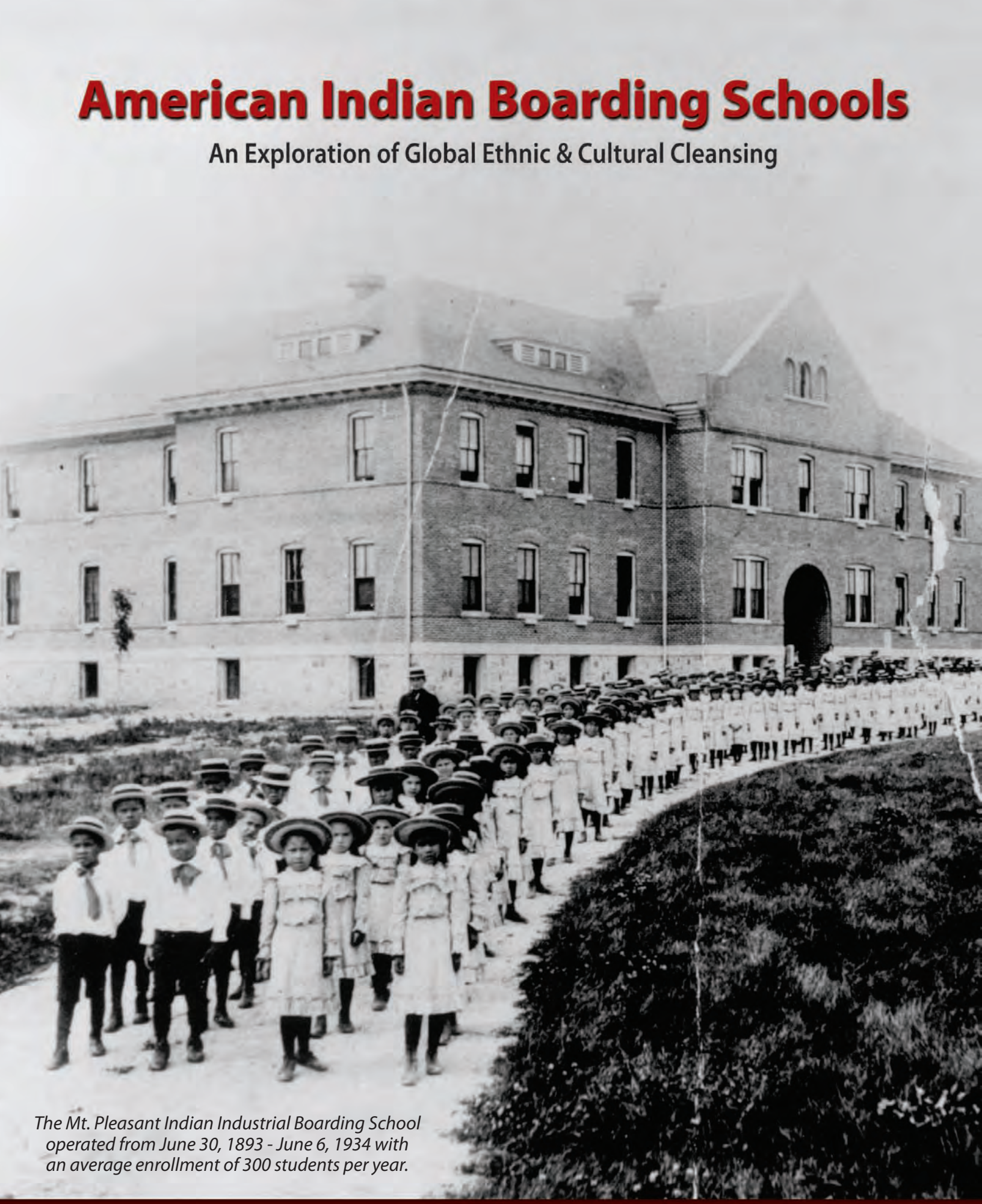
American Indian Boarding Schools

An Exploration of Global Ethnic & Cultural Cleansing



The Mt. Pleasant Indian Industrial Boarding School operated from June 30, 1893 - June 6, 1934 with an average enrollment of 300 students per year.

A Supplementary Curriculum Guide

ABOUT ZIIBIWING

The Ziibiwing Center of Anishinabe Culture & Lifeways in Mount Pleasant, Michigan is the Midwest's Premier American Indian Museum. Established in 2004, the Ziibiwing Center was created to provide a culturally relevant educational experience through its award-winning Diba Jimooyung (Telling Our Story) permanent exhibit, changing exhibits, research center, Ojibwe language immersion room, gift shop, and meeting rooms. The Ziibiwing Center is a non-profit cultural center and museum belonging to the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe of Michigan.

OUR MISSION

The Ziibiwing Center is a distinctive treasure created to provide an enriched, diversified and culturally relevant educational experience. This promotes the Ziibiwing Cultural Society's belief that the culture, diversity and spirit of the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe of Michigan and other Great Lakes Anishinabek must be recognized, perpetuated, communicated and supported.

DEDICATION

This curriculum guide is dedicated to all Indigenous Boarding and Residential School students, their families, and their communities throughout the world. May there be healing, truth, and justice.

In the pages that follow, you will be introduced to a topic most worthy of study in your classroom—the history of the Native American boarding school experience in the United States. This is one of the most painful and difficult chapters in our collective history as Indigenous people, and it remains a largely ignored area of study in secondary school classrooms across the country. This curriculum guide is an important step forward in ending the silences regarding this devastating period in Native American history.

As a university professor teaching courses in Indigenous studies and American studies, I continually hear from students that the content covered in my courses is new material for them. They continually ask, "Why have I not learned about this history before?" While some stand before me looking betrayed, many stand before me inspired to learn more. And there is no other topic that moves and inspires students to want to learn more than the history of the boarding school experience. There is something powerful and transformative that happens in the classroom when students hear the stories of the school survivors and alumni, and learn about the resiliency of Native communities in the wake of these devastating policies. If we are to move forward with our efforts to decolonize the historical record and engage in truth-telling regarding the U.S. government's policy of forced assimilation and cultural genocide, we must teach this history to our youth to end the silences and misunderstanding that permeates American society.

This brilliant guide developed by the Ziibiwing Center of Anishinabe Culture & Lifeways is compellingly written, well researched, and persuasively argues that we must use the knowledge gained from it to work towards healing and restorative justice. As educators we could not hope for anything more—to have a resource that helps us bring the finest in current scholarship to our classrooms. And, perhaps most importantly, a resource that inspires students to become "Agents of Change" to assist in addressing a great historical wrong, the legacy of which is still very much a part of the present.

Amy Lonetree (Ho-Chunk)
Assistant Professor of American Studies,
University of California, Santa Cruz

Front Cover: Opening Day, *Courtesy of the Alice Littlefield Collection*
Ziibiwing Center of Anishinabe Culture & Lifeways

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Chapter 1 - A Brief History of American Indians

American Indian Ways of Learning

For over 15,000 years the Indigenous people of North America thrived in tribal communities with respect for the land, plant and animal life, and their languages. Children were educated within their homes and families. Parents and grandparents taught young people through everyday life activities and special times of learning such as story-telling and ceremonies.

American Indians developed a vast skill set that enabled them to thrive in both work and leisure time. They discovered medicines for a wide array of physical ailments such as stomach aches, joint and muscle pain (e.g. aspirin and wintergreen), and arthritis. As agriculturalists, they developed such techniques as irrigation, soil enrichment, and terrace farming. As architects, American Indians engineered efficient housing structures: the long house, the wigwam, and pueblos. In an intricately woven societal structure, they lived in multi-generational homes, where they revered both immediate and extended family (Clan Families). Story-telling, dance celebrations, religious ceremonies, and harvest feasts were long enjoyed traditions.

Colonization and Conquest (1492 to 1900)

The European's quest for more land and wealth led to the **colonization** of countries along the coast of Africa, India, and North America. Spain invaded North America (known to the American Indians as Turtle Island) through Central America, moving northward, while the English and French began to colonize the east coast expanding westward.

Some of the Europeans sought respectful trade relations. However, some sought to enslave American Indians and claim the land for themselves. As more people came to the "New World" the demand for land and resources increased. European immigrants that migrated to America wanted land; however the land was already inhabited by millions of American Indians.

The concept of **Manifest Destiny** led early settlers to believe in their right and their duty to claim and cross this new world. Any measures required to accomplish this process were seen as necessary and just, even if it meant taking the lives and land of American Indians. As a result, millions of American Indians were killed in a short span of time. Only 2.5% of their original population remained after 1900.

Reservations, Removal & Resistance

By the end of the 19th century, American Indians, once stewards of the earth, were confined to living on small parcels of unproductive land called reservations. The United States' perceived "Indian Problem" was addressed through federal policies and acts of violence. American Indian clothing, spirituality, and hairstyles were considered "savage" and declared illegal by the United States Congress in the Indian Offense Policies. Some people, such as the Puritans, protested the systematic destruction of American Indians, but their small voice of national conscience went unheard.

Inset: Chief Okemos, *Courtesy of Archives of Michigan, Lansing; Negative 00746*

The threats to American Indians came in many forms: wars, forced relocations (e.g. Trail of Tears), foreign diseases (smallpox, influenza, scarlet fever, and whooping cough), and well-intentioned missionaries. These threats brought an unprecedented and extreme level of destruction to American Indian people.

