



# AWAY FROM HOME

AMERICAN INDIAN BOARDING SCHOOL STORIES

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HIGH SCHOOL CURRICULUM



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**This curriculum packet is generously supported by**



## Introduction

The Heard Museum is proud to make available this high school curriculum on the American Indian Boarding Schools as part of our longstanding commitment to documenting and sharing this important part of American history.

Knowing the complicated history of American Indian Boarding Schools is vital to understanding Native Americans today and recognizing the lasting impact the schools have had.

While much of this curriculum is focused on the past, the content continues to be relevant to current events. Family separation is an integral part of this history and provides an important perspective on modern forms of taking children from their parents as well as recent court decisions to overturn the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978, which legally guaranteed that American Indian children could never again be taken away from their parents, blood relatives and tribal communities.

### Objective

The curriculum was created as a means to teach high school students about the lesser known experience of the American Indian Boarding Schools. We have included many former students' voices, photographs and details in the student text so as to foster empathy among students.

Throughout the student text there are Imagine If questions designed to guide students in placing themselves in the shoes of American Indians at the boarding schools. One of the activities asks students to demonstrate both their understanding of the history and their ability to empathize by writing a narrative from the point of view of a boarding school student.

The other activities ask students to examine the experience of the Indian Boarding Schools with a critical and analytical eye. This is done using an interdisciplinary approach. The activities can be used by English, Social Studies, and Art teachers individually or can be assigned across subjects.

In writing the student text, we did, however, decide to limit the graphic details of abuse suffered at the hands of teachers and staff, specifically sexual abuse, so no one is triggered in the classroom.

We appreciate your desire to share this living history with your students and support your efforts by not only offering this curriculum, but providing supplemental online resources. Please consider enriching your students' learning by scheduling a class visit to the Heard Museum's exhibit, *Away From Home: American Indian Boarding School Stories*.

Regards,  
Sarah Nieto  
Director of Education

Afsaneh Moradian  
Instructional Designer

# AZ Standards

The American Indian Boarding School curriculum incorporates Social Studies, English, and Art Arizona State standards.

The Student Text is based on the following Arizona State high school Social Studies standard:

**Strand 1: American History, Concept 4: Revolution and New Nation, PO 6.** Examine the experiences and perspectives of the following groups in the new nation:

- a. property owners
- b. African Americans
- c. women
- d. Native Americans
- e. Indentured servants

## Activity # 1: Pre-Reading Questions

SS Strand 1: American History, Concept 1: Research Skills for History, PO 3. Formulate questions that can be answered by historical study and research.

## Activity # 2: Essay

SS Strand 1: American History: Concept 1: Research Skills for History PO 5. Evaluate primary and secondary sources for:

- a. authors' main points
- b. purpose and perspective
- c. facts vs. opinions
- d. different points of view on the same historical event  
(e.g., Geography Concept 6 – geographical perspective can be different from economic perspective)
- e. credibility and validity

9-10.W.1 Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

- a. Introduce precise claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that establishes clear relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.
- b. Develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly, supplying evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience's knowledge level and concerns.
- c. Use words, phrases, and clauses to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claim(s) and counterclaims.
- d. Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.
- e. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.

## Activity # 3: Create a Timeline

SS Strand 1: American History, Concept 1: Research Skills for History, PO 4. Construct graphs, tables, timelines, charts, and narratives to interpret historical data.

## Activity # 4: Photo Analyzing Essay

SS Strand 1: American History: Concept 1: Research Skills for History PO 5. Evaluate primary and secondary sources for:

- f. authors' main points
- g. purpose and perspective
- h. facts vs. opinions
- i. different points of view on the same historical event (e.g., Geography Concept 6 – geographical perspective can be different from economic perspective)
- j. credibility and validity

9-10.W.1 Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

a. Introduce precise claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that establishes clear relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.

b. Develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly, supplying evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience's knowledge level and concerns.

c. Use words, phrases, and clauses to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claim(s) and counterclaims.

d. Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.

e. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.

