-white students, are diagnosed with learning disabilities and learning disorders more often.

GENE DEMBY - HOST, CODE SWITCH: [00:40:16] Right. There's an idea of, like, what - a student's supposed to behave and that is racialized in all these ways.

REBECCA HERSHER: [00:40:20] Exactly. And I think - there have been a number of different studies on why it is that non-white students are diagnosed with learning disorders at higher rates. One thing that's true is that there's not a good reason. But the question of why the diagnoses are happening, I think, is nuanced. And one really interesting thing is that students who do not speak English as a first language are diagnosed at far higher rates with learning disorders. So you're testing a student in a language that is not their first language. Their answers may lead the tester to conclude they had trouble learning, when, in fact, the problem was that they had trouble understanding the questions...

GENE DEMBY - HOST, CODE SWITCH: [00:40:56] Right. Like, it's like idiomatic stuff. Like...

REBECCA HERSHER: [00:40:58] ...In the first place.

GENE DEMBY - HOST, CODE SWITCH: [00:40:58] Yeah, exactly.

REBECCA HERSHER: [00:40:58] Exactly.

GENE DEMBY - HOST, CODE SWITCH: [00:40:58] Yeah.

REBECCA HERSHER: [00:40:58] So that's testing bias, but the testing bias is part of larger institutional bias.

GENE DEMBY - HOST, CODE SWITCH: [00:41:03] Right.

REBECCA HERSHER: [00:41:03] And one thing, you know, Sam and his parents said is that all of that - having to fight to show that you being different is not you being bad or worse than your fellow students - that's so exhausting.

SHEREEN MARISOL MERAJI - HOST, CODE SWITCH : [00:41:16] And you mentioned in the story that some of the teachers were saying, well, maybe you should go back to the village because this isn't working and he's not doing well here and he's not doing well in school in Seattle. Maybe he'll do better if he went back home. And that's not necessarily the case, right?

REBECCA HERSHER: [00:41:36] Right. And I do want to say, you know, there are a lot of good things about Gambell for Sam. This is a place where he's related to basically everyone. Like, living in a small community with your whole family can be really great in a lot of ways...

GENE DEMBY - HOST, CODE SWITCH: [00:41:49] Everybody has your back.

REBECCA HERSHER: [00:41:50] ...Being with people he loves - yeah, everyone's got your back or knows your business.

GENE DEMBY - HOST, CODE SWITCH: [00:41:52] Right.

REBECCA HERSHER: [00:41:54] But there are a lot of hard things too. Gambell is a very small place, it has a very small school, and kids who want college preparatory classes can't get them at the local school. You have to travel. So that means you're taking a plane to go to school. You might be living part of the year away from home. So Sam is going to Stanford next year.

GENE DEMBY - HOST, CODE SWITCH: [00:42:14] Wow.

SHEREEN MARISOL MERAJI - HOST, CODE SWITCH : [00:42:14] Oh, wow.

REBECCA HERSHER: [00:42:14] The idea that he would have gotten there going to school in the village - it's not impossible, but it's really hard. And then there are social things that are really hard. You know, his own cousins have struggled with substance abuse. There's a very high rate of suicide in Gambell. That's not specific to Gambell. That's across Alaska in native communities. That's across the U.S. in native communities. That's, frankly, around the world in native communities - places that have had a lot of cultural destruction. So Sam has been protected from that in a lot of ways. Even if his education in Seattle has been difficult and there's been a lot of fighting to get him what he needs, in the end, he did get what he needed from that and maybe going home he might not have.

SHEREEN MARISOL MERAJI - HOST, CODE SWITCH : [00:42:55] Complicated.

[LAUGHTER]

REBECCA HERSHER: [00:42:57] No kidding. Can you imagine? I mean, so many parents have to make these tough calls where you want the child to have one part of a thing but to be protected from the hard part of that same thing. And this is just such a clear example of that, where, like, how do you get him closer to his family without putting him in danger?

**Sec. Haaland on healing from the indoctrination,
dehumanization at Indian boarding schools - PBS
NewsHour - Air Date 7-16-21**

JUDY WOODROOF - HOST, PBS NEWSHOUR: [00:43:15] As we know, Canada established an Independent, what they called, a truth and reconciliation commission to investigate this, to get to the bottom of it, to try to, and to issue a report. In our country we have what you just mentioned, the Indian Boarding School Initiative, it's being run under your department, the Department of the Interior, but it was the federal government that was in charge of this system. So my question is, can we be confident that we're going to get to the bottom of it when it's the government, in effect, investigating itself?

