

FROM OUR READERS

RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

In the August issue, we ran an article on Constance Brissenden and Larry Loyie of Canada. In it there is mention of “residential schools” which we mistakenly identified as public schools. Larry, of Cree First Nations descent, went to one of these schools. To clarify what they actually were, Larry has written the following:

It is crucial to clarify what “residential schools” were since both U.S. and Canadian native Indians went to them. They are not public schools, but a horrifying part of native history. Native children were forced to attend residential schools, which were also known as mission schools, Indian schools or Indian industrial schools.

Children were taken from their families to live in these schools, some as young as 3. Even if these schools were near their families, children were not allowed to visit. Some went home for the summer holidays, others were kept year-round in the schools. If families resisted, the parents could be (and sometimes were) put in jail.

The children in these schools received an inferior education, inferior food and harsh and cruel treatment, with instances of sexual, emotional and physical abuse. They were not allowed to speak their native languages and received severe punishment. The students at my school, for example, spent the majority of their time working for the school, digging potatoes, doing laundry, stacking wood, cleaning, etc.

The idea, both in the U.S. and Canada, was to strip the native person of their culture and assimilate them into European culture. The results have been devastating, a cultural genocide. There was a total breakdown of native family structure resulting in alcoholism, drug-addiction and dysfunctional families. Native people say it will take seven generations to heal these wounds.

I spoke before a United Nations tribunal last year that met here in Vancouver to investigate residential school abuse. The tribunal concluded that residential school abuse was widespread and the direct cause of many of the problems facing native people today.

Some who attended these schools say “it wasn’t that bad” in their schools. To this, I ask: “Did you get the level and quality of education that those in public schools received? Did you go on to advanced education? Can you read and write as well as others? Did your education result in a good career?” To these questions, few native people can answer “yes.”

Thanks for listening,
Larry Loyie
Vancouver, Canada

LOTUS SUTRA

The June issue of *Living Buddhism* was one of the best issues I’ve read in a long time. I especially appreciated the article by Dr. David Chappell on “The Global Significance of the Lotus Sutra.” This is exactly the type of article that I would like to see more of in SGI-USA publications. Chappell expresses an informed opinion and demonstrates that broadmind-

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edness, tolerance and inclusiveness are necessary when addressing matters of Buddhist doctrine. To me, the fact that you chose to print this article suggests that the SGI-USA is emerging from the long, dark night of doctrinaire rigidity that (in my opinion) we unfortunately inherited from Nichiren Shoshu.

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