### Activity # 5: Create a Photo Essay

VA.CR.1.7 b. Develop criteria (such as identifying the desired qualities of the final artwork) to guide making a work of art or design to meet an identified goal)

### Activity # 6: Narrative

SS Strand 1: American History: Concept 1: Research Skills for History PO 5. Evaluate primary and secondary sources for:

k. authors' main points

l. purpose and perspective

m. facts vs. opinions

n. different points of view on the same historical event (e.g., Geography Concept 6 – geographical perspective can be different from economic perspective)

o. credibility and validity

SS Strand 1: American History, Concept 1: Research Skills for History, PO 4. Construct graphs, tables, timelines, charts, and narratives to interpret historical data.

9-10.RI.7 Analyze various accounts of a subject told in different mediums (e.g., a person's life story in both print and multimedia), determining which details are emphasized in each account.

English:

9-10.RI.9 Analyze seminal/primary documents of historical and literary significance, including how they address related themes and concepts.

9-10.W.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

a. Engage and orient the reader by setting out a problem, situation, or observation, establishing one or multiple point(s) of view, and introducing a narrator and/or characters; create a smooth progression of experiences or events.

b. Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, and multiple plot lines, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.

c. Use a variety of techniques to sequence events so that they build on one another to create a coherent whole.

d. Use precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters.

e. Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on what is experienced, observed, or resolved over the course of the narrative.

# AWAY FROM HOME

## AMERICAN INDIAN BOARDING SCHOOL STORIES



Class portrait of Chemona School Students, Salem, Oregon, 1905. Copy of hand-tinted photograph. Pacific University Archives, Forest Grove, Oregon, 8617.

*Note to the reader: In speaking and writing about Indigenous people, words are important. When possible, we use the name the tribal nation uses. If talking about Indigenous people in general, we use Indigenous, Native, and Native American. American Indian/Alaska Native is used as well to refer to Indigenous people of the United States. Indigenous people in Canada are referred to as First Nations, Inuit and Métis. We use the term American Indian boarding schools in the United States, whereas Canada, Australia, and New Zealand say Residential Schools.*

### Introduction

The experience of the American Indian Boarding Schools is one of family separation, segregation and, later on, self-determination. This aspect of U.S. history is necessary to develop a fuller understanding of American Indians past and present and a more complete sense of U.S. history overall.

Well before Europeans had contact with the Indigenous people of North America, American Indians had developed multifaceted cultures; they had built cities, canals and roads. They had also created kinship systems, domesticated plants and animals and practiced democratic forms of government in which women played significant roles. American Indians already had educational systems in place that utilized oral tradition and practical, hands-on training. In this way, elders

transferred knowledge of history, values, cultures and skills to the young.

When Europeans arrived, the process of acculturation and assimilation did not happen all at once and in the same way all across North America. Contact with Europeans and tribal devastation through disease and warfare on the coasts and in the Southwest was occurring in the 1500 to 1600s, while it would not be until 200 years later that tribes in Montana first encountered the Corps of Discovery, led by Captains Meriwether Lewis and William Clark under the guidance of Native scouts, including a woman. Part of the purpose of this expedition was to inform the Indian nations on the Northern Plains that they were now under the jurisdiction of the United States through a policy that had been coined "Manifest Destiny."

As the country continued to expand westward, the government had to deal with what they

called “the Indian problem” as the United States now claimed ownership of American Indian lands.

## Mission Schools: The First American Indian Schools

The history of American Indian schooling is tied to the desire of Europeans and their descendants to acquire more land. Many Europeans had no intention of sharing the land with other nations and encouraged religious leaders to try to remake American Indians in their image. The first schools were formed in the 1600s by Christian missionaries who wanted to bring the bible and Christianity to American Indians, believing them to be “savages” and “Godless.”

Religious orders set up schools on American Indian land. In the early 1800s, the U.S. government paid religious orders to teach Native children to pray from the bible, dress and speak as Europeans did, and adopt European mannerisms and values. Even though these schools were funded by the U.S. government, the government failed to regulate them. As a consequence, the extreme abuse students endured at those schools went largely unchecked.