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR DEB HAALAND: [00:43:49] Well, I absolutely feel that with our initiative that we can work on healing. I really feel confident that, I mean, that's a goal for us and we want to make sure that the families get the answers that they need and they want. The federal government has a trust obligation to Indian tribes. That is an exchange for all the land that essentially became the United States, this was all Indian land at one time, and so I feel confident that this is part of our trust obligation to Indian tribes. This initiative that we are moving forward with, I feel very confident that this is a new era and we want to make sure that tribes have a seat at the table..

JUDY WOODROOF - HOST, PBS NEWSHOUR: [00:44:33] And ultimately, how do you see holding the institutions accountable that we're responsible for this?

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR DEB HAALAND: [00:44:40] That remains to be seen, of course. Recently I was able to participate in a ceremony at Carlisle, it's now an army war college, it was the Carlisle Industrial School for Native Americans. My great-grandfather attended that school and I was invited by the Rosebud Sioux tribe as they work to remove children from their tribe who were buried in the cemetery there, to take them home to their homeland in South Dakota.

And I think that it's up to every tribe -- how do they want to move forward? What is their idea of healing and what would make them feel like they've gotten the answers they want? And we're going to do our best to make sure that we are attentive to those needs.

JUDY WOODROOF - HOST, PBS NEWSHOUR: [00:45:27] Secretary Haaland, you also wrote recently about the challenge of loving your own country, a country that was responsible for committing these acts. How do you explain that to others, to other Native Americans who look at this and question, how can they, how can you love a country that has done this?

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR DEB HAALAND: [00:45:48] Well, first of all, my ancestral homelands are here and I can't go anywhere else. This is my home and this is where my family is. This is where my history is. We've been here for tens of thousands of years, and and we want to make sure that we are defending this land for future generations. I believe very strongly in democracy, and if you look at tribes across the country, so many Indian tribes had longstanding historical democracies in their communities, and I am confident that our country can live up to its promise to people, to our citizens, and and I want to part of that.

No Apologies, Land Back - The Red Nation Podcast - Air Date 7-5-21

NICK ESTES - HOST, THE RED NATION PODCAST: [00:46:31] I don't like focus all of my energy in researching boarding schools. There are a handful of us journalists and historians who do

do that work. But this took me years to find out. And the reason why I'm bringing that up and putting kind of like a temporal frame on it is because according to Deb Haaland's press release they want, she wants a final written report, final quote, final written report on April 1st, 2022. There are over 367 boarding schools that have been identified in the United States. A hundred of which are Catholic about 80 or so are other denominations. And the rest are federally run or public schools or integrating some kind of public school systems.

So how are you going to acquire all of the records, all of the personal experiences and the legacies and the consequences of the boarding school era? You know, cause we're still, I mean, some of these boarding schools are still operational. In my case, they're one generation removed. Like my dad went to boarding school, you know, in the, in the seventies and up into, well, he didn't go in the eighties.

But he was definitely there in the seventies. And so this is one generation removed and I'm not unique. You know, my story the story I wrote about my relatives experience at St. Joseph's Indian school was one generation removed from me, you know, it wasn't just like, but that was one of hundreds of experiences and I'm sure each in each and every one of us, you know, have that connection.

So how are you going to quantify that? And, and maybe, maybe I'm hoping that the final report will say, this is, this cannot be the final report because there's, it's so massive and extensive. And if you think about even the seven to eight years that Canada spent on the truth and reconciliation commission, millions of dollars that they've, they allocated towards that TV ads testimony in major cities, they are public meetings about the truth and reconciliation commission.

They trained and hired experts who could. With the very specific trauma of surviving a boarding school in, in massive amounts of sexual and physical abuse. Not only for the people who'd experienced it directly, but those who experienced it secondhand. So we don't even, there's not even a language that exists outside of a few academic circles around the psychological kind of needs of these people and the failure of this, of this country to even recognize it as happening.

