



Prime Minister Harper offers full apology on behalf of Canadians for the Indian Residential Schools system, 2008.
Courtesy of the Office of the Prime Minister of Canada.

8.6. STATEMENT OF APOLOGY TO FORMER STUDENTS OF INDIAN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS, ON BEHALF OF THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA

Here is a part of Prime Minister Stephen Harper’s apology:

“The treatment of children in Indian Residential Schools is a sad chapter in our history...

Two primary objectives of the Residential Schools system were to remove and isolate children from the influence of their homes, families, traditions and cultures, and to assimilate them into the dominant culture.

These objectives were based on the assumption Aboriginal cultures and spiritual beliefs were inferior and unequal. Indeed, some sought, as it was infamously said, “to kill the Indian in the child.” Today, we recognize that this policy of assimilation was wrong, has caused great harm, and has no place in our country....

To the approximately 80,000 living former students, and all family members and communities, the Government of Canada now recognizes that it was wrong to forcibly remove children from their homes and we apologize for having done this.

We now recognize that it was wrong to separate children from rich and vibrant cultures and traditions that it created a void in many lives and communities, and we apologize for having done this.

We now recognize that, in separating children from their families, we undermined the ability of many to adequately parent their own children and sowed the seeds for generations to follow, and we apologize for having done this.

We now recognize that, far too often, these institutions gave rise to abuse or neglect and were inadequately controlled, and we apologize for failing to protect you. Not only did you suffer these abuses as children, but as you became parents, you were powerless to protect your own children from suffering the same experience, and for this we are sorry...”