During this time the U.S. government passed laws pertaining to American Indians, two of which are significant to the development of the Indian Boarding Schools. The Indian Civilization Act of 1819 encouraged and funded benevolent organizations to teach American Indians reading, writing, arithmetic, and agricultural methods. They called it “civilizing” American Indians; however, the purpose was to provide them with the knowledge to integrate into mainstream European society as the government sought to control more land. In 1830, the government passed the Indian Removal Act which gave the U.S. Army the authority to remove American Indians from their land. The first government-run Indian boarding school opened only a few decades later.

“While they [Indians] are learning to do better on less land, our increasing numbers will be calling for more land.”

*President Thomas Jefferson, 1803*



ABOVE: George A. Croft, *American Progress*, c. 1873, chromolithograph. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C., LC-US262-737.

BELOW: Mission Indian School children, n.d. NativeStock Pictures.



## Carlisle: The First Government-run Indian Boarding School

Richard H. Pratt founded the Carlisle Indian Industrial School in October 1879 at Carlisle, Pennsylvania. The goal was to destroy the “Indian” aspects of the children and turn them into members of U.S. society, in other words the goal was forced assimilation. Pratt developed the school’s approach using methods he had developed at the Fort Marion prison in Florida, putting Native captives in uniforms, giving them regulation haircuts, marching in military drills and teaching English in class recitation. He applied his work with prisoners to American Indian children at the school under a mission he described as, “Kill the Indian, save the man.”

Support for Pratt’s mission was motivated by economic factors. Hiram Price, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, said in 1885, “It is cheaper to give them education than to fight them.” It is estimated that at that time it cost nearly \$1 million to kill an American Indian in warfare versus only \$1,200 to provide an American Indian child with schooling for eight years.

Towards the end of the 19th century, the Office of Indian Affairs created several more schools built on the model of the Carlisle School. By the early 1900s, there were 25 boarding schools in 15 states housing an estimated 17,000 American Indian children. In the same way that assimilation was forced on students, enrollment was mandatory and not subject to parental consent.



ABOVE: Richard Henry Pratt, 1900-1909. Archives and Special Collections, Dickinson College.

BELOW: Carlisle Indian School students, March 1892. J.N. Choate (Photographer), Cumberland County Historical Society.





## Compulsory Education leads to Family Separation

While some American Indian leaders voluntarily sent their children to Pratt's institution, convinced that learning "the white man's way" was important, most students were sent to boarding schools without their parents' approval.

Since Pratt was aiming for full assimilation into mainstream U.S. culture, he did not want the children to have contact with their parents, communities and culture. All of the federal Indian Boarding Schools have been run by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Uniformed police officers were utilized to coerce families or kidnap children from their homes and bring them to a boarding school.

A law was passed in 1898 that made attendance mandatory. The Commissioner of Indian Affairs was allowed to withhold rations, clothing, and money from families that would not consent to send their children to the government-run schools.

In fact, in November 1894, cavalry troops arrived in Oraibi, a Hopi village in Arizona, and arrested nineteen leaders for refusing to send their children to school. They were sent to Alcatraz prison in San Francisco Bay, and held for nine months. This was one of the more overt acts of resistance to the schools, but families took many other measures to keep children at home.

These punitive practices officially ended in 1917; however, forced enrollment and recruitment continued through the 1930s. American Indian parents did not have the legal right to refuse their children's placement in off-reservation schools until the Indian Child Welfare Act was passed in 1978.

Children were taken quite far from their homes. For example, Native children were seized in Alaska and taken as far as Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania where they had little hope of contact with their family.

Because the children's parents were absent, the students had no adults to protect them from the egregious abuse suffered at the hands of teachers, administrators and staff.



Sioux children on their first day at school, 1897. Library of Congress.



Hopi Prisoners at Alcatraz, January 3, 1895. Southwest Museum of the American Indian, Los Angeles, California; item # N.20086.

BELOW: U.S. School for Indians at Pine Ridge, South Dakota, 1891. C. H. John Grabill (Photographer), Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C.





Young student arrives at Sherman Indian School, c. 1940. Sherman Indian High School Museum, Riverside, California.

### Assimilation: The Policy of Erase and Replace

Pratt's approach became the model and standard practice at all of the Indian Boarding Schools. When children arrived at the school they were given standard issue haircuts.

For many American Indians, hair is sacred. Sitting in a barber chair and having their hair cut short was a traumatic way to start their school experience.