That's just like in the realm of mental health, right. When I was asking Dr. Denise Lash and Madeira, I said, you know, this is really heavy stuff. Cause I interviewed her for the podcast is this is really heavy stuff before we get started. You know, I would just, if you can give listeners resources that they might be able to reach out, you know, they're having, you know, if this triggers them in some way and she's just kind of like paused and she's like, there are no resources in the United States.

The only thing that really exists is the native American boarding school healing coalition. I did find out that they did get recent grants that are quite large, but when they started back in 2010, 2011, they had an annual budget of \$5,000. And so that's just on the side of like the social and psychological impacts of, of boarding schools.

And I was just sitting there thinking, I was like, you know, when I wrote that piece for high country news on the Carlisle Indian school, it took me a year to actually like, not be like, so traumatized from the stuff to actually sit down and write about it. Cause it was like, I didn't actually, I wasn't prepared.

I wasn't like ready, like mentally, physically, spiritually emotionally of what I would encounter. And it effected me like it affected me to the point where I can't forget and I can't unsee the things that I saw or forget the stories, you know? And as a result of that, Like, you know, Mary a second and Mary, this morning, she was like, you've joined the club.

And I was like, awesome. I'm in the club where it's like, you know, people it's like one of those things that she, she explained where it was like, it's like something that, you know, exists and it's under such constant eraser, eraser. There's retaliation. There's the ceiling of archives. Like, so for example, each of these religious orders, whether they're Catholic or not, has their own established archives to get to most of the Catholic arts archives, you need to have a baptismal record.

You need to, you know, they do like a quick background check. They're not publicly available. There's no transparency. I mean, there is in some degrees, but you know, if you are critical of the church you could probably just say goodbye to being allowed you know, access to some of these materials and imagine like, that's just me as somebody.

Who's not a direct victim, but imagine if you're. And you come forward and there are legal consequences for coming forward that way, because in South Dakota, as I documented, the church played a hand in drafting legislation to actually create statute of limitations that disallowed that barred survivors from filing civil suits and seeking monetary damage from the church itself.

And the statute actually reads that they can, they can do that with individuals, but it's this isn't like, as we all know, this is an institutional problem and it also doesn't just affect native people. But the bizarre thing about it is that it is, so it's such a hegemonic experience amongst native people, you know, in the kind of mainstream discourse, there's been movies like spotlight that have highlighted the role of the Catholic church in Boston, in sex abuse.

Nonesuch as well-known as those in native communities. And that's where, that's where I'm like really I'm pessimistic in a lot of ways, in terms of like, this is sincere commitment on behalf of the department of interior, because the thing is that they knew about this. It's not like they're acting like, wow, this is a shock.

They, oh my God, they discovered hundreds of bodies. And I was like, y'all like have a military installation with hundreds of bodies of children. Like I wrote about this, like this, why is this a shock to you? You, you should know.

They kept meticulous records on all of us in, you know, like if you think about like for comparison, think about the largest lawsuit in Indian country.

W what was it? Was it Cobell lawsuit? Eloise Cobell was a forensic accountant who used to work for the BIA and said, Hey, our ledgers don't match. Why are we always coming up short on these individual Indian. This happened decades before the settlement of that case, the class action lawsuit against the department of interior.

And so as a result of that, you know, she was spent decades in litigation. She found that hundreds of billions of dollars and unaccounted for money, essentially just siphoned away from individual money account owners in Indian monies and trust assets. Hundreds of millions of acres of land were in question through the allotment fractionation and Airship

process that the, that the department of interiors that was their responsibility to do the bureau of Indian affairs responsibility to do the actual settlement of that case happened after Eloise Cobell passed away.

So she wasn't even as a lead plaintiff, she wasn't even able to see the outcome of the case because it was in litigation for such a long time. And of course she died. A very kind of advanced, you know, an aggressive form of cancer, but it outlived her and they, she had to do, you know, they had to do all of this historical research.

You would think that the government would have these archives readily available and they didn't. Right. And this was, you know, thousands of native people that this entailed, I would say the boarding school issue is much larger than the Cobell issue in, in, in terms of its magnitude.

Yeah. I mean,

MELANE YAZZIE - HOST, THE RED NATION PODCAST: [00:54:43] the DOI is going to have to get permission from the Catholic church to go into those archives and given like the kind of intimidation that people, I mean, everyone saw spotlight, I'm assuming it was nominated for a bunch of academy awards.

