

Rehoboth

Righteous acts, filthy rags, and a mission cemetery.

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The cemetery at Rehoboth, New Mexico, is hardly a tourist stop, even though thousands of travelers pass it daily, thousands more each summer. Just a few miles east of Gallup, New Mexico, a city sometimes dubbed “the Indian capital of the world,” the village of Rehoboth sits quietly off legendary Route 66 and its hurried descendent, I-40. Beneath the hogbacks a mile south rests the town’s century-old cemetery.

Should travelers happen to glance out their windows when they pass by the village, they would see a circle of homes and school buildings, two churches (one brand new, the other abandoned), a spacious, new athletic field, and, all around, fairly significant ongoing construction. A century ago, Rehoboth, New Mexico, was a dedicated mission compound, the very first significant outreach of a young North American denomination composed almost exclusively of immigrant Dutch, the Christian Reformed Church—my church, my people. By 1920, the place would have resembled any of a dozen other mission compounds on or adjacent to Native reservations throughout the West: school and hospital, dormitories and staff housing. But even today you have to make a point of seeing the place. It’s not hard to miss Rehoboth.

The hospital is gone now, moved west a few miles into the city, where in the early 1980s it was merged with McKinley County Hospital. Today, the new system’s centerpiece facility is a 69-bed acute care campus that stands proudly atop the city, the home of Rehoboth McKinley Christian Health Care Systems.

The oldest stories that rise, even unbidden, from the beguiling cemetery are those intimately connected to the hospital that stood for years on the north end of the mission. According to Rehoboth’s own historians, the idea for some kind of medical care facility on Rehoboth’s campus grew from an early commitment to holistic ministry. In fact, Cacia Hartog, the first full-time teacher at the school way back in 1910, took courses in nursing, in all likelihood to prepare for work once a hospital was up and running.

The need for good medical care on the Navajo Reservation, the nation’s largest, had to have been obvious. The traditional medical care that Native people sought—via the tribal medicine men—struck the missionaries as terribly inadequate, if not downright demonic. A hospital with a Christian staff didn’t need to find ways to preach the gospel to patients; simply by their coming in for Anglo

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medical care, Native people from the vast reaches of the reservation were signaling at least some aversion to their own tradition of folk medicine. Medical care was itself mission work.

In those early years, Rehoboth Mission, like all mission endeavors, was an undeniable threat to the Native cultures of the Navajo and Zuni. It may well be that those avenues of holistic outreach, like health care and education, perpetuated the most significant changes.

The story of the hospital, of the mission itself, of the boarding school and the entire outreach of the mission is, I believe, somehow best told by an early morning walk in that old cemetery. It may not be a tourist stop, but for white Christians especially, it should be.

Most people where I live would say the Rehoboth cemetery is not well-kept. Yet, even months after Memorial Day, more fresh adornments festoon the burial sites, per capita, than at almost any graveyard off the reservation: a miniature basketball and hoop on the grave of a young woman who only a year before her death had helped her Gallup team to a state championship; half-empty bottles of Coke half-buried in the dirt; stuffed animals galore, ceramic angels, all kinds of toys; rosary beads hung from a homemade wooden cross jammed in the ground beside a miniature Mary in a Navajo blanket; hundreds—maybe thousands—of plastic flowers.

Arlington National Cemetery’s impressive orderliness makes the soldiers buried there seem as heroic and selfless as they were in war. But at Rehoboth cemetery the dead are remembered individually, strikingly, memorably, so that everywhere you look there is personality. So many stories. So much sadness. So much faith.

Here’s a young woman, murdered by her ex-boyfriend. There’s the daughter of a missionary—six years old, died in 1948. Does anyone remember her? Off to the left, that little gray stone marks the body of a stillborn, among the last deaths in the old hospital.

And there’s Albert Henry—a single man, war hero, assistant pastor at a church nearby; and just beyond him, Sidney Nez, a missionary at Toadlena. There’s Ben Musket, from a family that’s been part of the Rehoboth mission for four generations—and Marie Davis, who worked in



the school’s kitchen for years. Just beyond a ways is Juke Den Bleyker, the mission’s faithful maintenance man for decades.

Over there, a kid who played basketball as well as any in the last thirty years; he died of alcoholism. There’s Coolidge Begay, a quiet man whose son was a sheriff and whose great-grandson is in the 6th grade, at the new Rehoboth Middle School today. There’s David Charles—died tragically in a car accident, just 19 years old.