Students were given uniforms to wear so they no longer resembled themselves and did not look "Indian." The school even replaced their names with an assigned, Anglo name that they were forced to use the entire time they were at school.

“ I remember it was in October they came to get me. My mother started to cry, 'Her? She's just a little girl! You can't take her.' My mother put her best shawl on me.”

*Juanita Cruz Blue Spruce, Ohkay Owingeh Pueblo, Santa Fe Indian School student, 1915*

“ When they first took us in school, they gave us government lace-up shoes, and they gave us maybe a couple pair of black stockings, and long underwear, about a couple of them, and ... slippers and dress. Then they gave us a number. My number was always twenty-three.”

*Lily Quoetone, Nahwooksy, published story, 1981*

### IMAGINE IF

A soldier showed up at your house and took you somewhere far away from your family. How would you feel? How do you think the American Indian kids felt? What would you have done?



New students bathing in tubs at Hampton Institute in Virginia, c. 1880-1890. National Anthropological Archives, National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., SI54,778.

“I still picture my folks to this day, just standing there crying, and I was missing them. I got on the train and I don't even know who was in the train because my mind was so full of unhappiness and sadness...”

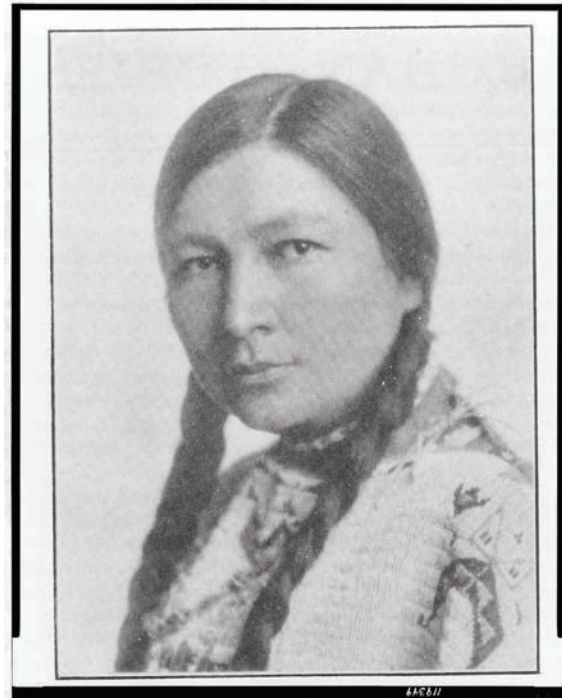
*Juanita Cruz Blue Spruce, Ohkay Owingeh Pueblo, Santa Fe Indian School student, 1915*

“The next day the torture began. The first thing they did was cut our hair...while we were bathing our breechclouts were taken and we were ordered to put on trousers. We'd lost our hair and we'd lost our clothes; with the two we'd lost our identity as Indians.”

*Asa Daklugie, Chiricahua Apache, 1886, taken from Fort Marion to Carlisle Indian School as a prisoner of war*

BELOW: Chiricahua Apache Children upon arrival at Carlisle Indian Industrial School from Fort Marion, Florida, c. 1886. J.N. Choate (Photographer), U.S. Army Signal Corps, War Department, Barry Goldwater Collection #GI-44, view 1, Arizona Historical Foundation, University Libraries, Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona.

BELOW RIGHT: Chiricahua Apache Children four months after their arrival at Carlisle Indian Industrial School, c. 1887. J.N. Choate (Photographer), U.S. Army Signal Corps, War Department, Barry Goldwater Collection #GI-44, view 2, Arizona Historical Foundation, University Libraries, Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona.



Zitkala-Sa (Gertude Bonnin), a Dakota Sioux leader and activist. n.d. Library of Congress.

“Since the day I was taken from my mother I had suffered extreme indignities. People has stared at me. I had been tossed about in the air like a wooden puppet. And now my long hair was shingles like a cowards! In my anguish I moaned for my mother, but no one came to comfort me. Not a soul reasoned quietly with me, as my own mother used to do; for now I was only one of many little animals driven by a herder.”

*Zitkala-Sa (Gertrude Bonnin), Sioux, c. 1900*





ABOVE: Annie Dawson, Carrie Anderson and Sarah Walker, 1878, upon arrival at Hampton Institute. Hampton University Archives, Virginia.

