

Survival



For tribes, for nature,
for all humanity

Factory Schools:

Destroying indigenous people in the name of education



Whoever controls the education of our children controls our future

Wilma Mankiller, Cherokee USA

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Foreword

“I looked outside, my mom was flailing her arms, and she must have been crying, and I see my dad grabbing her, and I was wondering why, why my mom was struggling.”

Lynda Pahpasay McDonald was only five years old when she was taken from her Ojibwe family and sent to one of Canada’s notorious Indian Residential Schools.

Over 6,000 children died in Canada’s Residential Schools – that’s one child in every 25 who attended these institutions. Survivors and their families remain traumatized to this day, suffering high rates of mental illness, addiction, and suicide. Similar schools have had devastating impacts on indigenous peoples across the Americas, Russia and Australasia.

It seems inconceivable that such schools could exist today, yet right now there are thousands of them across Africa, Asia and Latin America. Like the brutal boarding schools that existed in the U.S., these “Factory Schools” aim to “reprogram” tribal children to conform to the dominant society. This systematic cultural erasure masquerading as education damages millions of children, their families and communities worldwide.

Many tribal children in Factory Schools are today suffering emotional, physical, and sexual abuse and the loss of family and community life. But there is another way: When indigenous education is in indigenous hands, children, families and tribes can explore their potential together and flourish.

Survival International is campaigning to end Factory Schooling and give tribal children the education and future they deserve, under their control.

If you are moved by what you read here, please join our campaign at www.survivalinternational.org/factoryschools.



The kind of education they are in need of is one that will... cause them to look with feelings of repugnance on their native state.

George Wilson, 1882
U.S.

“We cannot fathom that any nation in today’s world would consider interning any children, in a ‘residential school’, given the horrific history associated with these types of schools in Canada and other parts of the world.”

Michael Cachagee,
National Residential School Survivors Society,
Canada

There are almost 200 graves in the cemetery at Carlisle Industrial School, USA, including 14 marked simply “unknown.”

Estimated numbers of tribal children in Factory Schools in key countries today:

Bangladesh	290,000
Botswana	7,000
India	1,000,000
Indonesia	1,000,000
Malaysia	130,000
Russia	40,000
Total for these countries	2,467,000

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.

Final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission
Canada

What are Factory Schools?

Factory Schools aim to “reprogram” tribal and indigenous children to fit the dominant society, divorcing them from their families, lands, cultures, languages and ways of life.

Until the late 20th century, Factory Schools in the U.S. and Canada aimed explicitly to “kill the Indian” in indigenous children by erasing their identities and remolding them as a labor force for the national economy.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Canada concluded this schooling policy amounted to “cultural genocide” and that 6,000 children died. Some estimate as many as 10,000 children died in boarding schools in the U.S. – hundreds died in just one school: the Carlisle Industrial School. Profound and pervasive damage was also inflicted on indigenous communities by Factory Schools in South America, Australasia and Russia.

Yet this model of schooling exists today with the same fundamental goals: the assimilation of tribal peoples to serve the industrial economy, and the erasure of their culture and lifeways.

The world’s biggest residential school is in India. It holds 27,000 tribal children and its stated mission is to “turn liabilities into assets.” It plans to reach two million children in a decade.

It is a genocidal situation. It feels like our youth are going up in smoke.

Joselyn Terese, President of the Advisory Council for Amerindian People of Guiana
French Guiana

Number of government-funded Native boarding schools in the U.S. in the 1900s:

357

Number of residential schools run by tribal affairs departments in India in 2014:

7,147

Why do Factory Schools exist?

Factory Schools are founded on the racist assumption of the superiority of the dominant culture and the need to make tribal and indigenous people fit the “mainstream” – linguistically, economically and culturally.

Three main motives underlie Factory Schooling:

Firstly, it is used as a means of quashing independence, such as in Indonesia where the government uses schooling to “pacify” indigenous Papuans and instil nationalism.

Secondly, missionizing schooling – whether Islamic, Christian or Hindu – is still pervasive worldwide, undermining indigenous religions, cultural practices and ways of life.

Thirdly, Factory Schools are a tool to break the deep connection between tribal peoples and their lands and skew community opinion in favour of exploitative enterprises and extractive industries, enabling the theft of tribal lands.

