

THE HISTORY OF EDUCATION IN ALASKA *and it's importance to YOU – a Presbyterian.*

Sheldon Jackson was a [Presbyterian](#) minister, [missionary](#) and in 1885, was appointed General Agent of Education in the Alaska Territory. He founded numerous schools that served these native people.



Jackson undertook a policy of deliberate assimilation. In particular, Jackson advocated an [English-only](#) policy which forbade the use of indigenous languages. "[N]o books in any Indian language shall be used, or instruction given in that language to Indian pupils."

Decades of punishment resulted in greatly decreased transmission of the culture and generational trauma began.

For a typical village in Alaska this might mean that in one generation a lot of trauma hit the community:

■ **1900-** Missionaries bring the gospel, but wrongly name all singing/drumming, totem poles etc. as "heathen."

■ **1918-1919** Measles wipes out half of a community of 250 people and in **1920** weakened people contract small pox, killing half of those remaining.



■ **1930**
Survivors' children are taken away to boarding school, dividing families and often leaving confusion about why this was necessary.

■ **1930-1980**

Boarding schools punish children for speaking their language, dressing in indigenous clothes, or otherwise expressing their indigenous culture.

AN APOLOGY FROM THE UPCUSA *And its importance to YOU- a Presbyterian*

The apology is for unintended historical trauma* caused by the church-run, and usually state-funded, boarding schools. Most children were required to leave their families for years, and the schools operated under the flawed, culturally paternalistic practices common in the day.

**A three-fold definition of historical trauma: In the initial phase, the dominant culture perpetrates mass trauma on a population in the form of colonialism, slavery, war or genocide. In the second phase, the affected population shows physical and psychological symptoms in response to the trauma. In the final phase, the initial population passes these responses to trauma to subsequent generations, who in turn display similar symptoms.*

--Michelle M. Sotero, at the University of Nevada

The impact of historical trauma is especially fresh for Alaska Natives. For the past 50 years or more, horrific levels of suicide, violence, sexual violence and substance abuse have plagued us.

IT'S A BIG DEAL!

REV. DR. J. HERBERT NELSON, the stated clerk of the National United Presbyterian Church will be in Alaska to present the apology.



YOU ARE INVITED!

Your presence will speak volumes on how important our Presbyterian Community of Faith places on repentance, and on the transforming hope of God's grace. We would like EACH of the churches of our presbytery to be represented there.

On February 6-8 the Native Ministries Committee of the presbytery, and the session of the UPC will be providing a teaching on the need for healing in Alaska. The event will end with a presentation of the apology on the Thursday, February 9, which is the first day of Kivgiq (The Messenger Feast). We estimate about 2500 people will be present from across the arctic to hear the apology. So please give speedy consideration about who should come. Please send the name, birthdate and contact information of your church's representative to Melissa in the presbytery office.