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Review of *A National Crime: The Canadian Government and the Residential School System, 1879-1986* By John S. Milloy

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Milloy's book answers this question, clearly and unequivocally. Federal bureaucrats knew what was happening. They knew that children were being mistreated, they knew that no real education was taking place, and they understood the impact this system was having on its survivors. The daily horrors the children experienced can justly be laid at the door of the churches, but the ultimate responsibility lies with the federal government which turned education over to churches without adequate funding, provisions for accountability, or supervision.

Milloy's research has the authority of the *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (1996) behind it. The Commission secured access to documentation up to 1993 after "protracted and difficult negotiations" and agreed to a detailed research protocol. Milloy, however, has been able to clarify much that has been obscured in the past and is scathing in his denunciation of the system.

The first part of the book examines the system's genesis. Even as a concept, Milloy feels, the system was abusive and violent in its intent to "'kill the Indian' in the child for the sake of Christian civilization."

Part 2, "Reality: The System at Work, 1879 to 1946," explores the physical creation and maintenance of the schools and their chronic underfunding. Milloy details the system's horrendous features: the neglect, the abuse, and the failure to reach educational goals. In 1931 eighty schools were in existence, forty-four in the prairie provinces. Problems were magnified in the Western schools: Crowstand was pronounced the "worst residential school I have had to visit" by the medical examiner; Round Lake continued to operate even after it was condemned by the Saskatchewan Fire Commission. Old Sun's was described as a "a sink hole of tubercular infections and scabies, the result of the neglect of staff of the children's hygiene."

"Integration and Guardianship, 1946-1986" deals with post-1944 when the move to closing schools began and Indian children were integrated into provincial schools. Integration,

A National Crime: The Canadian Government and the Residential School System, 1879-1986. By John S. Milloy. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1999. Photographs, appendix, notes, references. xix + 402 pp. \$55.00 cloth, \$24.95 paper.

The recent proliferation of commentary on residential schools leaves one question unanswered: Did no one know what was happening? The assumption is that if someone had known, it would have been prevented.

however, was a long, protracted process, the Catholic church, especially, resisting every move. Shortcomings and abuses continued for another forty years after the decision to assimilate the children had been made.

In an epilogue Malloy deals with more recent history, especially the the extent of sexual abuse. The Department of Indian Affairs had been aware of this violation, too, but a primary concern of both the Department and churches was their not being placed in positions of disrepute.

Apologies by churches and the federal government, and the 350 million dollar allotment for a healing fund, are paltry reparations for the federal government's neglect and abrogation of responsibility for over a hundred years.

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