Many Factory Schools are run in the misguided belief that they are the best way for tribal children to “progress.” Some children do flourish and achieve mainstream success, but often at grave costs to their culture and identity. Schooling should not carry such a hefty pricetag and, as detailed below, does not need to.

Killing the child

**Across India, hundreds of tribal
children die every year in
residential schools.**

**Disturbed,
traumatized,
haunted**

Eureka Mokibelo, Bushman Botswana



We have to change this system, so no more families have to go through this.

Midah, mother of Norieen, pictured left, and of her son Haikal who died. Temiar Orang Asli, Malaysia

Factory Schooling kills children

Factory Schools endanger children's mental and physical health and can cause death by abuse, gross neglect, dangerous and insanitary conditions, escape attempts by desperate students, and suicide.

A lack of hostel supervisors – as reported across Asia and Africa – leaves children extremely vulnerable. High rates of malnutrition and diseases related to poor hygiene are reported in tribal residential schools across India.

Emotional, physical, racial and sexual abuse are rife in Factory Schools and are often underreported. Perpetrators are rarely punished. In Maharashtra state, India, over one thousand tribal children died in residential schools between 2000-2015, including over 30 suicides. The trauma of such abuse has terrible impacts on future generations too – as experienced in North America and Australia.

Malaysia's schooling for Orang Asli children like Norieen (left) aims to assimilate them into the dominant society. Norieen and her brother Haikal were among seven children who fled their residential school in fear of a beating from teachers; only two survived. The school's response was to build a better fence.

Norieen Yaakob of the Temiar tribe was found 46 days after running away from her residential school in Malaysia.

Parents ... had their children ripped out of their arms, taken to a distant and unknown place, never to be seen again. Buried in an unmarked grave, long ago forgotten and overgrown.

Marie Wilson, Truth & Reconciliation Commissioner, 2015 Canada

I got told my Aboriginality when I got whipped and they'd say, "You Abo, you nigger." That was the only time I got told my Aboriginality.

Testimony of Aboriginal person removed from their family in 1967 Australia

Estimated deaths of indigenous children in Canada's residential schools from 1883-1996:

6,000

Historic Factory Schooling

Deaths: In the early years, half the residential school "inmates" in Canada died. In Australia, children in residential institutions suffered abuse and neglect leading to death directly or by suicide. The Boarding School Healing Coalition is investigating deaths in U.S. schools, caused by accidents, illness, abuse and suicide.

Abuse: One in ten Aboriginal girls in institutions in Australia reported sexual abuse; in Canada 38,000 claims of serious physical, sexual or emotional abuse have been lodged.

Racism: The Australian government's removal of Aboriginal children from their families aimed to extinguish the Aboriginal race. The same was true across North America where the aim was to "Kill the Indian, save the man."

Trauma: A study in Canada found over 60% of residential school survivors met the criteria for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

"Indian children should be withdrawn as much as possible from the parental influence, and the only way to do that would be to put them in central training industrial schools where they will acquire the habits and modes of thought of white men."

John A MacDonald, Canada's first Prime Minister, 1883.

Current Factory Schooling

The general condition of ashram [residential] schools is most dehumanizing, hazardous and unhygienic for children to live.

DAATRI study of residential schooling, 2011 India

Deaths: Malnutrition, neglect and unsanitary conditions are daily hazards at many Factory Schools. High rates of suicide are reported in tribal and indigenous communities where children are separated from their languages, families and cultures, such as Amerindian people in French Guiana.

Abuse: Sexual abuse of tribal children in Factory Schools has been reported across Botswana, Burundi, India, Indonesia, Malaysia and Uganda.

Racism: Deeply offensive and degrading racial discrimination traumatizes and alienates children worldwide. Many schools still describe tribal peoples as "primitive" and entirely exclude their history. Children from many tribes have reported to Survival the impact this has on them.

Trauma: our research has only revealed the tip of the iceberg - it may take generations to expose the full impacts of today's Factory Schools.

Reported deaths of tribal children in residential schools in just one state in India between 2001-2016:

1,463

Staff from the government agency "developing" the Dongria Kondh tribe of Odisha state, India, explain why residential schooling is good for the tribe: "It puts distance between the child and her family." The aim is to divorce children from their tribal roots and make them "fit" into the "mainstream" society.