In a straight line running north and south, you’ll find a list of Dutch names: the Reverend L. P. Brink, pioneer missionary, who came to the long shadow of the Red Rocks in 1901 and died here in ‘36. Rolf Veenstra, a patriarch of more recent vintage; his stone, flat and tan and somehow perfect for this desert landscape, calls him a “saint.” Then comes Casey Kuipers and his wife Martha, who spent a lifetime in and around the Zuni pueblo, talking to folks about Jesus.

A number of Code Talkers are buried here, authentic World War II heroes, distinguished warriors from the Navajo nation who rattled off military secrets to each other in their native tongue, words and phrases indecipherable to the sharpest Japanese cryptographers. Their wives are here too, beloved grandmas who stayed home and prayed—scores of them. There are Damons and Oppenhuizens, Henrys and Bosschers, Kamps and Begays, Yazzies and Boumas.

On the slope at the eastern edge, five rows of white crosses stand, fatigued as war-weary sentries—forty or more of them, some already broken or fallen. In a cemetery that’s as heavily decorated as this is with American flags, it’s impossible not to think of those crosses as marking something military.

Books consulted for this essay:

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Diane Glancy, *The Dance Partner* (Michigan State Univ. Press, 2005).

Cacia Hartog, *Indian Mission Sketches* (Privately printed by the author, n.d.).

Amelia V. Katanski, *Learning to Write “Indian”* (Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 2006).

Jonathan Lear, *Radical Hope: Ethics in the Face of Cultural Devastation* (Harvard Univ. Press, 2006).

Raymond Friday Locke, *The Book of the Navajo, 6th ed.* (Mankind Publishing, 2005).

Jon Rehner and Jeanne Eder, *American Indian Education* (Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 2004).

Hampton Sides, *Blood and Thunder: An Epic of the American West* (Doubleday, 2006).

Zitkala-S’a, *American Indian Stories* (Univ. of Nebraska Press, 2003).

But, strangely, those crosses bear no names. At Rehoboth, there were rules for Christian burials back then, just as there were rules at cemeteries all over the continent, rules long since loosened or abandoned. For a time, it seemed to me that they had to somehow note the graves—unmarked—of Native people.

I know the antagonism among the Lakota for what remains of an Indian Insane Asylum in Canton, South Dakota, not far down the road from where I live. On what is now a golf course, 121 Sioux and Ojibwa are buried beneath a marker

between the fourth and fifth fairways, hundreds of miles from the reservations where the deceased once lived. Between 1902, when it was opened, and 1933, when it was closed by order of John Collier, the commissioner of Indian Affairs in the Roosevelt Administration, Native people were committed to the Canton Indian Insane Asylum, more than occasionally for reasons that now seem specious, at best. There, some died. Those who did were buried on the grounds of what has become, ironically, Hiawatha Golf Course.

Every year, in May, some folks from

the Rosebud Reservation make the three-hour trek east to Canton to burn sage, smoke tobacco, and pray for the spirits. But the graves will not be moved; they will stay on the Hiawatha Golf Course because Native people have determined that moving the remains would afflict the spiritual journeys of the deceased.

In *The Dance Partner*, Diane Glancy, who is Cherokee, recorded the voices she heard when she visited that fairway gravesite, including one of the deceased listed on the commemorative stone, “James Blackeye, d. 5-6-22”:

The inmates were brought to the asylum in the night. By train or road. The blizzards howled. The train howled. There was a stirring of sound from the cells below. A baby cried. We were ordered to be quiet. To hold our noises, our cries and moanings. But in the asylum we could hear the ghosts, the spirits, the old ones, the dead ones, until we descend into death. The world was insane. They brought it with them. It was the disease we caught like small pox. They recorded our deaths. I dug the graves. Children were born here. This hell they invented in God’s name.

I couldn’t help but wonder, when I first I stood before all those unmarked crosses in the Rehoboth cemetery, whether my own people were as insensitive with the remains of all those Navajos who died at the old hospital.

In the gravelly New Mexico soil, four long lines of weather-beaten, unlettered wooden crosses may well bear witness not only to the white man’s selfishness and greed, his cultural blindness and racism, but also to the heartbreaking tragedy created by all of our own very best intentions. Those white crosses tell a story I have been trying hard to piece together. And it is in no small part my own.