RIGHT: Annie Dawson, Carrie Anderson and Sarah Walker, c. 1878-1879, after becoming students at Hampton Institute. Hampton University Archives, Virginia.



“When you first started attending school, they looked at you, guessed how old you were, set your birthday, and gave you an age. Then they’d assign you a Christian name. Mine turned out to be Fred.”

*Fred Kabotie, Hopi, 1900, attended Santa Fe Indian School 1915-1920*

**IMAGINE IF**

You arrive at a new school and you are given a new name, new clothes and a haircut that make you look completely different. How would that make you feel? What would you think?

“It was very difficult for me at first, for students at the school were not allowed to speak the language of the Indians. At the time I understood nothing else.”

*Wayquahgeshig (John Rogers), White Earth Ojibwe, 1974*

BELOW: Children praying before bedtime at Phoenix Indian School, June 1900. National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C., 75-EXP-2B.

Students were only allowed to speak English and had to say Christian prayers every day.

Students were forbidden from dancing, singing or practicing any aspect of their religion or traditions.

The process of assimilation even included the games children played. From the beginning of the Indian boarding schools, teaching children sports was seen as an important way to teach them to be more like mainstream students and, at the same time, create a sense of school spirit. Pratt knew that athletics played a large role in children’s lives within their Native communities, and he wanted to redirect their physical energy and desire to play. It was at school that kids were introduced to organized sports such as baseball, basketball and football.





LEFT: Fort Shaw girls basketball team at the 1904 World's Fair. Missouri History Museum, St. Louis.

BELOW LEFT: Members of the Carlisle Indian School football team. (Left to right) Alexander Arcasa, Stansil Powell, Gus Welsh and Jim Thorpe, 1912. Albert A. Line Collection, Cumberland County Historical Society, Carlisle, Pennsylvania.



As time went on, sporting events were effective in unifying not only the school community but townspeople as well as Native tribes in support of school teams. Several students competed in the 1912 Olympics and won gold and silver medals.

Although the schools were not focused on the academic achievements of students, children were taught the basics of the Anglo approach to math, science, history and language. Schools that offered art and music did so based on Western practices so students studied European painters while copying their styles at easels and learned instruments that would be played at concert halls and in marching bands.

In this way, the day was spent teaching kids, implicitly and explicitly, that being a Christian American was superior to being an American Indian.

BELOW LEFT: Art teacher, Elizabeth H. Foster and art students at Carlisle Indian School, c. 1901. F. Johnston (Photographer), Cumberland County Historical Society, Carlisle, Pennsylvania.



BELOW: Chilocco school band, c. 1910-1913. Archives & Manuscripts Division, Oklahoma Historical Society.



Dear dad, I suppose you will be surprised to know that I am here. I know I have made a big mistake and it is hard for me to think of the grief it will cause you Dad. Dad I was discouraged [and] I just went mad. I realize what I have done and am very sorry. I'll go back next year and like it."

*a Flandreau Indian School runaway, 1931*

## Resistance

Students resisted in a variety of ways. Many children ran away and did their best to return to their families.

Children who remained at the school would speak to one another in their own language and practice their customs and traditions in a clandestine manner. Sometimes children went to the woods near the school to hold secret ceremonies and speak their Native languages. Other students found creating drawings of family members in their regalia as a way to remember home life.

When students were caught doing anything considered "Indian," they were severely punished. If they spoke their Native language, their mouth was washed with soap. Other punishments—for running away or misbehaving—included being locked up and going without meals.

For years students were told on a daily basis that everything Indian was bad and that the Christian American way of life was good. This is traumatic for self-identity. There were rare occasions where educators would encourage Native forms of expression; however, this was outside the original mission of the boarding schools.



Justino Herrera, Cochiti Pueblo. *Corn Dancer*, 1940. This student painting was made at Santa Fe Indian School. Heard Museum Collection, Gift of Valona Varnum, 4183-7.

## IMAGINE IF

You were no longer allowed to speak your language, play your favorite games or do any of the things you enjoy. What would you do? How would you feel? How do you think students at the Indian Boarding Schools felt?

