Native communities always had their own ways of teaching, but missionaries and bureaucrats took over educating the children, hoping to “humanize” and “civilize” them, transforming them into hard-working Christian taxpayers. The schoolhouse became a trading post where Native American traditions were swapped for strange books and new looks.

The first step was to cut the children’s hair and take away their Native clothes. The next step was to teach them to think in English about wealth, private property, and individuality. The final step was to teach the children to salute the flag that their ancestors had fought against. Children were removed from their homes and placed in boarding schools. They lost traditional role models. They were punished for speaking their Native languages and thinking Native thoughts. Some were abused and molested. Many came to hate themselves, turning to alcohol as a cure for the Native American