The Rug

I’m not sure why I’m the grandchild who has it. My Arizona cousins play an envy game with me every time we speak of it—they think they should have it; after all, an ancient Navajo rug deserves to be displayed honorably someplace closer to its homeland. Some might question whether any of us—palefaces all—should have it. Perhaps it belongs to the kin of the weaver, whoever she was.

Once upon a time it belonged to our grandfather, a Dutch Calvinist preacher who served on what was then called “The Heathen Mission Board” for more than thirty years and thrice, according to his obituary, was sent to New Mexico to make “inspection tours” of the Rehoboth Mission. Presumably—and by way of family lore—he received the rug as a gift for his good service.

By the time I recognized the rug for what it was, I was a college kid, and the rug was doing its work on the cement floor of our basement, right in front of the washing machine, where it likely took the bruising that has resulted in its edges being rather unfashionably unstrung. If its whites once were, they are no more; today they’re dingy grays. No matter—the old rug hangs from a wall here in my study, one of my most treasured possessions, its discoloration and tattered edges telling their own story. My parents had no objection to my taking it when I left home; I’m guessing they appreciated their son’s thinking enough of family history to want it for his own.

That Navajo rug has been with me for forty years, and I’m only beginning to understand its character, largely because I’m only beginning to understand the immigration and homesteading that make up a formative chapter of my family’s history. Like so many others, my ancestors marched west to the tune of “manifest destiny,” and in so doing displaced the aboriginal inhabitants of the land.

In America, Dutch settlements, like the one I was born in and the one I still live in today, exist only in the northern tier of states because the Calvinists who immigrated in the mid-19th century would have nothing to do with slavery. But running off the savages apparently never similarly gouged their consciences—or if it did, they didn't bother to confess.

My immigrant great-grandfather on my mother's side came to the lakeshore region of Wisconsin at a time when pioneering white folks had to wield axes because the new land "was in the midst of the forest and had never before been occupied by white settlers," according to his obituary. "Then the hardships and trials of the early pioneer were experienced," it asserts, "for they had very little to eat, not much clothing, and scarcely any of the comforts of life. The red men were still numerous in this section, but were not troublesome to the white settlers, except as beggars."

Were the "red men" Winnebago, Potawatomi, or Fox? I'll never know; but history makes clear that at least some of the Winnebago were dispossessed of their Wisconsin lakeshore lands and relocated to treeless plains just west of the Missouri River, 500 miles away, and not all that far from where I live today. This much seems irrefutable: my great-grandparents, and every generation since, were buried, with dignity, on what was once Winnebago land, while its original inhabitants were made beggars by those heroic axe-wielding pioneers.

The rug that hangs beside me as I write is a relic of my father's side of the family. The Rev. John C. Schaap, my grandfather, was born to an immigrant couple who tried to farm in Dakota territory, just east of the Missouri River, at the time of the Wounded Knee massacre. It's quite likely that his father and mother, like thousands of other settlers, grabbed the kids and went into town in late December 1890, when news of a hostile uprising spread eastward. As a boy, my grandfather likely saw hundreds of Lakota, who regularly left the nearby reservations toting the blankets and coats and such they were given, by treaty, as reparations, then traded those goods for whatever they needed from white homesteaders, who were mostly just as poor—sometimes even more so.

Perhaps my grandfather, the preacher, became a member of the Heathen Mission Board of the church because his South Dakota childhood brought him into contact with Native people, even though they were Lakota, not the Navajo and Zuni of the Southwest. What I know is that he played a significant role in the development of the Rehoboth Mission, then in its infancy.

Nothing in my collection of family stories leads me to believe that he was anything less than sincere about his faith, nor that there was ever any disjunction between his walk and his talk. He was a quiet man, determined, and committed to church doctrine, not at all unlike most other Dutch Calvinist pastors of his vintage. He would never deliberately poke a sharp stick in the eye of someone with whom he disagreed. He wasn't mean or argumentative.

Yet, about Native people, about the purpose and mission of Rehoboth itself, it's

quite likely that this very good and righteous man, who undoubtedly prayed fervently for the Indians his denomination was evangelizing, was in some respects grievously wrong. He wasn't wrong in his unshakable conviction that Navajo and Zuni people needed Jesus, too—and here Diane Glancy, unlike many Native writers today, would say amen. But if the message really did come from God, the message-bringers were flawed, as we are too, looking back from our enlightened vantage point.