## Difficult Conditions

The Indian Boarding Schools were founded on the idea of forced assimilation. Therefore, the adults at the school were empowered to use a variety of punishments to prevent students from resisting the schools' teachings. Corporal punishment was considered an acceptable form of discipline at the time and, among other forms of mistreatment, penalties for infractions included lashings, lock ups, and withholding meals. Also, students caught practicing their own tradition were routinely placed in solitary confinement.

While the schools were funded by the U.S. government, they were not a funding priority. School dormitories did not have enough beds. Overcrowding and lack of sanitation led to widespread infectious diseases. Tuberculosis, trachoma (an eye disease that can cause blindness), measles, mumps, and influenza were some of the diseases that were rampant at the schools. Many schools had a hospital and, since the mortality rates were so high, many boarding schools had their own graveyards.



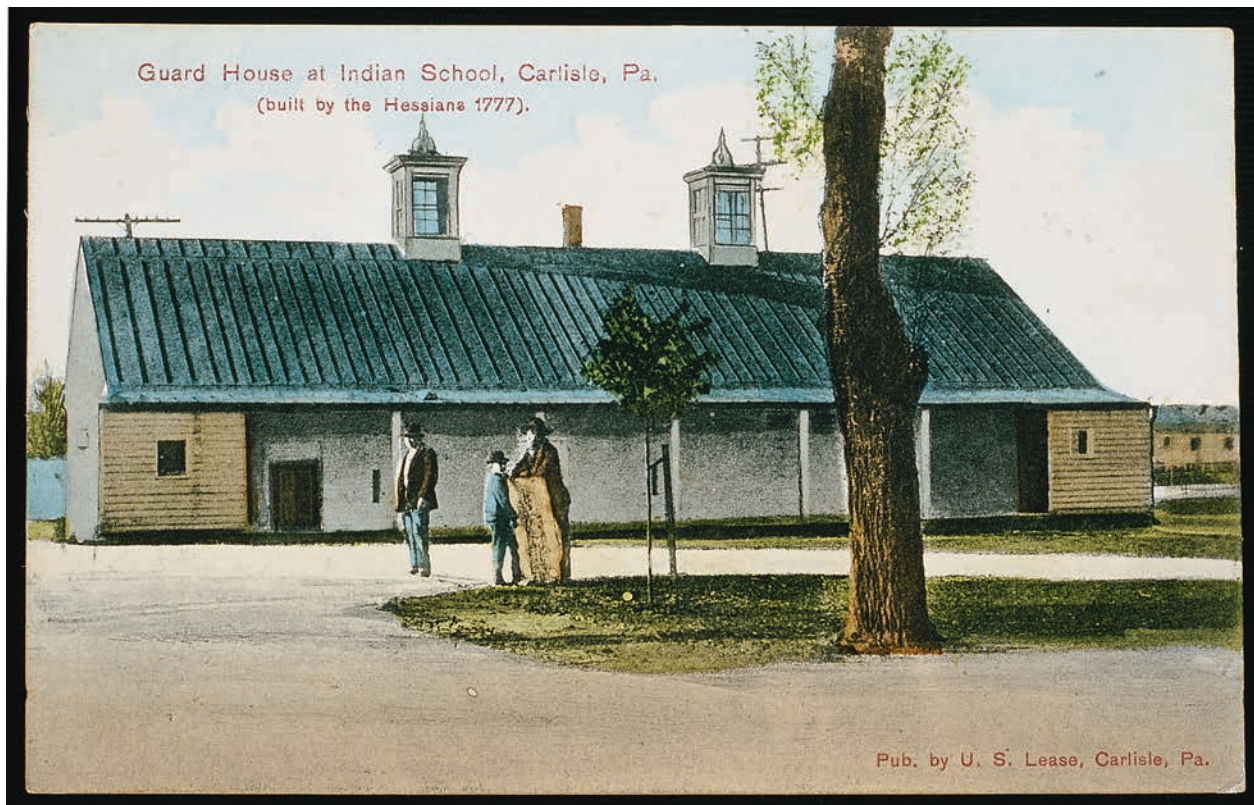
TOP: Students writing on the chalkboard in a classroom at Gila Crossing, Arizona, c. 1903-1905. Clarence W. Miller Photographic Collection.