Right. And they won a Pulitzer or D or is that the award that they won, they won several awards for the story that they broke the story about rampant pedophilia coverups in the Catholic church, in various parishes in Boston. Right. But we now know that this is like a global issue and cause the Catholic churches everywhere throughout the world.

And so it's like distinct to me how that can be an academy award wedding story and fuel it surprise winning journalist. Um, But you write like an editorial or you try to talk about the various, the central role that the Catholic church played in actual genocide, like the killing of indigenous children in these places, the theft um, and the removal of indigenous children from families, the total breakdown of the social fabric of indigenous kinship networks through the implementation of really rigid um, gender and sexual ideology.

Our relationships with our bodies and our sexualities and the kind of sex that we have was completely transformed by the introduction of the Catholic church. And like the very regimented approach to like the very fabric of who we are as human beings in indigenous societies. And you add all of that up.

Elena you and I were talking about how it's like, kind of like an acid. It's like an acid that eats you from the inside out. So talking about this, whether it's the boarding school healing project, which has been around for a while or in an editorial in the guardian, it's like, everyone is shocked, but it's also like, people are like, oh, well, you know, we all know that that happened to Indians.

Like it's kind of like acceptable in some really messed up way, not by native people, ourselves, but by non native people who are hearing about the magnitude, like the magnitude of the violence is truly mind boggling.

And so what you're seeing and what I've heard, especially from native people who've been trying to report on this issue is intimidation from the Catholic church or different parts

parishes that are under scrutiny because of the levels of sexual abuse that children especially native children experienced in Catholic run boarding school.

But like, it really just seems like for the Catholic church, it's a PR issue. It's not like an issue of morality. Like maybe, you know, like maybe you're like very central role in genocide. Like the fact that you pushed the doctrine of discovery, that is like literally the basis of colonialism in the new world that we're still living.

Of course, the legacies of today. Like maybe your role you're very central role in conquest is something that you actually, that there actually needs to be justice for. You actually have to account for that in very material ways for indigenous people, but for other people. And instead it's just like, they're like, oh, we're getting bad PR because 751 graves have been found at this boarding school we used to run in Saskatchewan.

Like let's push back against this quote unquote narrative, right. So that we can save face and it's. I guess they have a lot at stake because the Catholic church is like an old, very powerful, very wealthy institution in the history of the world. But at the same time, it's like indigenous people standing up against a monster like that.

Cause I mean like the Catholic church is truly a monster when it comes to indigenous people for all, for many of the reasons I just named and many others.

The Legacy of Residential Schools (feat. Keith Burich) - Let's Talk Native with John Kane - Air Date 6-10-21

KEITH BURICH: [00:58:14] I don't want to sound like a history professor, but since I didn't have one, it's important to look at the boarding schools, how they started. They go back to the early 1600s, many people don't know that, but they started them in Virginia. Harvard actually had a mission to educate Indian children. William and Mary, Princeton, Dartmouth was another one, and then they had other kinds of schools as well. That's where they started the half day system, half a day of work and so on.

Most of those failed, largely because money ran out during after the revolution money from England ran out, but in the 19th century, in 1800s there was something called the second great awakening, around 1800, and they sent missions out to foreign countries, actually all over the world, but also foreign nations, they considered the Indians to be foreign nations or reservations before nations, and that's where they started them. And right from the very beginning, the whole idea was to civilize, Christianize the Indians and through largely education.

So when we talk about the boarding school there's this long history and it runs throughout the 19th century, and then it became part of the federal boarding school system. So these schools were really designed to erase Indians from American conscience and American consciousness by changing their names, by having them speak English, by wearing a white man's clothes, by becoming farmers and giving up the chase or the hunt, teaching women, how to be housewives -- that was the whole idea, was to erase Indian culture and force them to assimilate.

Most presidents have said pretty much the same thing, because especially in the 19th century, they're all presented with this Indian problem out West, especially at that point and what to do with them, and you don't want to fight them anymore, but you can't save them so you either have to try to assimilate them, Christianize them, Americanize them by that point or else exterminate them. That became the mantra of presidents and newspaper editors and politicians and everybody in the United States pretty much gave up on Indians and figured, "well, they'll just fade away and sooner or later we won't even remember them."