The Indian Removal Act (1830) that was signed into law by President Andrew Jackson marked the beginning of many forced relocations. These forced relocations resulted in an enormous loss of life, land, and resources. American Indians were forced to move westward one step ahead of the white man's advanced weaponry, increasing population, and **ethnocentrism**.

Strong military forces were frequently utilized against American Indians. The United States government also paid citizens for the scalps of American Indian men, women, and children. In California alone, over $250,000 in scalp bounties were paid out for killing American Indians. Ironically, the new nation founded on the belief of life, liberty, and justice for all also included the painful consequence of **Manifest Destiny**.

This painting by John Gast is called American Progress. It is an artistic representation of the modernization of the new west. Here Columbia, intended as a personification of the United States, leads civilization westward with American settlers, stringing telegraph wire as she travels; she holds a school book. The different economic activities of the pioneers are highlighted and, especially, the changing forms of transportation. The Native Americans [American Indians] and wild animals flee.
Courtesy of Autry National Center, Los Angeles; 92.126.1

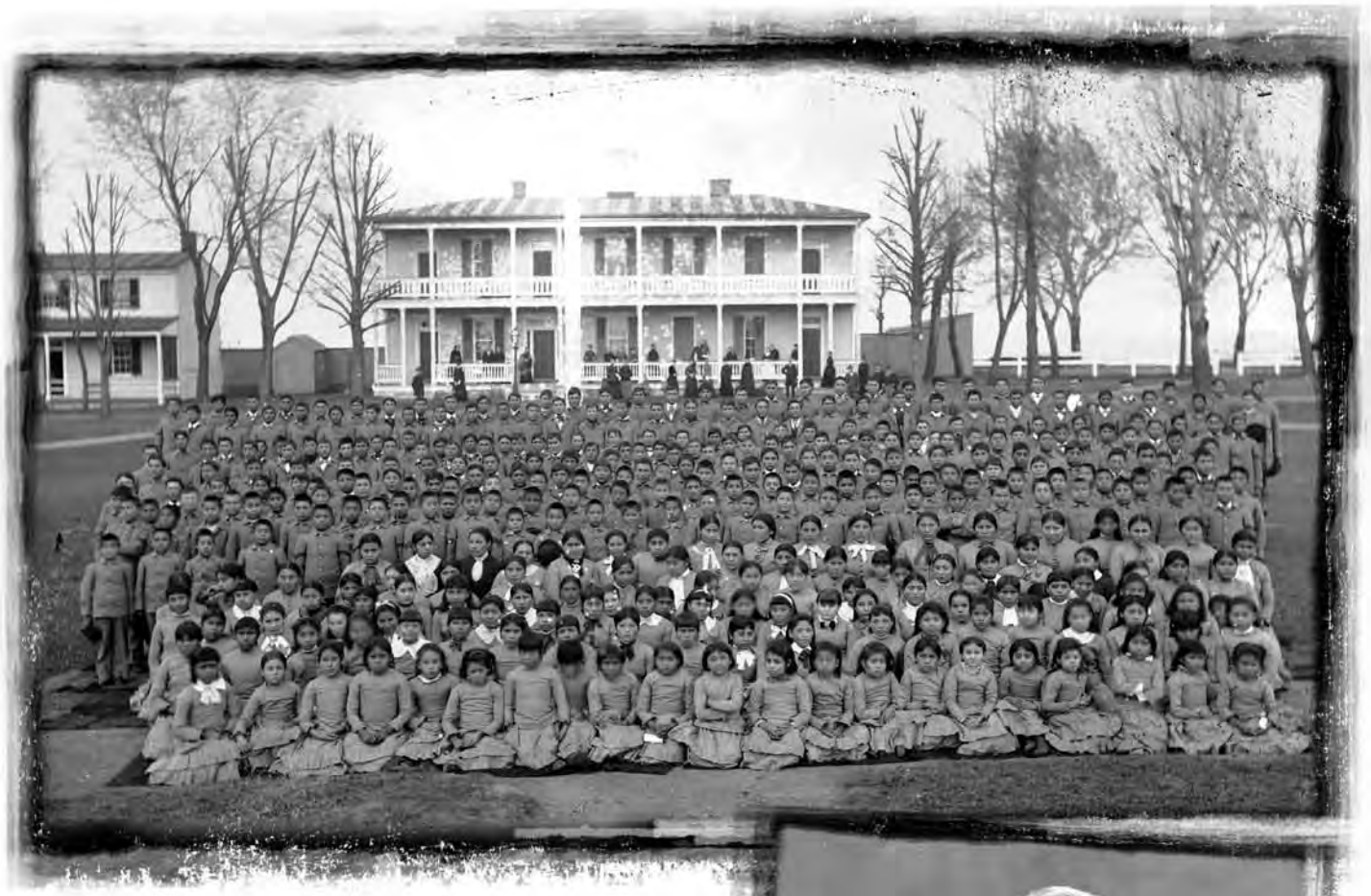
"American Progress"

In the South Dakota winter of 1890, the Massacre at Wounded Knee ironically was recorded as one of the last Indians Wars. The ravaged American Indians were forced into a small encampment. They were forbidden to sing traditional songs and practice their religion. In an attempt to bring strength and healing to their community, Lakota (Sioux) leaders began a spiritual dance called the "Ghost Dance." The federal response was quick and violent.

In less than four hours, military troops surrounded the camp and positioned four rapid-fire Hotchiss canons and the new Gatling Gun, invented specifically for mass killing. They opened fire with all weaponry gunning down over 300 unarmed American Indian men, women, and children.

Throughout this era, the United States government coerced tribes into signing treaties. Vast amounts of American Indian land was unfairly traded for the promise of money, food, a formal education, and medicine for diseases brought by European contact. American Indians were told they would be safer

Gatling Gun
© Fotosearch



Student Body Assembled on the Carlisle Indian School Grounds
Courtesy of National Anthropological Archives Smithsonian Institution, NAA INV06824700

living away from white "settlers." Small parcels of land called reservations were designated for American Indian tribes. Due to the loss of their plentiful hunting and fishing grounds, American Indians were now forced to rely on the United States government for food rations.

The United States government did not allow American Indians to own private land until the General Allotment Act of 1887. This Act divided reservations into individual homesteads. For the first time under the United States' control, American Indians were allowed to privately own homesteads as long as they did not engage in any "Indian" activities such as speaking their language or practicing their religion.

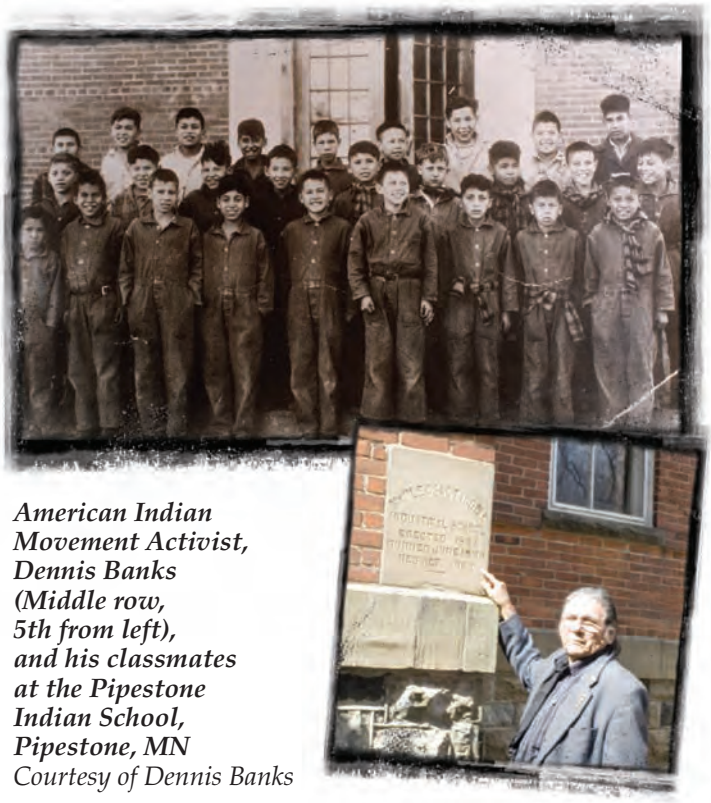
American Indians were allowed to become American citizens if they adopted the habits of a "civilized life." The Board of Indian Commissioners wrote that Christianity would quickly, humanely, and permanently solve the "Indian Problem." In the 1869 annual report of the board it was noted that "the religion of our blessed Savior is…the most effective agent for the civilization of any people." Full citizenship was not granted to the American Indians until 1924.

Lieutenant Richard Pratt
Courtesy of National Anthropological Archives Smithsonian Institution, NAA INV06828100

"Kill the Indian, Save the Man" - Richard Pratt

Indian Schools were designed to destroy American Indian cultures, languages, and spirituality. Students had to accept white culture, the English language, and Christianity. The first, and most well-known of these schools, was the Carlisle Indian Industrial Boarding School. The school was established in 1879 by an Army officer named Richard Pratt, and was located in an abandoned Army post in Pennsylvania.

Pratt conducted a social experiment with Apache prisoners of war. The captives were shackled and sent by train to a camp in Florida thousands of miles from their home. He cut the men's long hair, put them in uniforms, forced them to learn English, and subjected them to strict military protocols. During the course of this experiment, some of the men were severely traumatized by the experience and committed suicide. Most of the prisoners survived and learned the English customs and language. Using this social experiment as a model, Pratt went to Congress and requested funding for the similar education of all American Indians.