Indian Boarding Schools

That boarding schools—like Rehoboth—robbed Native people of heritage, culture, and dignity was clearly asserted even before Rehoboth itself existed, at least as early as 1900, with the publication, in the *Atlantic Monthly*, of "The School Days of an Indian Girl," an essay by Zitkala-S'a (Gertrude Bonnin), a Yankton Sioux, who wrote vividly of her first days at a Quaker school in Indiana. That she wanted to go to school is made clear in her memoir of her early years on the Yankton reservation. Nevertheless, when finally she came to boarding school, what she faced was nothing close to what she'd imagined:

A paleface woman, with white hair, came up after us. We were placed in a line of girls who were marching into the dining room. These were Indian girls in stiff shoes and closely clinging dresses. The small girls wore sleeved aprons and shingled hair. As I walked noiselessly in my moccasins, I felt like sinking to the floor, for my blanket had been stripped from my shoulders. I looked hard at the Indian girls, who seemed not to care that they were even more immodestly dressed than I, in their tightly fitting clothes.

But even greater humiliation comes to her a few hours later when she's told by another Indian girl that soon her hair will be cut off by the white matron. Short hair, Bonnin says her mother had always told her, carried the onus of disgrace; only those Sioux in captivity or in mourning cut their hair. Desperately afraid, she runs upstairs and hides beneath her bed, but soon is found:

I remember being dragged out, though I resisted by kicking and scratching wildly. . . . I cried aloud, shaking my head all the while until I felt the cold blades of the scissors against my neck and heard them gnaw off one of my thick braids. Then I lost my spirit. Since the day I was taken from my mother, I had suffered extreme indignities. . . . In my anguish I moaned for my mother, but no one came to comfort me. Not a soul reasoned quietly with me, as my own mother used to do; for now I was only one of many little animals driven by the herder.

In *Learning to Write "Indian": The Boarding-School Experience and American Indian Literature*, Amelia V. Katanski explains how Bonnin's essay angered the single human being most responsible for the widely held belief in Indian boarding schools, Richard Henry Pratt, the founder, promoter, and longtime superintendent of Carlisle Indian Industrial School, Carlisle, Pennsylvania. Carlisle was the flagship of the movement, Pratt its draftsman and

builder. "By specifically invoking a story that supports degenerationist ideology—a belief that humanity is not evolving, but devolving in the post-Edenic world," Katanski writes, "Zitkala-S'a refutes the assumption that going from the reservation to boarding school, from the West to the East, was the equivalent of progressing from savagery toward civilization," the philosophical foundation, Katanski says, of the Pratt-inspired boarding-school movement.

Pratt must have been particularly galled that Gertrude Bonnin had been employed at Carlisle for a term or two as a teacher, a successful one, accomplished in writing as well as music. Her shocking reminiscences served to refute Pratt's basic argument, as well as that of his followers—and there were many—an argument concisely summarized in his own words in a speech in 1892: "Kill the Indian in him, and save the man."

"Killing the Indian" really meant destroying Native cultures. Proponents of that dogma included some in far higher governmental positions than a military man turned educator like Richard H. Pratt, as well as countless ordinary Americans—including, apparently, my own

grandfather. As Jon Reyhner and Jeanne Eder explain in *American Indian Education*, the overwhelming optimism which surrounded a commitment to the boarding school concept was palpable. Himself an immigrant to this country, Secretary of the Interior Carl Schurz felt that "the object of Indian policy was 'unquestionably the gradual absorption of the Indians in the great body [of] American citizenship.'" In the same vein, John C. Oberly, the Indian Office's Superintendent of Indian schools, proposed in 1885:

If there was a sufficient number of reservation boarding school-buildings to accommodate all the Indian children of school age, and these buildings could be filled and kept filled with Indian pupils, the Indian problem would be solved within the school age of the Indian child now six years old.

Indian policy was dominated by an abominable either/or argument. Only two alternatives existed for the future of the American Indian—complete absorption into American "civilization" or mass extermination. Proponents for the second of those alternatives were more vocal and

more numerous than we might suppose, especially in areas bordering on Indian land. That Native boarding schools were an alternative to mass murder doesn't exonerate Pratt or my grandfather; but the context of the discussion, unimaginable as it may be today, is certainly relevant to my own understanding of how he saw the mission enterprise.