Historic Factory Schooling

1:2



ratio of children who died in the early years of Canada's residential schools



6,000

number of children who died in Canada's residential schools 1883-1996



1,463

official number of children who died in residential schools in Maharashtra, India between 2001-2016

40 %



percentage of the world population who lack access to education in a language they speak or understand

38,000

the number of registered claims of physical, sexual or emotional abuse suffered in Canadian residential schools

83 %



percentage of school-aged indigenous children in boarding schools in the USA by 1926

2 million



estimated number of children in Factory Schools worldwide today

11



number of staff arrested from one school in Maharashtra on charges of sexually abusing girls

**Destroying the family
Many schools teach tribal
children to be ashamed of
their families**

**You are making our
children aliens in
our own homes**

Oraon parents India



If the school is in our community, in the evening we can be with our parents, family and friends. In Ashram school, we feel like we are living in jails.

Cholnaikan children India

A lot of young people nowadays feel like nobody cares for them. The parents are not to blame for that. It's residential school, because our elders, people that attended residential school, they didn't get the love that they needed.

Clarissa, 14 year old
Attawapiskat girl Canada

Papuan boys who were taken from their families and sent nearly 2,000 miles to the Indonesian capital, Jakarta, for Islamic schooling.

Factory Schools tear families apart

Parents are often coerced into sending children to Factory Schools very far from home, with the false promise that this is in the child's best interests. Many schools allow children home only once a year; some do not allow children home for years at a time. Parents are often forbidden to visit the children's hostels, or financially unable to. This divorce from family life denies children a chance to grow up in a loving home and develop parenting skills that they will need in the future.

Factory Schools often teach children to be ashamed of their relatives, culture and community. Children can be banned from speaking their own language, or told to preach alien ideas or beliefs to their families when they go home. Once a religious, linguistic or aspirational gulf has opened up between generations, it is hard to keep the family, and community, from splintering entirely.

Boys from West Papua have been taken to Jakarta by religious organizations promising education, but delivering indoctrination and a total divorce from their families and cultures. Some children are encouraged to return to their communities to missionize; others never see their families again.

**Destroying tribes
Teaching children to be ashamed
of their tribe and their language
destroys tribal peoples.**

**My god, the pain,
abuse and spiritual
confusion is horrific**

Gilbert Oskaboose, Ojibwe Canada



Factory Schools threaten the future of tribal peoples

It seems the very word education is bringing the end of the Bushman culture. Education, education, education - we are losing our culture because of education.

Roy Sesana, Bushman
Botswana

What do these [Factory Schooled] kids know? They sit within four walls all day. They are lost in the forest, which is our mother.

Tille Kolaka, Dongria Kondh
India

Factory Schools tell children that the beliefs and knowledge of their people are “backwards” or wrong. Children may then not want to learn these skills, or feel ashamed of knowing them.

Often children take home nationalistic or religious zeal – which can cause catastrophic divides in their communities. Millions of tribal children are forbidden or discouraged from speaking their mother tongue; by some estimates, up to 90% of the world’s languages will have disappeared by the end of the century.

Thousands of years of collective wisdom, understanding, and insight can be lost within a generation if it is not passed on before older people die. If children abandon their tribal lands, or have not been taught the skills to read, understand, and manage their environment, the biodiversity and natural habitats of their area are threatened.

“If the language is alive, only then will our culture thrive. Losing our language, we will lose our identity, our forests, our rivers and our mountains. The government will get an opportunity to say that there is no tribal language, so there is no tribal population here, and take away our land.”

Lado Sikaka, Dongria Kondh.

Boa Senior - who died in 2010 - was the last of her people, the Bo tribe, of the Andaman Islands, India and the last speaker of their language.

Creating tax payers

Why do governments treat tribal children this way? To control them, their lands and resources.

Transforming “liabilities” into “assets”

KISS school for Adivasi children India



The company [Vedanta] is giving money to KISS to keep our Dongria children there. They think it is a smart way to cheat us. It's a way to threaten people who are protesting and resisting to make them give away the mountains. They would want our children to study at KISS school and join the police force to threaten us.