The schools became a way of trying to assimilate the Indians. If they can't be assimilated, then they're going to have to be exterminated. Americans face the real problem and what to do with Indians, and most people really just wanted to exterminate them, some thought that they could possibly save them through the schools and through missions and so on, but it was a real problem for Americans to try to figure out what to do with Indians. By the end of the 19th century, Americans had just given up. There was nothing they could do. I can't remember the quote by a President Garfield, but basically, they would just be remembered as some kind of a dream almost once they vanished. That was basically what they were thinking.

There's plenty of evidence that -- I know that the argument of whether there was genocide committed or not, there's plenty of evidence that there was every intention of exterminating Indians, despite the boarding schools, despite the reservations. The reservations, they sort of became a way of trying to save the Indian, to give them a place to live, but in reality they became a place to die. Deaths continued at the end of the 19th century, even as Indians were removed to the reservations. The Indians darn near became extinct by 1900.

The idea that somehow the Indians could be saved on reservations was undermined by the very policies that put them there in the first place. If you look at the way the wars, after the civil war, especially, at the end of the 19th century, I mean, they were genocidal. They killed everything. They raided villages, killed dogs, horses, men, women, children, elderly, and made it almost impossible for them to reproduce, declining fertility rates. And then they locked them up on reservations from which they were not allowed to leave. The law of 1851, the Indian Appropriation Act of 1851 made it illegal for Indians to leave in order to support themselves if they chose to. It was, in a way, a genocidal policy that almost led to the extinction of Indians, but most of them were moved to territories where their life wasn't a sustainable.

Native culture was based on, and I always hate people when they say Native culture because that homogenizes Indians, but Native cultures were based on their ecologies where they lived. And so Natives from east of the Mississippi, when they got moved out West, they were going to entirely foreign kinds of Environments. East of the Mississippi, there are trees and lots of water and so on. You go to the Dakotas and you go to Kansas and Nebraska and places like that the different kinds of ecologies entirely.

So they were placed on lands that basically, we call them fly over lands now because nobody ever goes out to those territories so they just fly over them. Their land was not really sus... they couldn't sustain the traditional ways of life on the lands that they were removed to, and I think that was one of the biggest things that happened to them in the 19th century, especially, when they were moved west of the Mississippi. Even if they were placed on

reservations where they had lived like the Lakota, for example, the much of their land was taken away from them. They lost the ability to hunt and pursue their traditional ways of life. I think placing Natives on reservations and places that were isolated, foreign to their traditional cultures, left them unable to really sustain themselves as they had in the past.

And that was really the reason for the decline in population. The reservations, like I said, did not become a place to live, they became a place to be. And a lot of Americans, a lot of presidents, and others thought, " well, good riddance."

JOHN KANE - HOST, LET'S TALK NATIVE: [01:04:23] And I would also maintain that they weren't just a place to die because of, looking at it in retrospect, I would say that they were places at the die as part of a strategy. If you can remove Native people from all of the most valuable lands and just put them someplace that they could wither away, that satisfied the US strategy.

KEITH BURICH: [01:04:43] That was definitely the case. There's no doubt that neglect was part of the strategy. Just to let them go there and eventually they'll vanish. And I think everybody, most Americans agree that was going to be the case. I have lots of quotes that I've just gotten in the book that I'm writing about the Indian as you described, the romanticized Indian, the Indian of the long head dresses and riding across the Plains, that was gone by the end of the 19th century, and the ones that were left behind weren't really worth saving.

In fact, there are some quotes in that book that I talked about, The Meriam Report, where they said the administrators of the reservations, the government agents, really didn't think that the Indians were worthy. They weren't worthy of the medical care. They weren't really worthy of a decent education. They weren't really worthy of the food that they were supposed to be given. And, you know, in essence that was like I said, good riddance.

JOHN KANE - HOST, LET'S TALK NATIVE: [01:05:40] And when you say worthy, you can actually break it farther down to they weren't worth the expense.

KEITH BURICH: [01:05:46] Right, they weren't worth the expense. But it really begins, and this is something I didn't mention that I guess we didn't touch on, they really didn't think that Indians were humans, I think that gets down to the bottom. They were a sub-species. And at the beginning when the Puritans and our Pilgrim forefathers and all the rest of them were fighting and defeating the Indians, and driving them off their lands, that was God's providence. God wanted it that way. By the end of the 19th century, they didn't need God's providence, they had Darwin. This was an evolutionary process -- a superior civilization replacing inferior one.