American Indian Movement Activist, Dennis Banks (Middle row, 5th from left), and his classmates at the Pipestone Indian School, Pipestone, MN
Courtesy of Dennis Banks

Dennis Banks in 2010 at the site of the Mt. Pleasant Indian Industrial Boarding School, Mt. Pleasant, MI
Courtesy of Carol Collins

The Pratt/Carlisle Model Sweeps Across North America

By 1900, most American Indian children were taken from their families. They were transported by train and later by bus to American Indian Boarding Schools where they would be put into uniforms, have their hair cut, and be forced to act and speak like white people. Many spent their entire childhood in the American Indian Boarding School system, without seeing their parents and families for many years.

Upon graduating, these young American Indians still retained certain aspects of their traditional culture yet acted, spoke, and thought like English-speaking, white Americans. They would often return to their families and communities feeling like outcasts and in most instances, their families and communities treated them as such. No matter how much time, money, and effort was made to **assimilate** American Indians, white society still did not readily accept them. No longer finding an identity in either the white or tribal society, thousands of American Indian adolescents were thrust into an abyss of lost identity.

Assimilate
To absorb into the culture of a population or group; to make similar; to alter by assimilation.

Questions & Discussion

1. **Was this era of American policy more about helping or controlling American Indian people?**
2. **What does ethnocentrism mean? How did this idea play a role in policies toward American Indians?**
3. **What does the phrase "Indian Problem" reveal about the perspective of government officials in North America?**
4. **The Puritans fled Europe to America to escape the tyranny of religious oppression. Why do you think the idea of freedom of religion in America did not apply to the spiritual practices of American Indians?**

ACTION STEP: **Research why historians use the word, "war" when referring to the Massacre at Wounded Knee.**

ACTION STEP: **Explain the meaning of the statement, "Kill the Indian, Save the Man." Do you agree or disagree with this philosophy?**

Chapter 2 - Expansion of the Boarding Schools

Superintendent Appointed

American Indian culture and ways of life were different from those of white Americans. Policymakers concluded that these differences rendered American Indians inferior. Many American women were recruited to help with the process of assimilating American Indian children by teaching them to value white, Christian beliefs, over those taught by their American Indian parents. In 1898, President William McKinley appointed Estelle Reel, superintendent of American Indian Boarding Schools. She held the belief that American Indians and other non-white races were inferior in their intellect and physical abilities.

Estelle Reel
Courtesy of the Library of Congress

Compulsory Education and the "Indian Problem"

On May 17, 1882, the United States Congress passed a bill known as the Indian Appropriation Act, whereby a sum of money was to be appropriated for the building of a school for American Indian youth. In 1893 Congress allowed the Bureau of Indian Affairs (established within the War Department) to withhold food rations and supplies from American Indian parents or guardians who refused to enroll and keep their children in the Boarding Schools. Many American Indian children were hidden from governmental agents/officials by their parents to avoid being forcefully removed from their families and communities.

Although American Indian Boarding Schools were primarily funded by the United States government, they were often operated by churches. Churches assigned priests and nuns to run the schools. In some cases, government administrators operated the schools. The complexity of American Indian culture, languages, and spiritual practices were broadly misunderstood. American Indians were viewed as savages, rather than as self-sufficient, knowledgeable, creative, and independent people.

A priority of American reformers was to provide American Indian children with the basic components of an academic education: the ability to read, write, and speak the English language. It was also a priority to convert American Indian Boarding School students to European religious beliefs. Individualizing American Indians was another rule of order, as white Americans measured their worth by the individual accumulation of property, American Indians measured their worth by what they gave away. It was believed that the importance of the tribal community must be abolished in order to civilize American Indians.

Merrill Gates, Chairman of the Indian Board of Commissioners said, "There is an utter barbarism in which property has no existence. The tribal organization tends to retain men in such barbarism. The great step is when you awaken in the [American] Indian the desire for property of his own, by his own honest labor." The underlying priority of educators was to prepare American Indian students for work in the industrial and agricultural world. In many of the Boarding Schools, the majority of the time was spent on learning manual labor techniques, such as farming, housekeeping, and carpentry, while minimal time was spent on academics.

Inset: Mt. Pleasant Indian Industrial Boarding School Construction, c. 1890s, *Courtesy of the Clarke Historical Library*

"Before and After" Portraits of Wounded Yellow Robe, Henry Standing Bear, and Timber Yellow Robe

Courtesy of National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution
NAA INV 00606600 and NAA INV 00606700

"Before" Chiricahua Apache children at Carlisle, November 1886

"After" Chiricahua Apache children at Carlisle, March 1887

Courtesy of the National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution
P06848 and P06859

By 1902 there were 25 federally funded non-reservation schools across 15 states and territories with a total enrollment of over 25,000 American Indian students. Although federal legislation made education **compulsory** for American Indians, removing students from reservations required parent authorization. Officials forced parents into releasing a quota of students from each reservation.

"Compulsory"
An adjective meaning required; mandatory; obligatory.

"Anishinabe"
Anishinabe means the first man lowered from above and placed on the Earth.

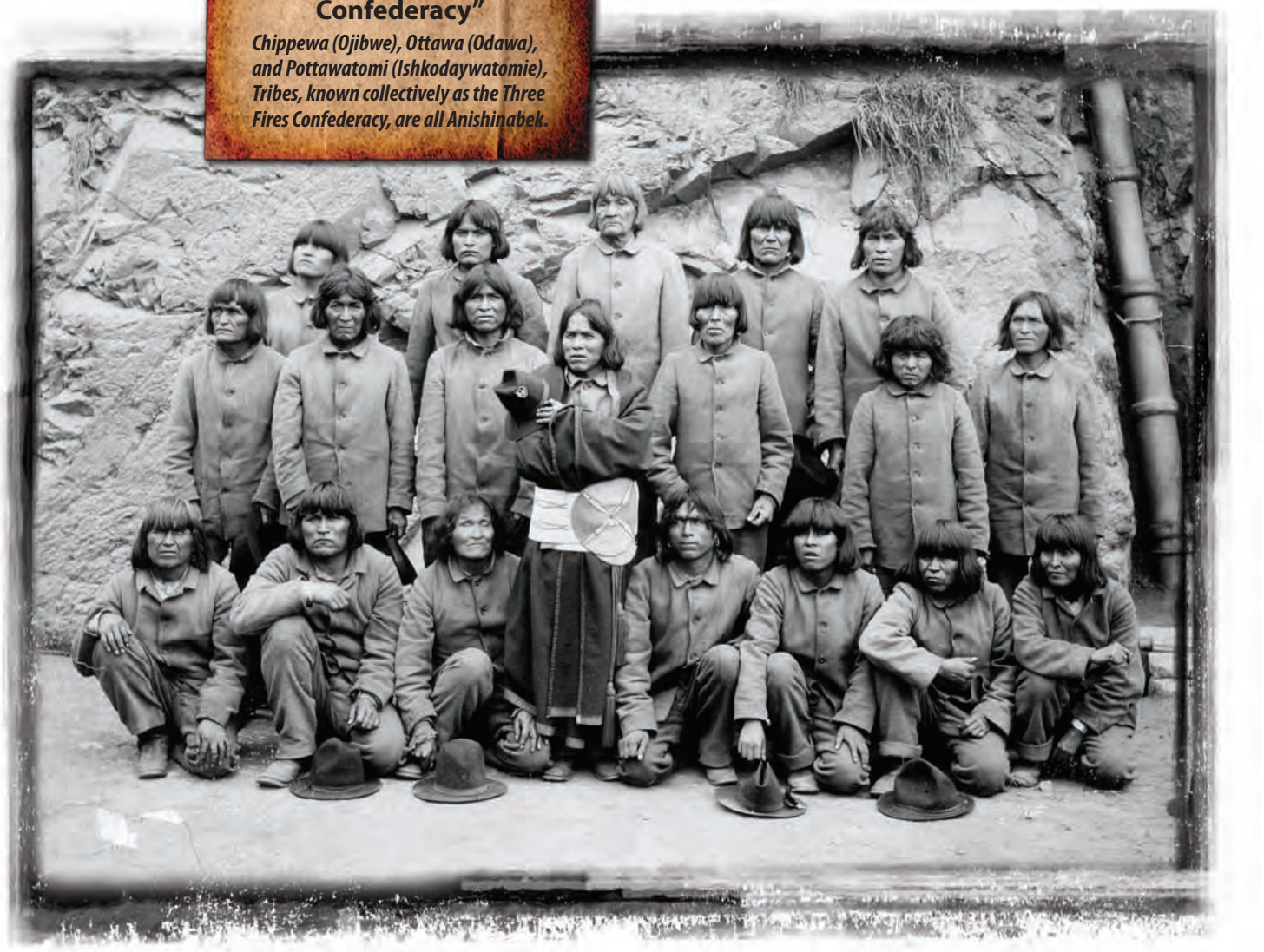
"Anishinabek"
The Anishinabek (plural) are descendants of this original man.

"The Three Fires Confederacy"
Chippewa (Ojibwe), Ottawa (Odawa), and Pottawatomi (Ishkodaywatomie), Tribes, known collectively as the Three Fires Confederacy, are all Anishinabek.

Resistance - Parents and Students Fight Back

Across the nation, American Indian parents responded in strikingly similar ways to the American Indian Boarding School concept. They often refused to surrender their children to governmental officials. Parents taught their young children a "hide and seek game" to avoid capture by authorities. A painful story of resistance involved the Hopi Indians in Arizona. In 1895, a group of 19 Hopi men endured imprisonment in the United States Military Prison on Alcatraz Island rather than giving up their children to boarding school agents.

