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Forced internment of children from indigenous peoples

Boarding schools



Sources: The Rocket to the Moon

Ethnocidal Practices Against Native Peoples of the United States

Last Thursday, the investigation began into one of the Colorado boarding schools where, for a century and a half, children belonging to native peoples of the United States were confined after being taken from their families of origin. In the first public communication from the research team, the head of the survey, Holly Norton, revealed that the objective of the initiative is "to promote the understanding of the inhabitants (...) on the physical and emotional abuse and deaths that occurred in Indian federal boarding schools."

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From 1819 to 1969 – the year Americans reached the nearest natural satellite – tens of thousands of creatures, from the age of three, were kidnapped and handed over to a system of forced internment, deployed throughout the country. The [preliminary report](#), released by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior, included a survey of 408 schools in 37 states or territories, including 21 schools in Alaska and 7 in Hawaii. During this period, children were separated from their tribes and sent to captivity, in compliance with a policy of [forced assimilation](#). In the vicinity of these internees, mass graves and unidentified graves of half a thousand [deceased creatures](#) have already been discovered during the last year as a result of the negligence, ill-treatment and violence prevailing in these confinement institutions. "That number is expected to increase," the 106-page report said, "to thousands or tens of thousands" of children killed in boarding schools.

The document made public is the result of the lawsuits generated by the Truth Commission, institutionalized in 2020 after the din caused by the discovery of hundreds of anonymous graves found in the vicinity of Catholic schools in Canada. Official documents released by Ottawa record the discovery – as of July 2022 – of 1,300 graves, some of them collective. In Canada, 150,000 children were abducted from their families and tribal groups until 1996, within the framework of various initiatives of forced assimilation of indigenous peoples, administered mostly by the Catholic Church.

In 2015, the first Canadian government report was released, promoted by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, whose conclusions state that "internees were used as a tool to commit a cultural genocide against the indigenous population." The Canadian program spanned 125 years and the surveys describe the psychological, physical and sexual abuse committed against its victims. According to the anthropologists and biological experts who carried out the field survey, the deaths of the children were due to malnutrition, curable diseases, health neglect, violence, abandonment and abuse. It is estimated that these are the reasons why the deaths were not documented and the relevant medical reports have not been found.

Los jóvenes sometidos a internados confesionales fueron avalados por el Estado canadiense, desde 1883, para "civilizar a la población indígena, erradicando su cultura". Luego de la asunción de responsabilidades por parte del gobierno, se produjo la visita del [Papa Francisco](#), quien [pidió perdón](#) en nombre de la Iglesia Católica ante los familiares

y sobrevivientes de las diferentes comunidades que fueron víctimas del etnocidio y los crímenes.

En los dos países de América del Norte, donde se presume de la defensa de los derechos humanos, se acepta que la motivación central de los confinamientos se vincula con el objetivo de [despojar de sus tierras](#) y posesiones a los pueblos originarios. “Creo que el contexto histórico es importante para entender la intención y la escala del sistema federal de internados”, prologó Bryan Newland, subsecretario para Asuntos Indios de los Estados Unidos, en la presentación del informe. Los documentos y los testimonios recabados también consignan que muchas tribus se resistieron a entregar a sus hijos e hijas, razón por la cual fueron asesinados. “Las normas a menudo se hacían cumplir mediante castigos, entre ellos castigos corporales como el aislamiento, la flagelación, la privación de alimentos, azotes, bofetadas y esposas”, añade el informe.

Racialización



Francisco junto a los líderes de los pueblos aborígenes de Canadá.

El relevamiento, difundido en Washington durante el mes de mayo, identificó sitios de entierro marcados o invisibilizados en [53 de los 408 internados](#), espacios donde los jóvenes secuestrados eran ingresados con nombres impuestos por las autoridades de dichos internados. A principios del siglo XX se consideró que dichos institutos albergaban a 20.000 jóvenes. En 1925 ese número se había triplicado. “Las muertes de niños indios mientras estaban bajo el cuidado del Gobierno Federal, o de instituciones apoyadas por él, condujo a la ruptura de las familias indias y a la erosión de las tribus indias –concluye el informe–, y con ello a la ocupación de tierras por parte de la [raza superior](#)”.

To achieve the subtraction of [native lands](#), a policy of forced assimilation was resorted to, capable of breaking the link of the aborigines with their identity. It was considered that a breaking of the link with the geographical coordinates would be less costly than military expulsion, and – above all – less questionable, more neat and aesthetic. It was surmised that internees would encourage intensive Western agricultural practices and that their victims would return, as adults, to borrow, to buy machinery and pay taxes to the credit scheme. This circuit generated, in a large number of cases, that the tribes could not face the debts and were forced to surrender part of their lands.

The ethnocidal mechanism included linguistic dispossession: in the boarding schools, Indians from different tribes were made to live together, so that they would necessarily have to use English to communicate. Democratic Rep. [Barbara McLachlan](#), who co-sponsored the establishment of the [Truth Commission](#), recently stated, "What they did in these schools was horrible. They took away their culture, cut their hair, did not let them speak their language, did not let them dress as members of the tribe and were arbitrarily separated from their families (...) We have to learn from history (...) It's like when you study the Holocaust. We just have to keep teaching and talking about it so it never happens again."

In addition to the imposition of language and the breakdown of family and cultural ties, forced labor was added. They were taught livestock and agricultural tasks alien to their tribal practices and useless to integrate into the productive system once they were released from the institutes. They were not paid for their tasks, which was a clear form of child slave labour: "A great deal of productive work is needed in our Indian schools," the 1928 [Meriam Report](#) certified. They would not be able to sustain themselves with the amounts allocated by Congress for their support, if it were not for the fact that students must wash, iron, bake, cook, sew, take care of the dairy, farm, gardens, buildings, etc. An amount of work that collectively has a very appreciable monetary value." When the survivors returned to their tribes, they had abandoned their parents' language and cultural practices, which led to new family breakdowns and destruction of emotional ties. They left these institutions with clear signs of abuse, with obvious signs of deterioration of health and without the basic language to recover the cultural fabric of origin.

in each successive generation, setting new rules of conduct, different aspirations and greater desires to be in contact with the dominant race." Colonel [Richard Pratt](#) is considered one of the ideologues of the model of internment of indigenous children. In the late nineteenth century, he summed up his philosophy as "a need to kill the Indian in every child to save the man who dwells within."

The program in the United States lasted until 1969, when the Vietnam War was taking place. In those years, Washington insisted on supporting all the military dictatorships that proliferated in Latin America and the Caribbean, in the name of the Cold War. His foreign policy always had a symmetrical expression at the domestic level: indigenous peoples, African Americans or Chicanos became the target subjects of the alleged disappearance, exclusion or invisibilization. That was, since the eighteenth century, the underlying substratum of his continuing supremacist intention.



Barracks where the children kidnapped from their families slept.

Source: <https://www.elcohetalaluna.com/internados/>

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