And there were Native leaders who had given their early approval and even sent their children off to Pennsylvania with Pratt. Sinte Galeksa (Spotted Tail), a Brule chief whose acquaintance with the white man had led him to believe—firmly—that his people could not profit from more war, sent several of his own children to Carlisle. But when, a year later, he traveled to the school and found his children homesick and dispirited—one of them jailed—he pulled them out of immediately and ushered them quickly back home to the Dakota Territory.

On a wider scale, the optimism, all the confidence generated by fine and thoughtful people, men and women—many of whom were deeply sympathetic with the Native people who'd been run off their land—began to wane as the graduates of these institutions finished their schooling and went out in the world. Who were they now? Where would they find their homes?

In the earliest description of the Rehoboth Mission (1910), Ms. Cocia Hartog opens up those questions. "The future has always been a great problem," she writes in a small pamphlet titled *Indian Mission Sketches*. "What are these tender lambs to do? Will not all the good impressions in them be wiped out by the overwhelming influence of the old life?" That question had no clear answer at Rehoboth or Carlisle, or any of the many other Native American boarding schools in North America.

By the late 1920's, so the historians say, the failure of the boarding school movement, on or off reservations, was already clear, though such institutions continued to operate. With some notable exceptions, graduates either showed no tendency to "assimilate," as Pratt and so many others had promised, or returned home only to find they were no longer capable of living with their own families, their own people.

Education often—always, some would claim—entails alienation. That's the theme of many a memoir, from tales of British boarding schools to Richard Rodriguez's acclaimed *Hunger for Memory*. But the particular context of the Indian boarding school movement was the devastation that occurred when millions of white people determined the North American continent was empty land, there—and theirs—for the taking. What is painfully clear a century later is that, in taking the Indians' land, white people also took away their culture, which is to say their way of life.

Good people—good Christian people, my own grandfather among them—were among those who carried out that destruction, often with prayerful intentionality and the conviction that what they were doing was what the Lord wanted. How faithful believers could be so wrong is the story I'm trying to understand. Not simply *them* either. All of us.

Rehoboth Memories

I've been interviewing some aging Navajo folks whose roots grow back into the century-old story of Rehoboth Mission and mission school. All of them remember the boarding school days very well—a few fondly, some very angrily. Several have told me they know very good people who would not walk on the compound again, so deep is their resentment at what happened to them during their boarding school days.

One of them, a man now approaching his eightieth birthday, was taken off to school in 1945. "I didn't know a word of English—didn't get a word of what people were saying," he says, remembering those first difficult days. Older Navajo boys would translate occasionally, which helped greatly, but it was the military-like regimen that still makes him shake his head, a behavior so alien to him: marching off to dinner, marching off to school, marching off to church, two-by-two, like soldiers, like cavalry.

In those days, he also remembers how his teachers made them memorize the Heidelberg Catechism, a task, quite certainly, the CRC teachers themselves had to perform when they were children back in Michigan or even

the Netherlands. Such forced and often meaningless memorization and an unflinching commitment to what seemed perfunctory obligations to religious ceremony which were rarely understood, made some people simply "go through the process, and a lot of people resent that today," he told me. When he explains why some Rehoboth graduates feel dishonored by the education they received at the mission school, he says the implication—whether stated or not—was often violent and stark: "If you don't do this, if you don't do that, you're going to hell." What was presumed worthy of damnation, for the most part, was behavior that arose from the hogan, from the Navajo culture; what was redeemed was what was white—and even exclusively CRC.

Some of these bitter memories are shared by many people, regardless of history or race, who have been sent away as children to boarding school. (If you know any missionary

kids, you know what I mean.) One woman told me that, at first, she wasn't at all sure of what she was doing at Rehoboth school—"I just thought my parents were sending me here to get rid of me," she told me. And then she shifted to the editorial we: "We didn't have good experiences at boarding school." She told me that her experiences up until high school were most difficult. "There were no gray areas—you either can or you can't." And then she stopped. "There are a lot of things that I will not speak of from my third grade until high school."

"It was strict—it was strict," her mother added during the interview, a woman nearly ninety, who sent nine of her 15 children through Rehoboth schools.

"There was no beating," her daughter says, "there was no physical abuse of any kind. Most of it was mental—things that happened that you couldn't do anything about. And I was punished a lot—I spoke up too much. I was punished a lot, and I was just a kid," she told me, fifty years after the fact. "I can forgive, even if I will never forget."