Once incarcerated in the American Indian Boarding Schools; American Indian students resisted by running away, sometimes hundreds of miles back to their families. While attending American Indian Boarding Schools the children endured beatings for speaking their language, but many secretly "talked Indian" with their fellow



"Hopi Prisoners on Alcatraz Island" by Taber
Courtesy of the Braun Research Library Collection, Autry National Center; P.4028

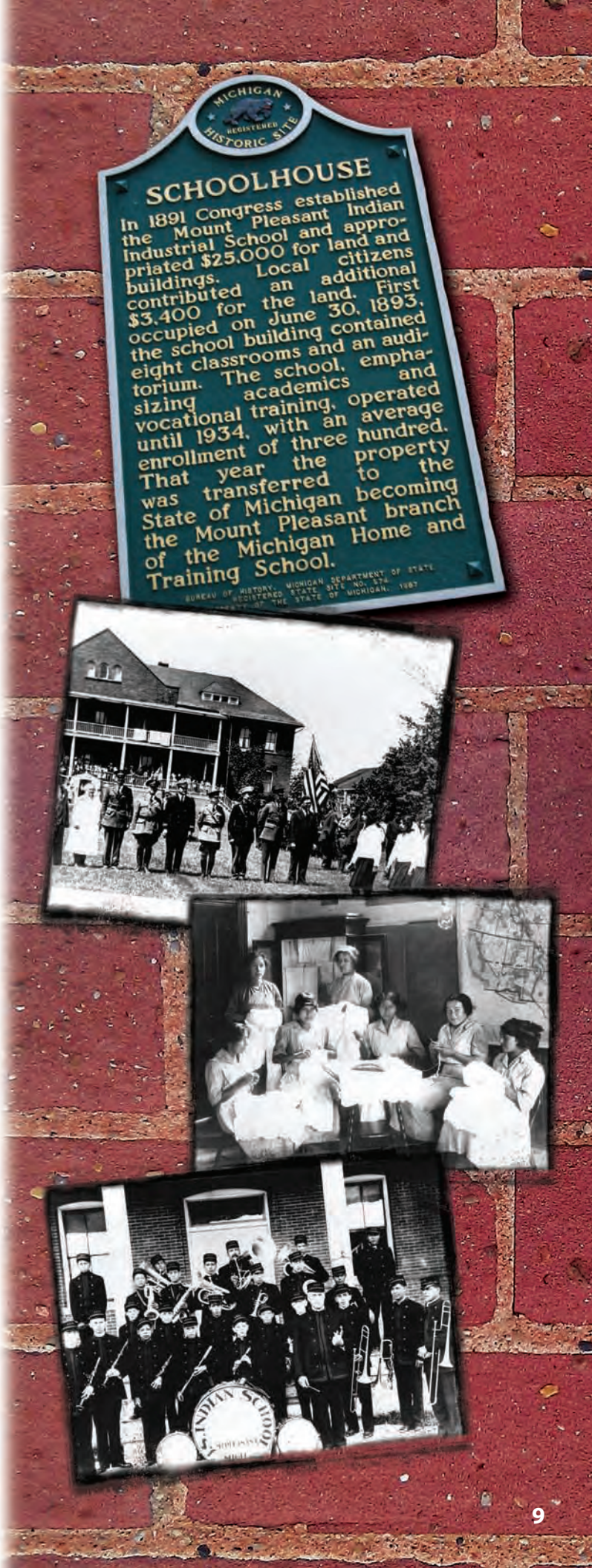
students (there were numerous American Indian languages). Parents were prevented from taking their children out of the American Indian Boarding Schools. Some parents wrote letters pleading with administrators to release their children so they could return home *(see page 14)*.

The Mount Pleasant Indian Industrial Boarding School

To fulfill part of the 1855 Treaty with the **Anishinabek** in Michigan, the United States Congress established the Mount Pleasant Indian Industrial Boarding School. **Anishinabe Three Fires Confederacy** lands were taken, and in exchange government officials promised to provide an education to all American Indian children. The 1855 Treaty became the basis for the 1934 Comstock Act legislation which pays for the college education of American Indians in Michigan. Today, it is known as the *Michigan Indian Tuition Waiver*.

The Mount Pleasant Indian Industrial Boarding School consisted of 37 buildings on 320 acres of land, with an average enrollment of 300 American Indian students per year in grades K-8. The school operated from 1893 to 1934. Daily life was very regimented. Like other American Indian Boarding Schools, the students performed work such as laundry, farm work, cleaning, and other manual labor for the majority of the school day. They also received basic academic instruction for the remainder of the day.

Almost every moment of the children's day was structured, documented, and controlled, including their religious worship or prayer. American Indian children were taught about religion in American Indian Boarding Schools in this era, unlike schools today which have separation of religion and education. Schools were typically Christian, Catholic, and Protestant. Students were taught that the teachings and practices of their culture were wrong and even "savage." They were also told that their original language was the "devil's tongue" or a sinful way to talk (Anishinabemowin is the original language of the Anishinabek of the Great Lakes area).



Mt. Pleasant Indian Industrial Boarding School Plaque
Courtesy of the Charles Butzin III Collection
Ziibiwing Center of Anishinabe Culture & Lifeways

Mt. Pleasant Indian Industrial Boarding School Flag Raising, Girls in Sewing Classroom & Band
Courtesy of the Alice Littlefield Collection
Ziibiwing Center of Anishinabe Culture & Lifeways

At the Mount Pleasant Indian Industrial Boarding School, children recited the following prayers each day:

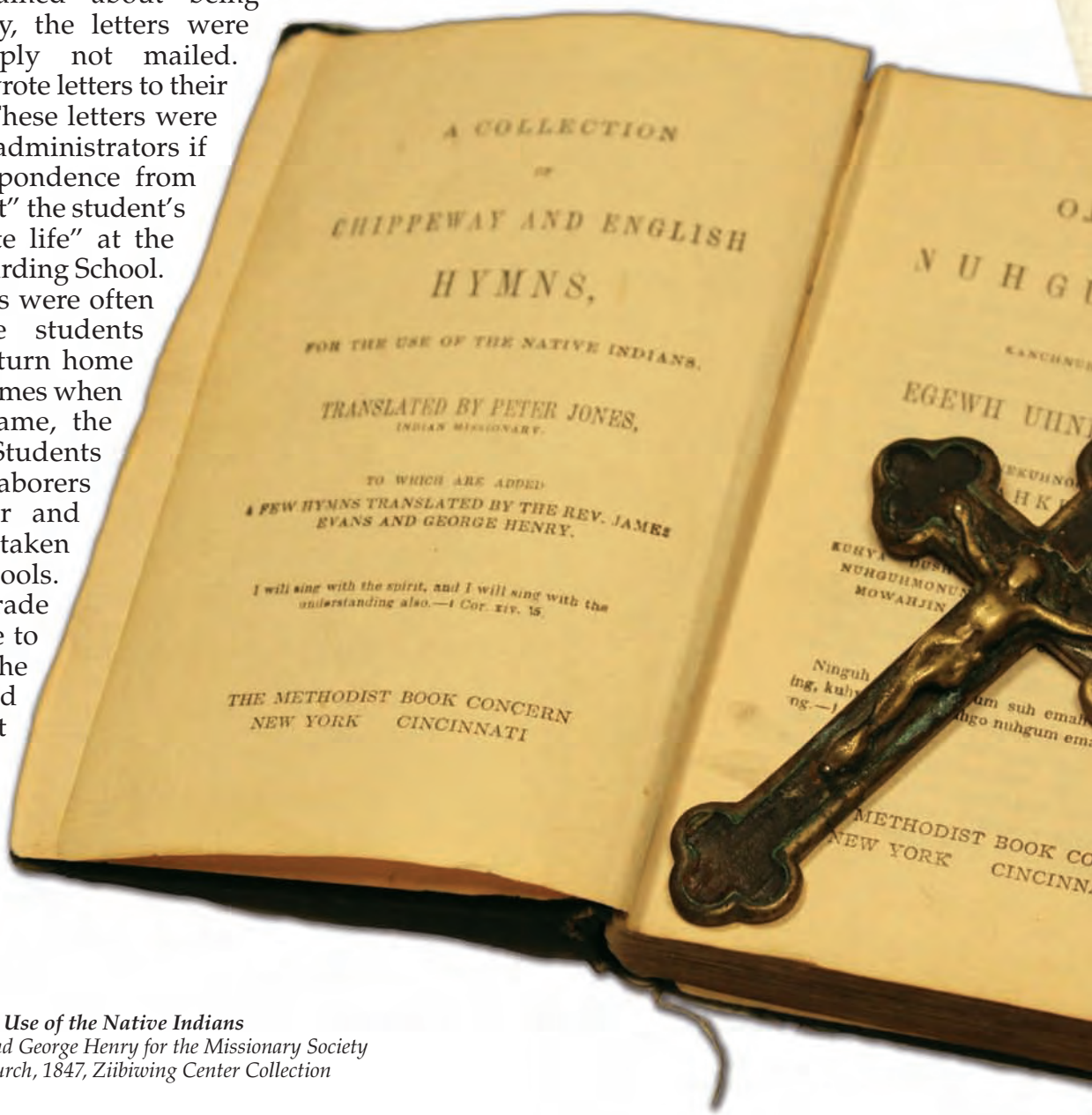
Morning Prayer
"Now I get me up to work,
I pray Thee Lord, I may not shirk;
If I should die before tonight,
I pray Thee Lord, my work's all right."