JOHN KANE - HOST, LET'S TALK NATIVE: [01:06:23] And again, when you say God's providence, you can trace language right back to Genesis when it talks about subduing the creatures of the earth, and clearly Native people were being regarded by the Europeans as creatures that required subjugation.

KEITH BURICH: [01:06:38] Yeah, and it was going on all over the world at that time, by the way. They wiped out the Tasmanians because they were just simply in the way. The South Sea Islanders, Africans, they were doing this all over the world, and the Indians we're just

part of this longer... what was going on here was just part of this larger process. And Darwin came along and explained it all for them.

Unapologetically Indigenous w/ Sarah Pierce and Amy Sazue - Future Hindsight - Air Date 2-25-21

MILA ATMOS - HOST, FUTURE HINDSIGHT: [01:06:58] The United States has a long history of eradicating Native cultures and communities through education. The most egregious, as many of us know, was the taking of Indigenous children from their communities and putting them in boarding schools. Though, a lot has changed, educational outcomes are still terrible.

Sarah, prior to being director of education equity at NDN collective, you advocated for Title VI education programs in South Dakota and Nebraska. What is Title VI and what is it meant to achieve?

SARAH PIERCE: [01:07:31] Title VI is a federally funded program designed to meet the unique academic and cultural needs of Indigenous students. It's designed exclusively to influence changes that help systemically yield student success, not only academically, but reinforce a solid sense of identity and language and cultural understanding.

And so, we see these programs exist both, on reservations and off reservations, in urban districts, across the country.

MILA ATMOS - HOST, FUTURE HINDSIGHT: [01:08:00] Amy, how does that translate in the schools? I understand you work with the communities together. And what's your experience with title six on the ground?

AMY SAZUE: [01:08:09] One aspect of Title VI is that they are required to have a parent advisory committee. They have to ask parents what they think that the students need from the district to be successful, basically. I served as the PAC president. And so what the PAC does, is, bring those concerns, our advice to Title VI who is then the liaison to the school district, to senior leadership into the school board.

The parents really feel like they aren't being heard, or they aren't being taken seriously, and that they, really, are, kind of, pigeonholed into this tokenized position, instead of being an authentic voice with concerns that are straight from the community. We're also feeling like we're not .

Part of the solution process for some of these issues

MILA ATMOS - HOST, FUTURE HINDSIGHT: [01:08:57] Yeah. I feel like the biggest problem, from my perspective, as an outsider, is that, we don't even know that there are concerns within native communities. For example, we see the Standing Rock pipeline protests, and we see protests against Trump showing up at Mount Rushmore, but we don't hear very much about education in equity for native communities at all. Like, we hear about that in Latinex, or Black communities, but not about yours. Why is that?

SARAH PIERCE: [01:09:25] One of the unique challenges that you alluded to previously, is the fact that starting from 1868 education was a compulsory imposition on our Indigenous peoples across the United States. In South Dakota, specifically, we were home to several

different residential schools, both Christian, and non-Christian, that contributed to, what our elders affectionately refer to as the severing of the sacred hoop of our nation.

Where the family structures, as we know it, were compromised. It's where the seriousness of generational trauma really started, and then began a vicious cycle that has been perpetuated until today. I think one of the primary reasons why we don't hear about it is because the narrative, as Amy mentioned, falls on deaf ears.

I think we see the problem in black and white, across state achievement data. We've seen that the current education system has failed our entire demographic for generations. At the federal level, at the state level, the things that we have to create prosperity are limited, and that keeps us in this perpetual cycle, and stuck in confinement to a system that has succeeded in cultural genocide and assimilation. And we're just trying to break free from that, stepping into a different time of cultural safety.

MILA ATMOS - HOST, FUTURE HINDSIGHT: [01:10:44] So, I have a question about the ways in which the education system today continues to perpetuate overt racism against Indigenous children. Amy, do you want to tackle that one?

AMY SAZUE: [01:10:59] Curriculum choice, and the actual education system itself, is built to eliminate us. And the education system is so long-standing, and has operated the way it has for so long, that even Indigenous people working within the field, it's hard for them to break free of that way of thinking. We are perpetuating that silencing, that erasure of our history, and of who we are, and of our connections to the lens that we are all sitting on.