Laxman Pusika, Dongria Kondh India

Some of the 27,000 pupils at the giant KISS school in Odisha, India, which states that it aims to turn tribal children from "tax consumers" to "tax payers," from "liabilities" to "assets."

Motives behind schooling

Factory Schooling serves the interests of states and corporations which seek control over tribal peoples and their lands. Extractive industries in India, Mexico and beyond support schools which – directly or indirectly – teach children to embrace mining and industrial development, and reject the connection their people have to their lands.

Religious conversion is another motive. In Bangladesh and Indonesia Islamic missionizing underscores much tribal schooling; in South America various Christian churches run residential mission schools. Hindu fundamentalists in India target tribal children for conversion via schooling.

States also use schooling as a means of inculcating patriotism and quashing independence movements, as in West Papua.

Multinational company Vedanta Resources wanted to mine on a mountain sacred to India's Dongria Kondh tribe, but they strongly and successfully resisted. Vedanta announced that it would fund 100 Dongria children to go to KISS school (left). The school now says it never took the money, but was Vedanta hoping this would change Dongria attitudes to mining and their land?

Tribal education

Tribal children who do not go to school are not uneducated: They receive a wealth of learning on their land

**We have the
knowledge needed to
live wholesome lives**

Lodu Sikaka, Dongria Kondh India

If only they went to school, they would be people.

Non-Bushman person, talking about Bushman children
Botswana

I am tired of teaching Korku children because no matter how many times I hit them, nothing seems to go into their heads.

Teacher India

In schools, students and even teachers call us dirty. They call us pigs, they call us dogs.

Orang Asli Malaysia

Racist assumptions in schools

Global calls for “education for all,” with a “one-size-fits-all” model of compulsory schooling, assume that outsiders know best how to educate indigenous children and that children who do not go to school are uneducated.

Imposing a national curriculum, timetable, calendar and language can cause great harm to tribal communities, undermining self-determination.

Most national curricula ignore, airbrush or deny indigenous histories, knowledge, religions and lifeways – which will all be lost if generations are schooled in this way.

Schools for tribal children are often woefully under-resourced and are frequently staffed by teachers who view them with racist disdain. Tribal children then disproportionately fail or drop out – left only with a sense of dislocation and failure by a system that has failed them.

A 2016 history and geography textbook in French Guiana has not one single mention of Amerindian peoples. The areas where they live are blank on the book’s maps.

Education outside school

Our knowledge has not been written down by us – on the contrary: We dance it, we draw it, we narrate it, we sing it, we practice it.

Ole Henrik Magga, Sami linguist Norway

We are educated in the things we know. We can pass on our knowledge to the rest of the world. I can be a lecturer, even though I have not been to school.

Daquoo Xukuri, Bushman Botswana

On their land, in their community, tribal children learn complex, specific skills and knowledge, enabling them to live well on their land and nurture it for future generations.

Evenki children learn to herd reindeer across the Arctic tundra; Bushmen children learn to find food and water in the Kalahari desert; Dongria Kondh families gather 200 forest foods and grow over 100 crops. This knowledge takes generations to accumulate and years to master.

Generally, indigenous learning methods are led by, and tailored to, the child, involve story-telling and ceremonies, and combine the spiritual and the practical. Such learning is, however, invisible to, and undervalued by, Factory Schooling.

“[The Jarawa tribe’s] knowledge of indigenous plants, herbs, diseases, and creatures of the jungle is immense and needs no schooling. No one can really educate them further. It is we who need to be educated because soon all this knowledge will evaporate, with the imminent danger of the extinction of the tribe.”

Professor Anvita Abbi, India

**Taking back control
Worldwide, tribal communities
are taking control of their
education: On their terms, on their
land, in their language.**

**The goal of education
is to empower people**

Butet Manurung, Orang Rimba Malaysia



Education should make a person proud of who he or she is, and therefore not take them away from their origins and language

**James Tshabu Morris,
Bushman Botswana**

Taking control of education

Across the world, indigenous and tribal peoples are taking back, or refusing to relinquish, control of their education. From the Yanomami and Enawene Nawe of Brazil to community-scale projects across Asia, and Sami colleges in Scandinavia, these initiatives focus on rebuilding children's pride in themselves, their communities and peoples.