Evening Prayer
"Now I lay me down to sleep,
I pray Thee Lord, my soul to keep;
If I should die before I wake,
I pray Thee Lord, my soul to take."

American Indian Boarding School students were allowed to write letters home, however letters were censored by school administrators. If students complained about being mistreated or lonely, the letters were destroyed or simply not mailed. Sometimes parents wrote letters to their children at school. These letters were withheld by school administrators if they felt the correspondence from home would "disrupt" the student's conversion to "white life" at the American Indian Boarding School. Students and parents were often promised that the students would be able to return home for visits, but many times when summer vacation came, the visits were denied. Students worked as day laborers during the summer and their wages were taken to fund the schools. Eliza Silas, a 2nd grade student, wrote home to tell her mother she would not be allowed to return home that summer.

Typical "Welcome" to the Mt. Pleasant Indian Industrial Boarding School

Children as young as 5 years of age arrived by car, train, or wagon and immediately were told they were "dirty Indians." They were stripped and disinfected by having alcohol, kerosene, or DDT (dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane), one of the most well-known synthetic pesticides, poured on them. Long hair, valued for its cultural and spiritual significance, was cut. Any personal belongings such as medicine pouches, beadwork, family photographs, etc. were taken from them and never returned. Students were given uniforms that were made of low quality, uncomfortable materials to help teach them "sameness, regularity, and order." School administrators renamed the students, giving them common English first and last names. It was a humiliating and traumatic experience for the students.



Prayer Text
Courtesy of Great Lakes Regional Archive, NARA

Father Pierre-Jean De Smet Mission Crucifix, 1839
Ziibiwing Center Collection

A Collection of Chippeway and English Hymns: For the Use of the Native Indians
by Peter Jones, James Evans and George Henry for the Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1847, Ziibiwing Center Collection

Representation of the "Letter Home" from Eliza Silas, Saginaw Chippewa, *Mt. Pleasant Indian Industrial Boarding School, 1920*

Eliza Silas, *Courtesy of the Louis Leksche/Lewis Pontiac Image Collection Ziibiwing Center of Anishinabe Culture & Lifeways*

Representation of the "Appeal Letter from a Mother for the Return of her Daughter," *Mrs. Annie Turner, 1919*

American Indian Boarding Schools: What Happened to the Former Sites?

Perhaps the most famous of the American Indian Boarding Schools is the Carlisle Indian Industrial Boarding School (1879–1918). It became a National Historic Landmark in 1961 and today it is the U.S. Army War College. In 1884 the Haskell Indian Industrial Training School began as the United States Indian Industrial Training School of American Indians. The site is now home to Haskell Indian Nations University, and also includes the Haskell Cultural Center and Museum.

Many of the historical sites were turned over to the State in which the school was located with one of the stipulations being that they be used for public use. Some former sites became hospitals or museums, while others have been abandoned. Today's currently operational American Indian Boarding Schools are administered by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Many tribal communities have taken over the educational needs of their community by managing their own educational programs.

In 2011 the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe of Michigan was faced with a decision to address what to do with the property of the former Mt. Pleasant Indian Industrial Boarding School.

The complex histories of American Indian Boarding Schools and the full impact they have had on American Indian communities, families, and children are fueling the drive for political and cultural self-determination in the 21st century.

American Indian Boarding Schools

(United States of America)

1. **Chemawa Indian School**
   Salem, Oregon
   1880 – Present

2. **Fort Bidwell Indian School**
   Fort Bidwell, California
   1898 - 1930

3. **Greenville School & Agency**
   Greenville, California
   1894 – 1925

4. **Stewart Indian School**
   Carson, Nevada
   1890 – 1980

5. **Perris Indian School**
   Perris, California
   1893 – 1902
   Note: Transferred to
   Sherman Institute
   Riverside, California
   1902 – Present

6. **Fort Mojave Indian School**
   Fort Mojave, Arizona
   1891 – 1930

7. **Phoenix Indian School**
   Phoenix, Arizona
   1891 – 1935

8. **Fort Shaw Industrial Indian Boarding School**
   Fort Shaw, Montana
   1891 – 1910

9. **Grand Junction Indian School**
   Grand Junction, Colorado
   1886-1911

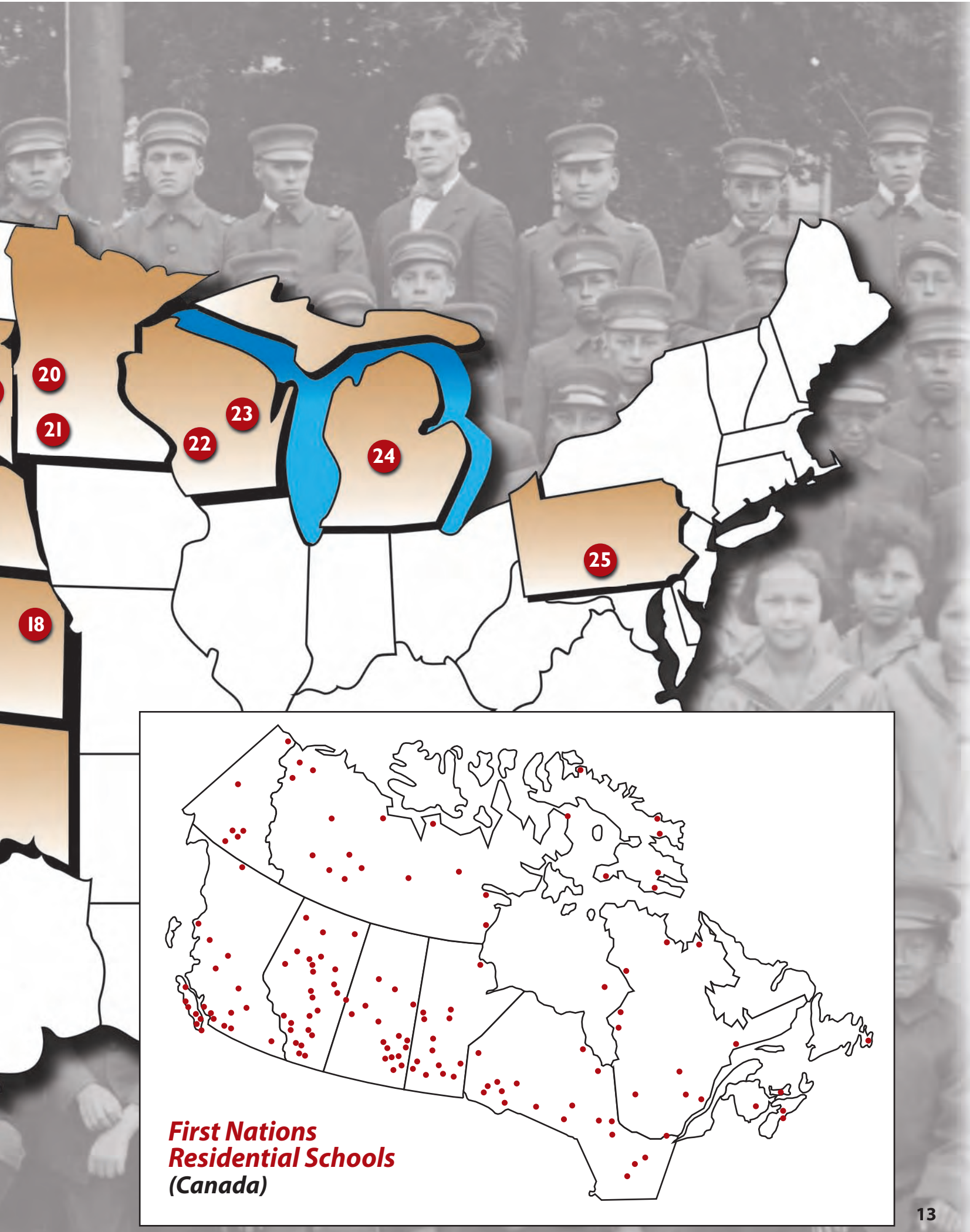
10. **Fort Lewis Indian School**
    Hesperus, Colorado
    1892 – 1910

11. **Santa Fe Indian School**
    Santa Fe, New Mexico
    1890 – 2008

12. **Albuquerque Indian School**
    Albuquerque, New Mexico
    1885 – 1982

13. **Rapid City Indian School**
    Rapid City, South Dakota
    1898 – 1933

Mt. Pleasant Indian Industrial Boarding School, 1921
Ziibiwing Center Collection



First Nations Residential Schools
(Canada)

American Indian Boarding Schools
(United States of America)

14 **Pierre Indian School**
Pierre, South Dakota
1891 – Present

15 **St. Joseph's Indian School**
Chamberlain, South Dakota
1927 – Present

16 **Flandreau School**
Flandreau, South Dakota
1892 – Present

17 **Genoa Indian Industrial School**
Genoa, Nebraska
1884 – 1934

18 **Haskell Indian Industrial School**
Lawrence, Kansas
1884 – Present

19 **Chilocco Indian Agricultural School**
Chilocco, Oklahoma
1883 – 1979

20 **Morris Indian Boarding School**
Morris, Minnesota
1887 – 1909

21 **Pipestone Indian School**
Pipestone, Minnesota
1910 – 1953

22 **Tomah Indian School**
Tomah, Wisconsin
1893 – 1941

23 **Wittenberg Indian School**
Wittenberg, Wisconsin
1886 - 1917

24 **Mt. Pleasant Indian Industrial Boarding School**
Mt. Pleasant, Michigan
1893 – 1934

25 **Carlisle Indian Industrial Boarding School**
Carlisle, Pennsylvania
1879 – 1918

Note: In the United States there were more than 460 American Indian "Day" schools, with enrollment totalling more than 100,000 students. The schools were administered by religious organizations and funded by the federal government.