That is a big part of what we are trying to break free from. And things that we're trying to acknowledge, and without shame, but in full honesty and transparency and saying, "We can do better."

But moving forward, we need to start acknowledging historical truths, and the impact they've had on generations of our people. All of my grandparents went to boarding school, and the effect that that had on my parents is really profound because my Mom decided that she would learn about Lakota spirituality and make sure that that was a bigger part of our life than the Catholicism, the things that her parents saw, what she saw.

And my Dad kind of felt the same way. They both decided to that punitive punishment. Wasn't going to be a part of our lives.

And so, in my family, I'm the first generation free of that trauma. And so, I'm able to teach my kids in a good way, and an honesty and talk about the resilience and strength of our people, and not fall into those kinds of historic pitfalls of where they don't understand the accurate history of their own people and Indigenous people across the United States.

That is one big way that the school system has been unwilling to change. And we just don't talk about the accurate history of the United States and the impact on the people here. If it's some way that we could change, you know, curriculum choices and accurate history.

MILA ATMOS - HOST, FUTURE HINDSIGHT: [01:12:57] That would be definitely a good first step forward.

I have a question about punishment, since you said it used to be a punitive system, but from everything that I have read, it's that Native youth in school continued to be punished more than other students for essentially, you know, same teenage infractions, skipping class, let's say, or something relatively minor.

They get expelled for very little reason, and are driven out of the system. In your mind, what is the first thing that needs to happen in order to find a path for educational justice in your community?

SARAH PIERCE: [01:13:40] It brings us back to that narrative that we talked about, how and why education, as we know it, was imposed on our people.

Because of the inconvenience that was viewed, that our people posed to the United States government in westward expansion, we know that the basic premise for assimilation efforts was, basically, to control, or tolerate, Indigenous people. So we see that being perpetuated in the schools today, where if we can just tolerate these students, then we're winning.

An elder by the name of Joseph Marshall III tells the story, comparing Lakota people to wolves, in the fact that, wolves are generally viewed antagonistically, as very predatory animals. However, wolves are very much parallel to humans, in that they are extremely loyal to their families, they travel in packs, they protect their young, and they just have an inherent sense, and desire to live. Right?

So when we think about those spaces, I think the civic outreach and obligations that we've engaged in over the years brought us closer together.

We know through roles in community efforts, such as the Mniluzahan Okolakiciyapi ambassadors, a leadership organization geared towards bridging gaps in racial barriers that prevent prosperity in our city. But having those relationships, and humanizing the other, I think is a great first step.

Final comments on the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition and patriotism

JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT: [01:15:05] We've just heard clips today, starting with the Native American Rights Fund, raising up the voices of some of the victims; Intercepted laid out the history of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Canada, and what it found; Vox explained the origin of residential schools in the U S; Code Switch discussed the effects of intergenerational trauma; the PBS news hour spoke with Secretary Deb Haaland about the Indian boarding school initiative; and the Red Nation podcast had some thoughts about what it would really take to do a full accounting of the impact of the residential schools.

That's what everyone heard, but members also heard bonus clips from Let's talk Native, discussing the dehumanization of the natives and the explicit plan to exterminate them; and Future Hindsight explained Title VI education programs that seek to support the unique needs of Indigenous children. So ending on a bit of a high note.

To hear that, and all of our bonus content, delivered seamlessly into your podcast feed, sign up to support the show at bestoftheleft.com/support or request a financial hardship membership, because we don't make a lack of funds, a barrier to hearing more information. Every request is granted. No questions asked.

And now, we would normally be hearing from you, those to leave us voicemail at 202 999 3991 or send me a message to jay@bestoftheleft.com to turn into a Voicemail, to play on the show. But I have a couple of things I want to get to.

So first before wrapping up, now that you're informed and angry, we would like to encourage you to get involved with the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition. Also known by the acronym NABS, or "Nabs," NABS was formed in 2012 in the wake of a national symposium, where leaders from the U S and Canada came together to discuss the Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and the need for that process in the U S. Their mission is to increase public awareness and cultivate healing for the profound trauma experienced by individuals resulting from the U S adoption and implementation of the boarding school policy of 1869.