At the heart of many schemes is the revitalization of indigenous languages. Rapidly declining knowledge of the Maori language led communities to establish mother-tongue schooling from pre-school to PhD level across New Zealand – with great results.

Learning in your mother tongue has been proven to enhance a child's achievement and wellbeing, and is vital for the future of tribal peoples.

Beyond language, indigenous-controlled education can firmly re-establish a tribe's values and knowledge, and can connect generations torn apart by Factory Schooling. It can also revitalize land-based skills and environmental protection, because the relationship with their land is fundamental to all tribal peoples and at the heart of their indigenous education.

An Enawene Nawe boy helping construct a fishing dam with his community.

Flexible schooling

Why should tribal children lose so much in exchange for schooling?

Why can't they gain the knowledge they need, on their terms?

School must adapt to us

Baka Cameroon



The government imposes its own ideas. It imposes another language. We develop our own language, our own culture. Here we share learning and learn from each other - even the youngest child can contribute. We want our children to learn about freedom and dignity and to value all human beings.

Zapatista autonomous school movement Mexico

Learning on our land

Where Factory Schooling is not imposed on them, indigenous communities usually choose to combine their traditional education with those elements of outside schooling that are useful to them. Learning is embedded in the community: on their land, in their language, on their terms with a curriculum tailored to their needs including: math skills; language skills; mapping skills for demarcating their lands; medical skills to address newly introduced diseases; and legal tools to protect their lands and rights.

By giving children a nurturing, culturally-appropriate start to their education, these approaches then enable children to access external schooling, if they so wish. They are only possible, however, if state schooling with a national curriculum is not compulsory and where indigenous peoples' internationally recognized right to control their education is upheld.

“A” is for “Autonomy”

Learning in a Zapatista Autonomous school is about respect: Respect for the autonomy of the child, the self-determination of the community and the respect for other peoples and other ways of life.

Sokola Rimba, the Jungle School, Indonesia.

Learning as a community
Education does not necessarily
mean school: Some communities
are learning together their way.

**Whoever controls the
education of our children
controls our future**

Wilma Mankiller, Cherokee USA



White people say they are intelligent. But we are not any less intelligent. Our thoughts unfurl in every direction and our words are ancient and numerous. They are the words of our ancestors.

**Davi Kopenawa, Yanomami
Brazil**

Learning together

Western-style schooling has become so ubiquitous it seems the only way to teach. But many tribal communities prefer to learn together – adults and children – and want formalized teaching to fit around all the other learning children do all day, every day.

The Enawene Nawe of the Brazilian Amazon developed an education project to teach the skills and knowledge from outside that they decided they needed to the whole community in the evenings, in their communal building. Children were not the target group: They have so much to learn already.

Many Yanomami communities have followed a similar path, based firmly on respect for their own knowledge and ways of learning and living.

Yanomami children are extremely knowledgeable about the wildlife around them, and this knowledge forms the heart of their education. A typical lesson would focus, for example, on local birds. Starting with an exploration of their knowledge, the class would build up reading, writing, drawing and science skills themed around local birds.

Yanomami child, Brazil.

**Healing the wounds
In Canada and Australia ,
communities are reconnecting
young people to their lands and
knowledge.**

**When you're "in
Country" you walk with
your head held high**

William Watson, Nyikina man Australia



A real teacher is somebody that leads by example. You learn in the country, you see it, you feel it, you hear stories and that's what makes you strong.

Apitet Andrew, Innu Canada

Innu youth on a trek on their land, Canada. The logo on their parkas reads "In memory of Justin." He was an Innu teenager who had recently committed suicide.

Healing the wounds

Indigenous communities are healing the trauma inflicted by generations of Factory Schooling through projects which reconnect youth to their language, land, history, and older generations.

In the U.S., many Native communities have asserted self-determination and taken control of schools that were previously run as government boarding schools; or have established language revitalization programmes, which immerse students in their mother tongue from preschool.

In Australia, the Yiriman project takes Aboriginal youth out into their Country and teaches them the stories of their people, giving them skills to live well on their land.

In Canada many First Nations have established indigenous education programs. The Tshikapisk Foundation takes Innu youth into the land, restoring their faith in themselves, giving them skills and knowledge and reconnecting them to their language and traditional ways of living.

