

## 286 Red Bird

In Canada, the remains of 215 children were recently discovered on the grounds of an old residential school. Similarly, in the United States, the Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative works to identify student burial sites across 367 such schools across 29 states.

Their ancestral lands stolen and cultures decimated over centuries, Native Americans faced further horror in these so-called “schools.” Hundreds of thousands of Indigenous children were abducted and forcibly relocated to distant government and church re-education centers in order to “implement cultural genocide through the removal and reprogramming of... Native children.”

The stated goal was to “Kill the Indian, save the Man.”

From 1819 to 1969, these boarding schools flourished across the U.S. and Canada. School authorities forbade traditional hairstyles and clothing, suppressed tribal religious beliefs and ceremonies, and prohibited the use of Native languages. Thousands of children faced brutal physical and sexual abuse. Many died, and survivors carried the trauma throughout their lives.

Red Bird represents these children and all that they suffered. She has had her traditional braids shorn and will next be stripped of her tribal clothing.

The Canadian government has now prioritized reconciliation measures for First Nations people. Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland, the first Native American cabinet secretary in the U.S., believes that shedding light on a traumatic past is necessary for truth and healing.