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# NEWS

## The Red Road

Mon, December 8, 2008

# PART 2: Suffer the children

By **MARK BONOKOSKI,**  
Sun Media

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The concept of residential schools to assimilate aboriginal youth has roots in the 1600s but accelerated following the War of 1812 and the failed American invasion of Upper Canada. First Nations people played a vital role in military campaigns to repel the Americans, however, after the war the incentive to appease aboriginal leaders evaporated.

By the 1830s, an official policy of assimilation began to solve the "Indian problem" — work largely handed over to missionary churches a decade later. That led to the creation of industrial and residential schools across Canada eventually with compulsory attendance for all aboriginal children aged 7 to 15 years.

Thousands of Native youth attended the schools throughout the 20th century where they were separated from their families and culture and many subjected to sexual, physical and other abuses. Beginning in the 1980s, revelations, lawsuits, government reviews and admissions of wrongdoing saw the last school close in 1996 and by 2006, Ottawa announced a \$2 billion compensation package.

This past summer Prime Minister Stephen Harper apologized for Canada's policy of assimilation and treatment of First Nation's people.

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