Canada

There were over 140 Residential Schools for First Nations children, far more than any other place in the world. The first Residential Schools began before the founding of the country, and remained a common practice through the 1950s.

In 1969, the Canadian government decided to close Residential Schools (in part due to the growing American Indian resistance) however, the last school was not officially closed until 1996.

Australia

Australian governmental officials have done extensive research on the effects that Residential Schools had on Australian Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders.

Children were taken away from their homes and families by force, often before the age of five. Australian Aboriginal students suffered abuses at Residential Schools, and their effects are still being felt today.

New Zealand

During the colonization of New Zealand, Residential Schools for Maori (Indigenous people of New Zealand) were primarily subsidized by the government and overseen by missionaries.

In 1960 only 26% of Maori children could speak their language compared to 90% in 1900. Since winning a historical landmark case in 1986, the Maori have been revitalizing their language and culture through their own controlled schools and colleges.

Note: Asia, Africa, Latin America, Middle East, Scandinavia, and the Russian Federation also had Boarding/Residential Schools.

Homesickness

Most American Indian children did not understand that they would be staying at the school for years without seeing their home or families. The attitude of the school administrators was American Indian children did best if completely separated from their previous lives. In many cases, parents were prohibited from seeing or even communicating with their children. Oftentimes, American Indian Boarding School officials refused to send the students home to visit, even when the child's parents were dying or grieving the loss of a family member *(See page 11)*.

One year later Mabel Turner's mother, Mrs. Annie Turner, wrote the Mt. Pleasant Indian Industrial Boarding School and made another request to see her daughter. The Superintendent denied her request writing on March 11, 1920:

> *"Dear friend, none of the pupils whose terms are not over will be allowed to go home for vacation this summer, so your daughter Mabel will have to stay here with the others. I am very sorry I cannot comply with your request."*

Note: R. R. Cochran was replaced by Ora Padgett as the new Mount Pleasant Indian Industrial Boarding School Superintendent in 1924.

Mabel Turner, age 7, c. 1918
Courtesy of Linda Craig

The United States Department of the Interior scolded the Mount Pleasant Indian Industrial Boarding School Superintendent, writing on April 17, 1925:

> *"It has been brought to the attention of this Office that there is a tendency on the part of those in charge of some non-reservation schools not to return pupils to their homes promptly at the end of their periods of enrollment. Sometimes they are not even sent home for a visit. This causes great dissatisfaction among the parents who are entitled to definite information concerning the length of time their children will be enrolled in any school."*

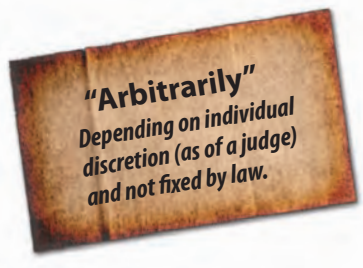
The new Superintendent responded:

> *"Regarding your letter per above reference, regarding pupils of non-reservation schools being detained at school during the vacation period or after their term has expired…I find no record where pupils have been **arbitrarily** held at school regardless of the wishes of their guardians."*

Runaways and Punishment

American Indian students who ran away from their Boarding School and attempted to return home were called "AWOL" (a military term meaning Absent Without Official Leave). Boarding School staff, local police, and trackers hunted them down and brought them back where they were severely punished. They were often beaten and confined in the school's jail upon their return. It was common practice to force older American Indian students to deliver punishments to the younger students. Older American Indian students formed two parallel lines holding sticks, clubs, and whips and the runaways were forced to run through the middle of the lines while their peers hit and mocked them.

In a letter from the Department of the Interior, Office of Indian Affairs in Washington, dated February 7, 1924 the Mount Pleasant Indian Industrial Boarding School Superintendent, R.R. Cochran was advised that "there have been frequent complaints presented to the Office concerning the whipping of pupils." The Office of Indian Affairs states that "…Superintendents must be held responsible for results to the extent that no cruel or improper punishment be inflicted."



Forced Child Labor

The workload imposed on students attending American Indian Boarding Schools compounded the effects of malnutrition, loneliness, and poor living conditions. Young students were forced to do huge piles of laundry or work on dairy farms without proper equipment. Young boys were required to operate dangerous machines, while girls pressed clothing with extremely hot irons. In 1935, a Bureau of Indian Affairs employee stated that the American Indian Boarding School system consisted of "penal institutions-where little children [are] sentenced to hard labor for a term of years for the crime of being born of their mothers."

The "Outing Program" was an out-of-school (summer months) system with work placement in homes and farms developed for American Indian children. In most cases, children were exploited and/or abused. For example, in the Genoa, Chilocco, Albuquerque, and Sherman Indian Boarding Schools, groups of 50-100 children were sent out to harvest crops for the full day in the sweltering sun from sunrise to sunset. In a few cases, the children were placed in loving and caring homes.

Merriam Report on the Negative Impact of the Boarding Schools

Authorized by the Institute of Government Research (Brookings Institute) in 1926, the Merriam Commission was charged with the task of investigating the state of Indian affairs in the United States. After two years of intensive research, the findings were published in 1928. Officially entitled "The Problem of Indian Administration" the 847-page report detailed numerous concerns with American Indian programs. It addressed health, education, general policies toward American Indians, family life of American Indians, emigration, and the legal and religious aspects of the "Indian Problem."

The research revealed the United States government largely failed at the task of protecting American Indian land and resources. American Indian Boarding Schools were grossly overcrowded. Children were provided inadequate food and lacked basic supplies like blankets, beds, and desks. Unsanitary conditions fostered the spread of infectious diseases that were not adequately treated by school administrators. The report noted, "the question may very properly be raised as to whether much of the work of Indian children in boarding schools would not be prohibited in most states under child labor laws." For example, a Haskell Indian Industrial School boy assigned to the print shop was required to fold papers for hours every day and to work under pressure to complete a commercial job on time. The "production work" that children were performing helped operate the school, but was not necessarily an educational tool. The "Outing Program" for hiring out boys and girls as maids and servants in homes and farms to do cooking, cleaning, serving, and childcare provided little in the way of a real education or training.

The Merriam Report recommended abolishing the "Uniform Course of Study," which taught only European-American cultural values; sending younger children to community schools near home, while older children would be able to attend non-reservation schools; and ensuring that the Indian Service provided American Indians with the skills and education to adapt both in their own traditional communities (which tended to be more rural) and the larger American society.

Questions & Discussion

1. **What would life have been like to be an American Indian Boarding School student? Explain how you would cope with being separated from your parents, family, and community?**

2. **Where in Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota are the American Indian Boarding Schools located? When did each of these schools open and close?**

3. **How did the American Indian Boarding School students show resistance to the assimilation tactics employed at the American Indian Boarding Schools? These young leaders took many risks to stand up for what they believed in. What were some of the risks?**

ACTION STEP: **Compare your school experience with that of a student attending an American Indian Boarding School. Use a Venn Diagram to show five similarities and ten differences.**

ACTION STEP: **Research the Merriam Report and identify other serious problems the study revealed about the mistreatment of students housed in the American Indian Boarding School system.**

Social Experiments Around the World

In the late 19th Century, the world watched as the United States implemented policies against the American Indian people of North America. Many countries followed suit with policies of their own to control and convert Indigenous people and claim their land, knowledge, and resources. **Colonialism** contradicted American ideals of universal equality and justice. One way to justify such a contradiction was to proclaim a "civilizing mission."

It was some 50 years after Charles Darwin wrote his Theory of Evolution, when "Social Darwinism," an extremely controversial idea that poor or sick people were inferior, became popular among the elite. Those who were considered "weak" were believed to be from inferior "stock" or genetic make-up. Around the world, Boarding Schools were a "social experiment" designed to solve the social "problems" of Indigenous people.

In Canada Indigenous children (Aboriginal or First Nations) were often taken forcibly from their families and placed into Boarding (Residential) Schools. Similarly, in Australia and New Zealand, Indigenous children were removed from their homes and placed in Residential Schools. Their primary role was to convert Indigenous children to Christianity and to prepare them for manual labor jobs. Family bonds, culture, and languages were destroyed in the process. It is estimated that 30% to 60% of the children died in these Residential Schools.

St. Paul's Indian Industrial School, Middlechurch, Manitoba
Courtesy of Library and Archives Canada, PA-182251

The era of United States policies towards its Indigenous people regarding reservations, forced relocations, and education damaged the culture, language, and resources of American Indian people. Federally sanctioned massacres that occurred between the 1500s and 1900s resulted in cultural and tribal **desecration**. Some scholars consider it an American Indian **Holocaust**, which spanned across two continents and four centuries, consuming the lives of millions of Indigenous people.

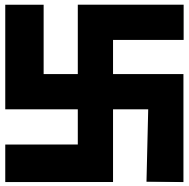
By comparison, the Jewish Holocaust was a systematic persecution of Jewish people by the Nazi **regime.** The lives of six million Jews were lost during the 1930s and 1940s due to forced relocation, labor camps, and death in gas chambers.