ABOVE: Girl's dormitory at the U.S. Indian School in Fort Totten, North Dakota, 1913. State Historical Society of North Dakota.

BELOW: Guardhouse at Carlisle Indian School, 1908. Cumberland County Historical Society, Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

“Intimidation and fear were very much present in our daily lives. For instance, we would cower from the abusive disciplinary practices of some superiors, such as the one who yanked my cousin's ear hard enough to tear it...”

*Bernice Levchuck, Navajo, 1997  
in Reinventing the Enemy's Language*





ABOVE: Children's Graves at Carlisle Indian School Cemetery, c. 1900. Drex Brooks (Photographer), Sweet Medicine.

Malnutrition was common which left younger children more susceptible to falling ill and dying. During the first 60 years of the Indian Boarding Schools, hundreds of children passed away from these conditions.

Often, children fell ill and passed away without their parents being notified until it was too late.

“Your son died quietly, without suffering, like a man. We have dressed him in his good clothes and tomorrow we will bury him the way the white people do.”

*Richard H. Pratt*

Each school day presented challenges for students. They spent half of the day in classes and the other half doing laundry, gardening to provide the school with food, and cleaning the facilities. In the name of vocational training boys were taught school-approved farming methods, carpentry, shoemaking, stone masonry, and other skills needed to maintain the school.

Girls were taught sewing and cooking which they used for making clothes and cooking for the student body and staff. In addition, girls were made to perform other domestic tasks such as cleaning and washing. Girls were also taught secretarial skills so they would be employable after leaving school. There was a special emphasis on turning girls into good Christians with the understanding that they would be the biggest influence in the home on their partners and children.



ABOVE: Ironing at Gila Crossing Indian School, 1903-1905. Clarence W. Miller Photographic Collection.

BELOW: Two girls sewing, Gila Crossing Indian School, c. 1903-1905. Clarence W. Miller Photographic Collection.



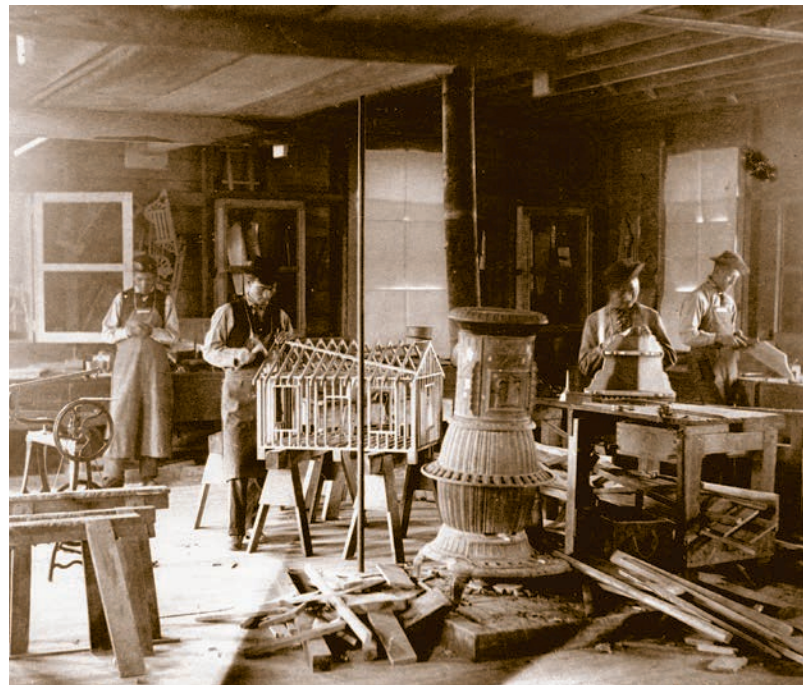


While it may have been called vocational training, students' manual labor was essential for the boarding schools to function.

Not only did students spend hours working at the school each day, the school also hired students out to local families in the summer for extremely low wages.

