

Session 6

The Science, Ideologies, and Practices of Extinction, Part II

“Genocide and Ethnocide: Attempting Extinction in Practice”

- forced labour regimes (debt peonage, slavery, labour tribute)
- displacement/dispossession (loss of communal lands, relocation to private estates and missions, relocation to military controlled model villages)
- demise of traditional political structures (placed under the authority of European appointed middlemen, or under the direct authority of European military or church officials)
- dispossession of children (residential schools)
- decline in native language use (residential schools, urbanization, shame)
- suppression of native religions (missions, laws prohibiting certain practices)
- massacres (to clear lands, retaliation against rebellions)
- epidemics (intended and unintended)
- subsidized alcoholism
- prohibition against hunting and gathering, forced welfare dependency
- changes in diet (obesity, malnutrition, diabetes)
- erosion of native judicial systems
- discrimination (denied rights of citizenship, controlled movement, denigrated in media and educational systems)
- persecution by police, harsh penalties by courts
- contamination of lands (toxic dumps, nuclear detonations, mining waste)

- Drawing on the Greek word “genos” for race, in 1944 the Polish lawyer Rafael Lemkin coined the word genocide. Lemkin examined the genocidal policies of the Germans, defining genocide simply as “the destruction of a nation or an ethnic group.”
- This “is effected through a synchronized attack on different aspects of life of the captive people.” The purpose of these attacks is the elimination of the “essential foundations of the life of national groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves. The objectives of such a plan are the disintegration of the political and social institutions, of culture, language, national feelings, religion and the economic existence of national groups, and the destruction of the personal security, liberty, health, dignity and even the lives of the individuals belonging to such groups.”
- the legal definition is that of the United Nations, adopted in 1948. It defines genocide as: acts committed which intend to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group, as such:
- (a) Killing members of the group;
 - (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
 - (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
 - (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
 - (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.
- (a) does not specify whether the entire group is eliminated or not, but (c) does seem to accept that possibility; (b) is very broad; (e) is of obvious relevance to residential schooling, and indeed, in Australia, the Governor General’s Commission on the “stolen generations” of Aboriginal children abducted and forced into mission schools does define that experience as a genocidal one