

Mark Smith Pro D. report

Ok, what have I learned from viewing this material.....the whole issue of Residential schools flows from the idea of colonization and the inherent idea that Euro-North Americans have a right to be here. They came by conquest and took what they wanted. As "Christians" it was not only a right, but also an obligation. Early on it was rooted in the Protestant belief that they were the "New Israel" and could dispossess the pagan nations as exemplified in the Old Testament repossession of the Promised Land.

Disease and warfare greatly decimated our population and left large tracts of land empty and unused according to the mindset of Euro-North Americans. A desire to survive and prosper drove them to crowd and fight back when native peoples began to push back. Among all people are those of good conscience...those having a desire to do what is right. This gave rise to Euro-North Americans wanting to help and "lift up" the savages. Early in the 1800s a school was started to educate native missionaries to reach out to their own people. It ran into trouble when a native student became involved with a young white girl. It proved too much for the community and the experiment failed. To learn more, read the "The Heathen School" by John Demos. Then after the American Civil War Carlisle Indian Industrial School, was founded in 1879 by Captain Richard Henry Pratt. It was the forerunner to all the residential schools in North America. "Kill the Indian, save the child" was the underlining philosophy of all the schools highlighting the racial superiority belief held by the Euro-North Americans. While this was a set up for all the schools to move forward to "help" with the "Indian Problem" it underlines the belief of cultural superiority. This firmly imbedded ethnocentrism allowed the horrors visited on the multiple generations of First Nation children.....from beatings, mental abuse, and the devastating evil of sexual abuse. One chief I know believed over 90% of the children were sexually abused.

I have sat through countless sharing circles of men and women sharing about their own abuse and went with friends to 2 IPAs. The conservative government opened the door with the apology and then the financial reparations for healing to begin. That is a long and convoluted road with anger blame and people moving down the grieving cycle. Should the Lord tarry, future generations will be able to evaluate the value of the apology and resulting actions.

An apology goes without speaking. David had to take decisive action when he became King and God began judging Israel for its breaking of the covenant with the Gibeonites. 2 Samuel 21. Then there was the action of hanging the descendants of Saul. What we as a mission agency could do is complicated. We have no funds like a denomination has and we are serving the native peoples but that can be viewed as a continuation of the colonization. I am sad to say that a number of NAIM staff carry on with the racial superiority disguised in a misapplication and misunderstanding of Biblical teaching. The deliberate demonization of all things native still taints many of those attitudes.