Violence and suicide are the top two causes of death for indigenous youth in the U.S. Reconnecting with one's indigenous identity, land and knowledge can bring down spiraling suicide rates and return hope and cohesion to communities.



How can we be backward when we know how to protect the rainforest? How can we be primitive when our people live peacefully together in communities that are kind to each other, and that make us strong? How can we be stupid when our instinct is to protect, not destroy the environment? The children play and learn as nature teaches us.

**Davi Kopenawa, Yanomami
Brazil**

Baka children who are learning to “chase two rabbits at once” – both their indigenous knowledge and schooling from outside their community, Cameroon.

Bright futures

Education is a fundamental right for all children. For tribal and indigenous children it cannot be divorced from their rights to learn in their mother tongue, practice their culture and religion and have a family life.

All tribal and indigenous children should be able to access an education that enriches their lives and fulfills these rights. And their parents and communities should be able to exercise real control over what their children learn, who teaches them, where they go to study and what language they learn in. They should have real choices rather than having to send their children to a Factory School.

It's not rocket science! Indigenous control over education is both a right and a necessity, for today's children and for the tribal peoples of tomorrow.

“Indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning.”

UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

It is the dominant culture schooling system that is failing. The [Yolngu] traditional schools and universities still operate very effectively ... despite dominant culture opposition and lack of support.

Richard Turner, working with Yolngu communities Australia

Experience with other indigenous groups has shown that if you put children in uniform, feed them, educate them to make them “economically viable” you will de-skill and de-culture them.

Heggy Wyatt, working with the Enawene Nawe Brazil

Conclusion

For tribal and indigenous children to have schooling that really educates and empowers them, it needs to:

- Be under indigenous control, including the curriculum, timetable and calendar;
- Contribute to, rather than undermine, their self-determination;
- Use and nurture their own language;
- Be local to the community and enhance children’s connection to their land;
- Help them understand their rights so they can better defend their lands and determine their own futures.

The future of schooling for tribal children doesn’t have to repeat the mistakes of the past.

Survival International is campaigning to end Factory Schooling so indigenous children get the education and future they deserve.

If our report spoke to you, please take action now to ensure its message is spread as widely as possible.

With your help, we can end Factory Schooling for good.

Together we can stop Factory Schools. Please join us.



Tribal children need your support

Join our campaign for indigenous people to be in control of their own education.

www.survivalinternational.org/factoryschools



Donate

We take no money from governments or big corporations so our integrity is never compromised. We rely entirely on your donations to keep fighting for tribal peoples worldwide.

www.survivalinternational.org/donate



Follow #FactorySchools

Help us grow the call to stop Factory Schools by liking and sharing our posts on social media.



Spread the word

Talk to people about Factory Schools; help us harness a tide of public opinion to finally end this dangerous education system.



Distribute this booklet

We’d love to send you free copies! Drop us an email: info@survivalinternational.org

Schooling should give a feeling of love, care, nurturing and joy to the indigenous child, but mentally, these Factory Schools are killing us. I would wish that all of us should have an education system that promotes, protects and enhances humanity and Mother Earth. As a child feels confidence in her mother's lap, so an indigenous child should feel confident in their identity and where they are.

Nicholas Barla, Oraon India

About Survival International

We are the global movement for tribal peoples. We're fighting for their survival around the world. We've offices in France, Germany, Italy, Spain, UK and the U.S. and supporters in over 100 countries. Founded in 1969.

Our mission

To give tribal peoples a platform to speak to the world and to bring about a radical change in public opinion which will make sure they have a future.

Our vision

A world in which tribal peoples are respected as our contemporaries and their human rights upheld.

Our work

We work in partnership with tribal peoples to help them defend their lives and lands. We investigate atrocities then expose crimes using global media campaigns. We lobby the governments, companies and NGOs that violate tribal rights. We speak truth to power and we win against all odds.

Follow. Share. Make the message heard.



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When your innocence is stripped from you, when your people are denigrated, when the family you came from is denounced and your tribal ways and rituals are pronounced backward, primitive, savage, you come to see yourself as less than human. That's what residential schools inflicted on us

Richard Wagmese, Ojibwe Canada

50
years

Since 1969 | Offices in Berlin, London,
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