

The stolen generation

Family



Explain the Stolen Generation (when did it occur/who was responsible and why government officials believed they were justified in taking these actions). The Stolen Generation was a very lonely and depressing time for the indigenous people of Australia. It lasted an overwhelming 60 years in which an estimated 100 000 aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were forcibly removed from their families and land to be raised in homes or adopted by white families. This Policy was designed to ‘breed out’ Indigenous people until there was none left. These children became known as the ‘Stolen Generations’.

The forced removal of these Indigenous children became an official government policy from 1909 to 1969. However these acts of removing Indigenous children from their homes occurred before and after these dates. The Aborigines Protection Board (APB) managed this removal policy; Governments, Churches and welfare bodies all took part in this operation. The Government gave the APB the power to forcibly remove Indigenous children without parental consent and without a court order in 1909. Children were to be fixated to an institution or mission dormitory, fostered or adopted.

The Government under the White Australia and Assimilation Policies tried to encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who were not of pure blood to become incorporated into the broader community of white Australian’s so that eventually there would be no Indigenous people left. At the current time the white Australians thought they were superior to the Indigenous people and that they were doing them a favour by giving them

an education and clothing them, even though they only educated them to a certain extent so that they could work as labourers or servants.

Children were extracted from their Indigenous cultures so they could be brought up white and 'taught' to reject their Aboriginality. These children were distributed to institutions and from roughly the 1950's were also allocated to white families. The APB only educated the Aboriginal children so that they could become labourers or servants, so their education was very poor. They did not educate them to a satisfactory 'white' standard because the white people could stay in power and hold the higher positions in society.

The Aboriginal girls that were forcibly removed from their families were sent to homes and facilities authorized by the Board to be trained in domestic service. The white people did not understand or respect the Aboriginal people or their way of life, this also meant that the people who supported the policy thought they were doing the 'right thing'. Some of these people also believed the Aboriginal people lived impecunious and unrewarding lives and that the institutions they were placed in would be a more appropriate environment in which the Aboriginal people could better themselves.

The white people thought the Aboriginals were stupid and had no tools or houses and could not provide for themselves. When in fact they were just so blind to the fact that the Aboriginal culture was based off living as one with the earth and the white people couldn't perceive and accept their way of life. The dominant, bigoted racist views that were part of the white society and government at the time also meant that people believed that Aboriginal

people were bad parents and that the Aboriginal women did not feed or look after their children accordingly.

They didn't realize that the Indigenous people lived off the land and used the nuts and plants for medicine, they only took what they needed from the land. They were not greedy, unlike white people who harvested massive crops and wore fancy clothing. So the white people took it upon themselves to try and exterminate the aborigines by breeding them with white people until there was none left. No one really knows how many Indigenous people were taken from their homes and lands, because most records of this tragic time have been lost or destroyed.

Countless parents never saw their children who were stolen from them, siblings were premissibly separated from each other and most never saw each other again. To this day many Aboriginal people do not know who their relatives are or have been unable to track them down due to this appalling and shameful policy Australia enforced in an attempt to assimilate the Aboriginal population during 1909-1996, meaning that even today there are Aboriginal people as young as their late 40's and 50's who are members of the Stolen Generation.) Discuss the varying experiences members of the stolen generation had; including where they were taken and the conditions in which they lived. Experiences throughout the stolen generation vary quite a lot, especially gender wise, generally the men found it difficult and tried to escape from where they were sent. On the other hand the women generally had lots of fond memories although it was very difficult at the time because they were separated from their parents at a very young age.

Depending on whether you were female or male, you would be taken to different locations, the women were often taken to farms as servants and waiters, the men were normally taken to institutions where they would be trained to become labourers. Both genders were at first taken to missions that were usually religious based. At these missions they would be taught how to speak and dress like a white person. Once they were of a satisfactory standard, they would be placed in different locations, women as maids, servants and cooks and the men as stockmen, labourers or other tedious jobs.

Even though they had jobs, the Aboriginal workers would not get paid. If they were lucky they would be left in their country (their land/are they called home), this was very important to them because their country was part of their life. In the Aboriginal community they believe that being on country is a nurturing experience for them, in other words if they look after their country, the country will look after them. It's their duty to look after the land, and when they are separated from it, they cannot do this, which brings them great suffering and pain.

From the point in which they were taken and separated from their family, friends and country, they were not permitted to speak their own language and could only speak English, if they did speak their own language they were severely punished. They had to dress and behave like white people. They were displaced, their whole culture was stripped from them, they were put into a situation on a cultural level to survive, and were totally at the mercy of the white people.

My Grandfather is an Anthropologist (Gary Watson) and has spent the last 8 years in Western Australia working with the Wadjarri Yamatji tribe. In the Wadjarri language Yamatji roughly translates to Aboriginal. One of his friends from the tribe is a member of the stolen generation and gave my grandfather some examples of the cultural displacement he went through; when he was first taken from his land and family he had a girlfriend, and he would constantly escape from the institution to go and see her.

They would always come and take him back, he could not understand why they would want to keep him from her. He was severely punished every time he escaped but he continued to escape to go and see her. Another experience he told my grandfather was when they told him to sleep inside the house, for him this was absurd. why would he sleep inside, he had never slept inside his whole life. To this day he hates sleeping inside, even in a little tin shed when they're out in the bush.

Allot of the Aboriginals couldn't and still cant understand why the white people would want to take them away and confine them and tell them not to be themselves. All these experiences have left a lasting impression, to this day these experiences affect the members of the stolen generation. Lots of the men get very angry when u bring the topic up, more so because they were done wrongly just because they were black. Bibliography Reference Material My Grandfather is an Anthropologist (Gary Watson)

Spent last 8 years in Western Australia working with the Wadjarri Yamatji tribe.

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