Other groups of people deemed undesirable such as Gypsies, Blacks, mentally deficient people, and homosexuals were also killed by the Nazis. The American Indian Holocaust and the Jewish Holocaust were both based on the goal of stamping out the perceived inferior population.

The Sanskrit and Swastika

In the early 20th century, the symbol for the **Sanskrit** word meaning "All is all" and resembled what we think of today as the swastika was used worldwide. It was regarded as a symbol of good luck and success. North American Indian tribes like the Zuni Nation also used the symbol as a representation of the cycle of the sun and the cycle of life. In 1915, the Swastika became the symbol for the Nazi Party flag. Since the Jewish Holocaust, this symbol will always have a sinister **connotation**.

Sanskrit



Swastika

Adolf Hitler

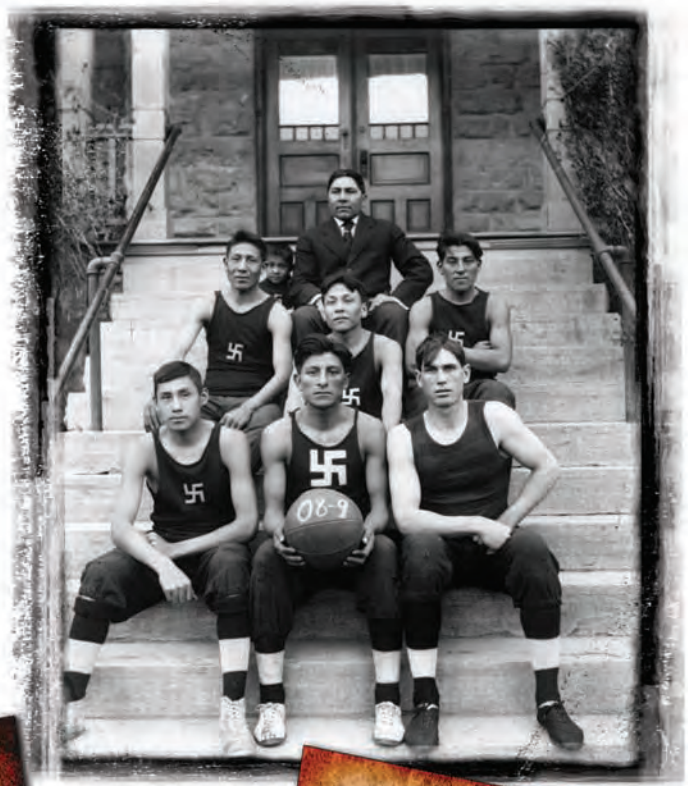
As a young boy, German leader, Adolf Hitler's favorite game was "Cowboys and Indians." His friends reported that he enjoyed endless war scene re-enactments. As an adult, he continued with his fascination of American Indian history and studied about the plight of the American Indian.

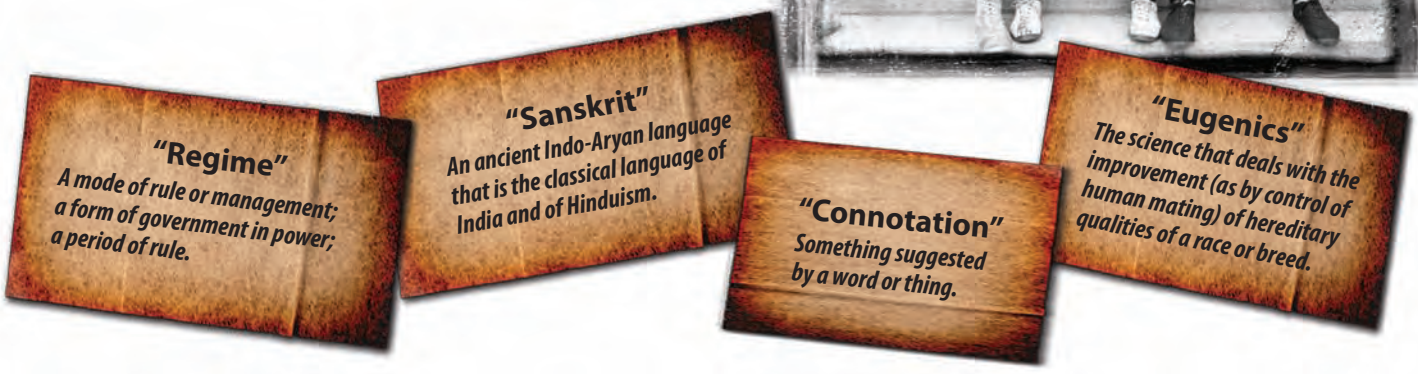
In 1916, Madison Grant, an American writer published his book, *The Passing of the Great Race*. Grant introduced the notion that the Nordic blonde, Arayan race was "ideal." He advocated that killing and sterilizing non-white, non-Christian people was an acceptable method of achieving what he termed "racial purity." In addition, Grant wrote specifically about the need to control the American "Melting Pot" by prohibiting interracial relationships between whites and Indians, Negros, or Hindus. He stressed the need to remove and control the perceived inferior races. Adolf Hitler wrote a letter to Grant about the book that said,"This is my bible."

Eugenics and Ethnic Cleansing

As Hitler's political ambitions developed, so did his obsession with creating a "perfect race" of people. By 1928 Hitler seemed to have heard about the massive industrial wealth of the United States and the fact that several states had **Eugenics** (ethnic cleansing) Boards to sterilize people who were considered to be mentally defective. The state of Indiana was among the first to establish a Eugenics Board. Hitler proclaimed his admiration for these sorts of policies and expressed his wish that Germany would do so on a much greater scale. He opposed inter-racial marriages and sterilized mixed race teens to prevent racial "polluting." Hitler believed that the

Basketball Team from the Chilocco Indian Agricultural School in Oklahoma, 1909
Courtesy of National Archives at Fort Worth





Barbed wire closes in the Auschwitz Concentration Camp in Southern Poland
David Brauchli/Getty Images News/Getty Images

United States had become a major power by ethnic cleansing the American Indians.

As early as 1920, Hitler demanded that the Jewish people be removed from among the German people. He termed this as a "struggle to the death." Hitler's desire for German progress, expansion, and living space or "Lebensraum" was eerily similar to the United States' notion of Manifest Destiny. Hitler compared the Russians and the Polish to American Indians, proclaiming the need to have them herded off to reservations, where their numbers could be thinned and their labor could be exploited. Hitler compared himself to Robert Koch, a scientist who discovered bacteria. Hitler said, "He found the **bacillus** and it showed medical science a new way. I ***discovered*** the Jew as a bacillus and the ferment of all social decomposition…and one thing I have proven is that the state can live without Jews."

"Bacillus"
Rod-shaped bacteria that may cause serious infection.

"Camps for the Boer's in South Africa"
British-controlled concentration camps for Indigenous Africans that operated from 1899 - 1902.

Hitler's "Final Solution"

Hitler claimed he owed much of his knowledge about concentration camps and the practice of genocide to his studies of American and English history.

Adolf Hitler
Hulton Archive/Getty Images

He admired the **Camps for the Boer's in South Africa** and the American Indians of the Wild West. According to historian, John Toland, Hitler "often praised to his inner circle, the efficiency [of] America's extermination - by starvation and uneven combat, of the red savages who could not be tamed by captivity." In 1938, Hitler instigated Kristallnact or "The Night of Broken Glass." Jewish stores and synagogues (places of religious worship) were broken into, robbed, and destroyed in a massive public display of violence against Jews.

In 1941, hidden in seemingly innocent sounding bureaucratic language, Hitler gave the orders to exterminate the Jewish race. He said, "Make all necessary preparations regarding organizations and financial matters to bring about the complete solution to the Jewish question."

Auschwitz, a camp strategically located at the border of Germany, was secretly converted to Hitler's "solution" to the Jewish problem and one of the greatest killing centers in mankind's history.

Questions & Discussion

1. **What are the similarities and differences between the Jewish Holocaust and the American Indian Holocaust?**
2. **Why do you think so few people have heard about the American Indian Holocaust?**
3. **Do you believe internment camps are still being used in the world today?**

ACTION STEP: In your school or community find an example of someone who was targeted because of their background.

ACTION STEP: Research other countries in the world today where ethnic and cultural cleansing (genocide) is occurring. Identify ways in which you can make a difference.

Chapter 4 - Truth-Telling, Healing & Reconciliation

The Legacy

It will take a determined effort on the part of all people to address the legacy of Boarding/Residential Schools, which was a form of cultural genocide. Countless individuals have experienced intergenerational trauma as a result of the separation from parents and family. The impact is passed down one generation to the next. Alcoholism, type II diabetes, abuse, and suicide are some of the long-term effects of the destruction of culture and family ties. The healing process begins with an acknowledgement of the past. Many countries are beginning to discuss the process.

Canada

The Canadian government began to acknowledge the impact on Indian (First Nations) families in the late 1990s. Many survivors came forward to tell their stories and finally break the silence. They revealed the pain of being separated from their parents, the abuses from teachers and administrators, and the life-long impact it had on them.

In March 1998, the Canadian government made a 'Statement of Reconciliation' – including an apology to those people who were sexually or physically abused while attending Residential Schools and it established the Aboriginal Healing Foundation. The Foundation was provided $350 million to fund community-based healing projects focusing on addressing the legacy of physical and sexual abuse in Indian Residential Schools. In some instances, the Canadian government paid financial damages directly to the people who suffered abuse in the Indian Residential Schools. In Ontario, former teachers and students met in a process of reconciliation in partnership with the Aboriginal Healing Center.

