



Indian Homemakers' Association of B.C.

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TRAFFICKING IN CANADIAN INDIAN CHILDREN

The liberalization of abortion, effective birth control and the social acceptance of single motherhood have created a tremendous market for adoptable babies in the United States...with unprotected Canadian Indian babies being used as the main victims in the marketplace.

We, as representatives of 10,000 Indian mothers and grandmothers from throughout the province of British Columbia, Canada, have been aware of the legalized kidnapping of our children and have sought answers for years from various federal and provincial representatives about the disappearance of our children only to be met with a wall of silence.

Through perseverance we discovered independently that many of our disappeared children had been transported to the United States and placed for adoption, lost forever there to our families and people.

William Byler, a Washington D.C. lobbyist for Indian people and past president of the New York based Association on American Indian Affairs (A.A.I.A.), informed our organization there was a high demand for Canadian Indian children to be adopted in the United States. Byler stated, "Since the 1950's there has been a tremendous decline in white children for adoption...There just are not that many white children being placed for adoption and with the few there are, the waiting list can take many years before a couple ever sees a child.

"In order to fill the market demands for adoptable children, it was necessary to seek acceptable alternatives to adopting white children. In the United States Black children are not socially acceptable alternatives, but Indian and Asian children were deemed acceptable by the white community."

Byler said because of the market for adoptable children in the U.S. the Bureau of Indian Affairs worked out agreements to supply Indian children to interested adoption agencies during the 1950's.

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From that time, Byler explained, there was an incredible leap in the numbers of children being taken from Indian communities and placed in permanent custody for adoption. Over 100,000 Indian children were eventually taken from their homes before the U.S. "Indian Child Welfare Act" was passed in 1978 to protect Indian families there. Byler called the last two decades "a period of wholesale marketing of Indian children."

Byler was one of the consultants who helped draft the 1978 U.S. legislation to protect the integrity of Indian families within the country. Canadian Indian children are not protected by the legislation, however, and Byler informed our organization that although there has always been a high rate of Canadian Indian children being adopted into U.S. families, the numbers may have increased drastically since the U.S. legislation was passed.

Steven Unger, current president of the A.A.I.A., in his report to the 1980 Senate Select Commission on Immigration and Refugee Policy states, "The importation of Canadian Indian children (to the United States) has already offered at least a partial explanation for the unconscionably high rates of placements of Indian children in the U.S."

The Unger report indicates that during 1976, for example, in the State of Maine, 114 out of 120 children adopted were Canadian Indian children. During the period from 1968-1974 the report said 45% of children brought into Minnesota for adoption were Canadian Indian children.

Both Byler and Unger said those statistics were only a small sample of Indian children brought into the United States for adoption into white families, just the tip of the iceberg. They did not follow through on investigating the whole problem of Canadian Indian children being adopted in the United States because their organization was primarily involved with Indian children in the United States.

Although there are no national statistics available in Canada of the numbers of Canadian Indian children taken from their families and tribes, provincial statistics indicate the numbers exceed the scandalous record of the United States.

We have recently received information from the Dakota Ojibway Tribal Council of Manitoba (one of the other ten Canadian provinces) that confirms this wholesale marketing of our children. Chief Ernie Daniels, a member of the Council, reported that during 1980 of the 98 Indian children placed for adoption,

58 were sent to the United States. The Dakota Ojibway Tribal Council was also able to obtain evidence that U.S. child care agencies were being paid up to \$4,000 for each Canadian Indian child.

Richard Zelinger, executive director of the Children's Bureau in New Orleans, told Daniels his agency charged adoptive parents between \$200 and \$4,000 for placing children in their homes. None of this money went to Manitoba officials.

Here in our province of British Columbia, forty percent of the children in care of the Department of Human Resources are native Indian children. This does not include Indian children who have been adopted by non-Indian people. British Columbia's Indian people represent less than two percent of the provinces's total population.

It is important to note that the apprehension of our children is most often based on a lack of understanding of the culture, values and lifestyle of our native people.

The federal government pays to this one province alone the sum of \$9 million per year for the cost of apprehension (taking into custody) and care of Indian children. The provincial Human Resources refuses to be held accountable to the Indian people or the federal government for the care of Indian children and the monies allocated for their care in custody.

On the other hand, the Department of Indian Affairs, which holds the federal responsibility for Indian people, ignores their responsibility and trust position and continues to condone these blatant acts of genocide against Indian families and their Tribes.

Within this country, as we have already stated, we do not receive answers or any accountability from the governments of our lost children. We are not however, ignorant of the consequences of these actions -- to us, it is the decimation of our Nations. To our children, it is the loss of parents, community, traditions, the right to be Indian, to be loved and understood by one's own people.

We are also aware, that the effect of being stripped of one's Indian identity leaves our children in a cultural and social vacuum. For example, seventy percent of young teenagers on Vancouver city streets who are into drugs and prostitution are native Indian children who are in the custody of the provincial Department of Human Resources. These young children ultimately go

into the prison system...which is filled with a disproportionate number of our people. These facts are ignored by the powers that control the lives of these children.

As women and Indian women we are doubly discriminated against by the governments and in some instances by our own male "leaders". As a result, we are ill-funded and unable to carry out the full-scale investigation and documentation of this major tragedy facing our people.

But, with or without major financial resources, our native Indian people want to raise their children free from unjust governmental interference and coercion. We want to PROTECT OUR MOST VALUABLE RESOURCE, OUR CHILDREN. And it is with this in mind we feel this issue must be brought to the United Nations.

We feel that every time an Indian child is forcibly taken from his or her community, an act of genocide is being committed and is violative of the articles of the United Nations Genocide Convention, of which Canada is a signatory.]

We, therefore, urgently request that the United Nations Human Rights Commission investigate the charges of our organization that the government of Canada has been and still is guilty of acts "intended to destroy wholly or in part a national, ethnic, racial or religious group as such," contrary to the Convention on Genocide.