Those elderly Navajos who do not regret their boarding school educations frequently balance whatever antipathy they still feel with what their parents or guardians considered the requirements of a future that would undoubtedly be less tribal and more "white." One man told me his grandfather, an exceptionally wealthy shepherd and rancher, sent his grandson off to Rehoboth school in the late '30s, when the boy, just ten years old, knew no English. "When you're in Rome, you do what the Romans do"—he claims that line was his grandfather's argument. By the mid-20th century, even though shepherding was still the dominant way of life, it must have already been clear to at least some Navajo leaders that a certain kind of assimilation was going to take place in the future, regretfully or not.

It's probably fair to say that the educational standards of the small Christian elementary school I attended as a boy in the 1950s were similar to those of Rehoboth in the same period. But I'd come from a religious and ethnic culture which had deliberately created those standards. What Navajo and Zuni kids encountered, even in the 1950s, was an educational experience that denied (at best) or damned (at worst) the way of life into which those students had been born. In order to be, the children had to become. But they knew they already were; it's just that what they were wasn't what they were supposed to be. That moral equation was inescapable.

Canadian Truth and Reconciliation

Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, in response to the 2007 Indian Residential Schools Settlement

Agreement, has been conducting hearings designed to examine the historical record of its First Nations boarding schools. Not unlike its neighbors to the south, the Canadian government, in the late 19th century, embarked on a policy of what they called "aggressive assimilation," instituting a national program to enroll Native children in schools that would strip away their ("savage") culture and teach the children to find their way in the white national culture. Religious denominations were enlisted to undertake much of that education, not only because churches were vitally interested in missionary outreach among "the heathen," but also because churches were more determined, and therefore more likely, to go into largely unpopulated areas than were typical public-school educators.

By the early 1930s, as many as eighty Native boarding schools were operating throughout Canada; estimates of exactly how many First Nations people were taken from their homes and brought to boarding schools range as high as 150,000.

Stories of physical and sexual abuse abound. There can be no doubt that sexual predators found a haven in such boarding schools; not only were the schools geographically isolated, the students, separated from family and tribal authority figures, were largely unprotected and therefore easy targets for all manner of abuse.

Just who was and wasn't victimized by sexual and physical abuse may be difficult to ascertain, as it always is in such cases; many of the alleged acts took place decades ago. Nonetheless, in a 2005 settlement, the Canadian government determined to offer compensation for the abuse by announcing a \$2 billion package for those who were forced to attend Native boarding schools. That compensation, called the Common Experience Payments, offered all former students of Indian boarding schools an initial payment of \$10,000, plus additional payments of \$3,000 for each of those students' years of attendance. The government estimates that approximately 86,000 of its First Nations people are eligible for that compensation.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission is headed up by Canada's first Native judge, Justice Harry LaForme, a member of the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation in southern Ontario. The commission's other members include experts in public policy as well as in the health problems facing Canada's aboriginal people. The commission was given a significant budget to carry out its work, and five years in which to accomplish its task.

Like its famous South African ancestor, Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission will focus on "restorative justice," as opposed to adversarial or retributive justice. It will not, on its own, determine guilt and innocence; instead, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission will attempt to determine truth, to find appropriate means to offer public mourning, attempting, as did the South African commission, to forgive and to heal.

The most complex accusation made by First Nations people—and the least debatable—is that of systematic "cultural abuse" carried out on boarding school students. Students enrolled in boarding schools were snatched out of their homes and offered very few opportunities to return, even to visit, during extended school years. They were forbidden to use their native tongue and frequently separated from siblings, since the avowed purpose of these schools—just as for their U. S. counterparts—was to systematically destroy their associations with their own native culture.

In every way, Canadian Native people, like their cousins south of the border, were victims of a policy both created and carried out by Christians, many of whom fully believed that what they were doing, they were doing in the cause of Kingdom of the Lord. But in the process, what was created, without a doubt, is what some Canadian commentators call "soul wounds."

Believers, like me, have much for which to be sorry, much for which to feel shame. A Bible verse frequently quoted by old-time Calvinists comes to mind: "All of us have become like one who is unclean," the Old Testament says, "and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away" (Isa. 64:6, NIV).

—This is the first part of a two-part article.