The Canadian government established a Truth and Reconciliation Commission to listen to and document the Residential School students' experiences. This Commission has been charged with completing their work by July 1, 2014.

Inset: Journey for Forgiveness, June 17, 2009 *Ziibiwing Center Collection*

Former Canadian Residential School Student and Teacher Holding Hands During a Healing Ceremony *Courtesy of James V. Scott & Mike Degagne*

Canadian Healing Well *Courtesy of James V. Scott & Mike Degagne*

Australia and New Zealand

As a result of the Native Schools Act of 1867 the New Zealand government required that English be the only language used in the education of Maori children (Indigenous people of New Zealand). The goal was to assimilate the children into European culture. Likewise, there were thousands of Indigenous Australian children taken from their parents and placed in Residential Schools from the 1860s to 1960s. Today, these children are referred to as the "Stolen Generations." The award-winning film, *Rabbit-Proof Fence*, is based on the true story of two Aboriginal girls who escaped from a Residential School.

A formal apology was issued by leaders of the Australian government to the survivors and families affected by their Residential School system in February of 2008. Below is an excerpt:

"Today we honour the Indigenous peoples of this land, the oldest continuing cultures in human history. We reflect on their past mistreatment. We reflect in particular on the mistreatment of those who were Stolen Generations – this blemished chapter in our nation's history. The time has now come for the nation to turn a new page in Australia's history by righting the wrongs of the past and so moving forward with confidence to the future. We apologize for the laws and policies of successive Parliaments and governments that have inflicted profound grief, suffering and loss on these our fellow Australians.

We apologise especially for the removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families, their communities and their country. For the pain, suffering and hurt of these Stolen Generations, their descendants and for their families left behind, we say sorry. To the mothers and the fathers, the brothers and the sisters, for the breaking up of families and communities, we say sorry. In addition, for the indignity and degradation thus inflicted on a proud people and a proud culture, we say sorry. We the Parliament of Australia respectfully request that this apology be received in the spirit in which it is offered as part of the healing of the nation. For the future we take heart; resolving that this new page in the history of our great continent can now be written.

We today take this first step by acknowledging the past and laying claim to a future that embraces all Australians. A future where this Parliament resolves that the injustices of the past must never, never happen again."

Australia's National Sorry Day, 2008
Courtesy of Drew Douglas

United States

To date, the United States government has not yet acknowledged its role in operating American Indian Boarding Schools. However, American Indian communities and organizations are leading the "Journey for Forgiveness." Over the past ten years, "Journey for Forgiveness" marches have been organized at every former American Indian Boarding School to raise awareness and begin the process of healing American Indian individuals, families, and communities impacted by the boarding school era.

In 2009 White Bison, a national organization focused on healing the legacy of boarding schools, partnered with the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe of Michigan to lead a local march. Hundreds of Native and non-Native people participated in a full day of listening to survivors' stories and participating in healing ceremonies on the grounds of the closed Mt. Pleasant Indian Industrial Boarding School. The City of Mt. Pleasant government and Central Michigan University officials, staff, and students took part in the activities acknowledging this painful era.

Images from the June 17, 2009 Journey for Forgiveness March from the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Reservation to the Mt. Pleasant Indian Industrial Boarding School, Mt. Pleasant, MI
Ziibiwing Center Collection

Questions & Discussion

1. **What is the mission of Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission? Should the United States form their own?**

2. **Racism fueled the American Indian and Jewish Holocausts. What signs of racism do you see in your school or community today? How can you help bring healing to victims of racism?**

3. **Why or why not is a National Apology to American Indians needed from the United States government?**

ACTION STEP: Write a letter to your local or state governmental official as to why or why not a National Apology is needed.

ACTION STEP: As a student, you have been charged with organizing a school event that will build awareness of the history and issues regarding the American Indian Boarding Schools. Explain your event/program.


Journey for Forgiveness
Mt. Pleasant Indian Industrial Boarding School
White Bison
Wednesday, June 17, 2009


MT.PLEASANT INDIAN
INDUSTRIAL SCHOOL
ERECTED 1892
BURNED JUNE 1899
REBUILT 1900

Chapter 5 - I Can Make a Difference

What is an "Agent of Change?" Looking at the World

An "Agent of Change" is an individual or group, who attempts to bring about change, aid in its accomplishment, or helps to cope with change. You and your family or friends can make a positive difference in the world.

First, you must arm yourself with knowledge. What cause are you passionate about and willing to work hard at educating yourself and others? Identify the problem. Do you want to help the environment? Stomp out racism? Fight for human rights? Feed the poor? Stop bullying?

Second, you have to create a plan of action. You can join global, national, state, church, or community groups that support your cause. You might even want to come up with a plan of your own. Find out what others are doing to help make the world a better place.

Next, it takes dedication and good communication skills to inspire others. Oftentimes you might be misunderstood and will have to find new ways to communicate your message of change in a positive manner. Are you willing to contact the appropriate officials to affect the necessary change?

Lastly, remember change takes time and is hard for some people. "Agents of Change" are dissatisfied with the way things are today and are willing to work for a better future. No action is too big or small to make an impact on your community and the world. Are you ready to take action? Be empowered with the skills you need to impact the future as an "Agent of Change."

What Can I Do? Healing the Legacy

You may be asking yourself, "What can I do to help heal the legacy of the American Indian Boarding School era and prevent this injustice from ever happening again?" There are a number of things that you can do to help including educating yourself, helping to spread the word, and taking action to help heal the wounds.

Educate Yourself

The first thing you can do is learn all that you can about the impact of the Boarding/Residential Schools around the world and similar acts of global ethnic and cultural cleansing (genocide). You may want to find out how many people were affected, or how they still suffer from the trauma. Conduct your own research.

Visit the Ziibiwing Center's website at www.sagchip.org/ziibiwing for a resource list, updates to this guide, and much more.

Help Spread the Word

Help spread the word and raise awareness at the local, national, or global level. You may do a presentation at your school to help educate others or create a poster about what you have learned.

You may want to organize a group of people around your cause by utilizing social media and networking sites. You could partner with existing sites, such as the Boarding School Healing Project on Facebook, or you may want to start your own group.

Take Action - Helping to Heal the Wounds

Once you have a group of informed, like-minded people organized, you are ready to take action. Encourage your local politician to support a National Apology to the American Indian people. You and your group might volunteer at a local Tribe or reservation. For example, you might help organize a virtual or actual field trip to a former Boarding School site. You may want to host a film screening in your community on a film that focuses on the topic of cultural genocide.

Whatever you choose to do will make an impact.

No issue/action is too big or too small!
A'yaangwamazin. Be determined.

Central Michigan University Repatriation "Walk Them Home" Procession, November 2010
Ziibiwing Center Collection

Annual Freedom Walk, August 2008
Courtesy of the Tribal Observer Collection

Niibing & PEAK Youth Community Service Day Island Park, Mt. Pleasant, July 22, 2008
Courtesy of the Tribal Observer Collection

Domestic Violence Awareness Walk, 2008
Courtesy of the Tribal Observer Collection

Annual Freedom Walk, August 2007
Courtesy of the Tribal Observer Collection

U.N.I.T.Y. Delegation in Washington D.C., February 14, 2008
Courtesy of the Tribal Observer Collection

"The old boarding schools that Indian kids were forcibly taken to were concentration camps for children where we were forbidden to speak our language and were beaten if we prayed to our Native Creator."

Dennis Banks *- Ojibway Boarding School survivor, Co-founder of the American Indian Movement (AIM), and speaker against police brutality, racism, broken treaties, and mistreatment of American Indians*

"How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world."

Anne Frank *- Jewish Holocaust Victim*

"I don't think anybody anywhere can talk about the future of their people or of an organization without talking about education. Whoever controls the education of our children controls our future."

Wilma Mankiller *- First Female Principle Chief of the Cherokee Nation and Presidential Medal of Freedom Recipient*

"A small body of determined spirits fired by an unquenchable faith in their mission can alter the course of history."

Mohandas Gandhi *- Political and Ideological Leader of India*

"Almost always, the creative dedicated minority has made the world better."

Martin Luther King, Jr. *- African American Civil Rights Activist*

"True power does not amass through the pain and suffering of others."

Joy Harjo *- Muskogee Activist, Poet, and Musician*

"Let us put our minds together and see what kind of future we can make for our children."

Chief Sitting Bull *- Hunkpapa Lakota Sioux Holy Man*

"Until the great mass of the people shall be filled with the sense of responsibility for each other's welfare, social justice can never be attained."

Helen Keller *- Renowned Blind/Deaf Author and Presidential Medal of Freedom Recipient*

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Supplemental resources found at:
National Archives and Records Administration, Great Lakes Region Chicago, Record Group 75, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Mt. Pleasant Indian School and Agency, Michigan 1892-1946

The Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe of Michigan National Archives, Mt. Pleasant, Michigan
Records held within the Ziibiwing Center of Anishinabe Culture & Lifeways

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What can you do?
How can you become an "Agent of Change?"

*Go to **www.sagchip.org/ziibiwing** to see how you*
can help stop the cycle of global ethnic & cultural cleansing.

Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe of Michigan

ZIIBIWING CENTER
of Anishinabe Culture & Lifeways

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