As a coalition, NABS is comprised of over 80 Native and Non-Native members and organizations committed to boarding school healing. So go to boardingschoolhealing.org to find education, advocacy, and healing resources, and click "Get Involved" for ways you can support their efforts online, and in your community.

Secondly, I just wanted to give a little bit of insight on the production of this episode, in particular, one very small and specific part of it. The Deb Haaland interview clip, in which she's describing the boarding school initiative that she helped launch, and was asked the question about, whether or not, or how can she, love America, or love a country that has done such a thing as the residential boarding schools.

And I was of two minds on that clip. I... when I heard it initially, I thought, "I don't need that. I don't need to include that. That doesn't need to be part of the conversation because, who cares about how we feel about things? I am interested in policy. I'm interested in outcomes. I want, you know, changes in benefits that are concrete to individual people, who are going to be impacted by those policies. How the people helping devise those policies feel just isn't on my priority list. And I don't care that much."

But, I got thinking about it a little bit more, and realized that I, sort of, had a choice to make, which was to either: highlight how Deb Haaland feels about the country, because she was asked, and she gave an answer; or, if I were to cut that out, it, sort of, leaves a silence, which runs the risk of being filled with someone's assumptions. And the type of person I'm imagining who would even take the time to fill in that silence within assumption would likely not be good or positive. They may assume that this is a liberal Democrat, who hates the country, and that's why she wants to bring up all these terrible things about our history.

And all of this is happening at a time, I mean... it was just this month, we're still in July, and there was a July 4th article, or an article that came out and right around July 4th, about the flag being seen as divisive in America, which I saw as an entirely true and unsurprising statement of fact. But of course, the Right Wing media picked up on that, and criticize the article for being divisive itself, and helping perpetuate this division, or exacerbating it, and certain... like, taking a swipe at the flag and all it stands for.

And, you know, to me, I fall squarely into the category of people who are very ambivalent right now about patriotism and pride in one's country, because so many people have been learning so many things about our history that was previously suppressed to the point of widespread ignorance, that to not be ambivalent about it would be very strange, if you..

It means you are either still ignorant, which is, you know, that is excusable, in some instances, or you're a, you know, like at, at, at minimum, a, sort of, borderline sociopath. If you're, just, full throated, patriot, and you know all of the things about our history, such as residential boarding schools, and their repercussions, and that they were done, not just by individuals, but as sponsored by the government ...if that doesn't give you pause, then I have a hard time understanding a person like that.

Which is, sort of, what was at the heart of the question posed to Deb Haaland, about her feelings about the country. And she explained her reasoning about continuing to love the land, and the ideals of democracy, which can be traced to the pre-Colombian era. You know, native people in America had ideas of democracy that they had already implemented and helped influence the creation of the founding documents of the United States.

And so, to take pride in that is very understandable. Anyway, like she can speak for herself, and give her feelings. I'm talking about it because I realized that my struggle over whether or not to even address it, whether it should deserve to be included in the show, made sense, because, you know, am I making a show that says everything exactly that... as I needed to be said? I mean, I... as I said, I don't have really strong feelings about how politicians feel about things. I care a lot more about what they do.

So, I don't really care about Deb Haaland's personal feelings. But other people care a whole lot. And in terms of a functioning democracy... I am coming to terms, and have been over the past few years, with the need to, uh, as a previous president might've said, win hearts and minds when it comes to forging a new path forward. And facts, and history, and statistics, and policies, and outcomes... Even though I feel like they should be enough, they just aren't.

And so, uh, that was, that was the thought process I went through when deciding whether or not to include that, and thought it was interesting enough to tell you about it.

The very last note is just reminder to please nominate the show at podcastawards.com in the News and Politics Category. That's going on right now, so please don't waste a minute, the nomination period is closing quickly, I think. So. podcastawards.com Best of the Left, News and Politics.

As always keep the comments coming in at 202 999 3991 or by emailing me to jay@bestoftheleft.com. Thanks to everyone for listening. Thanks to Deon Clark and Erin Clayton for their research work for the show and participation in our bonus episodes. Thanks to the Monosyllabic, Transcriptionist Trio, Ben, Ken, and Scott for their volunteer work, helping put our transcripts together.

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So, coming to you from far outside the conventional wisdom of Washington, DC, my name is Jay, and this has been the Best of the Left podcast coming to you twice weekly thanks entirely to the members and donors to the show from bestoftheleft.com.