Pratt explained the thinking behind this program to the Board of Indian Commissioners in 1889: "My theme is 'a way out' or the 'outing system.' I say that if we take a dozen young Indians and place one in each American family, taking those so young they have not learned to talk, and train them up as children of those families, I defy you to find any Indian in them when they are grown. I believe if we took one of those Indians—a little papoose from his mother's back, always looking backward—into our families, face it the other way, and keep it under our care and training until grown, it would then be Anglo-Saxon in spirit and American in all its qualities. Color amounts to nothing. The fact that they are born Indian does not amount to anything."

Vocational training and the "outing system" continued for much of the boarding schools' existence.



And we stayed there until school was out. And a lot of times we never came home, we stayed and we worked. I used to work in Everett during the summer times in the fruit cannery

*Josephine Sparks, Suquamish, 1985*

TOP: Baking class at Flandreau Indian School, Flandreau, South Dakota, c. 1900. South Dakota State Historical Society-State Archives, RC125(7):2.1.5.1

CENTER: Trade School class in carpentry at Hampton Institute, c. 1800. Hampton University Archives, Virginia.

RIGHT: Student labor kept schools in operation. Here they mix concrete for floors at Phoenix Indian School, c. 1950. Bureau of Indian Affairs, Phoenix Area Office, Arizona.

## Returning Home, Facing Challenges

Indian boarding schools had lasting impacts on Native individuals, families, and communities. Some of the vocational training students received was out-dated or not of use in their home communities. Readjusting to living at home after being at a distant school for 5 or more years was difficult. Speaking their Native language did not come easily after years of immersion in English. They had been absent for some of the transitional ceremonies such as initiations and coming of age ceremonies. When they returned, many felt alienated and separate, while at the same time full of judgment for the “inferior ways” of their loved ones.

As Luther Standing Bear, a former Carlisle student, remembers, “All our relatives heard that I was coming home, and there was quite a gathering at my father’s place to greet me. Some of them were very glad to see me; others hesitated about shaking my hand. I found out later the reason for this. It seems that some of the returned Carlisle students were ashamed of their old people and refused to shake hands with them; some even tried to make them believe they had forgotten their Sioux language.”

Some former students looked down on their family and community members for wearing blankets, carrying baskets, and not wearing “proper” shoes. They were disconnected from their communities, strangers to their families, and strangers to themselves.

## The Meriam Report and Reforms

In 1928 the Meriam Report was issued. This report was officially titled “The Problem of Indian Administration” and was compiled by the Institute for Government Research. The report revealed the substandard conditions of American Indians across the United States. The report found that the U.S. government was failing to protect American Indians in all aspects including their land, resources, their cultures, and American Indians as individuals.

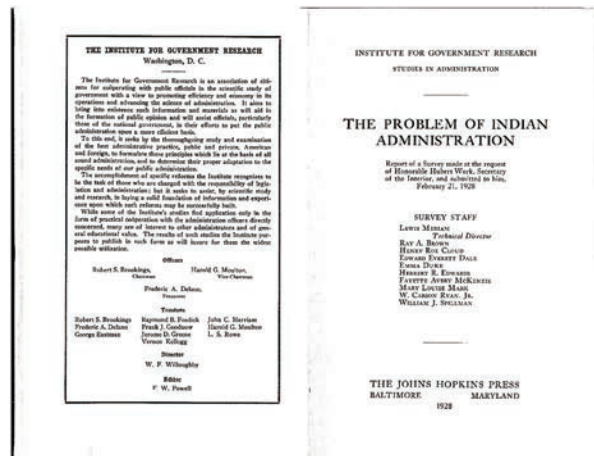
The Meriam Report also included the first investigative report of the overall workings of the Indian Boarding Schools. The report criticized the poor conditions the children were kept in and recommended that children attend schools closer to their families, learn about their own culture and history while studying, and be taught the skills they needed to adapt in their communities as well as in the mainstream United States. Those who had written the report recognized the damage the schools had caused children who did not fit in with their communities once they left school and returned home, and sought to prevent future students from being damaged similarly.

After the report was published, there was public outcry regarding the well-being of the students. The first significant reform was to provide students with



Standing Bear, son Luther, and Red Fish, n.d. John N. Choate (Photographer), Dickinson College Archives & Special Collections, CIS-P-0020.

Below: Meriam Report (The Problem of Indian Administration) 1928. John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, Maryland.



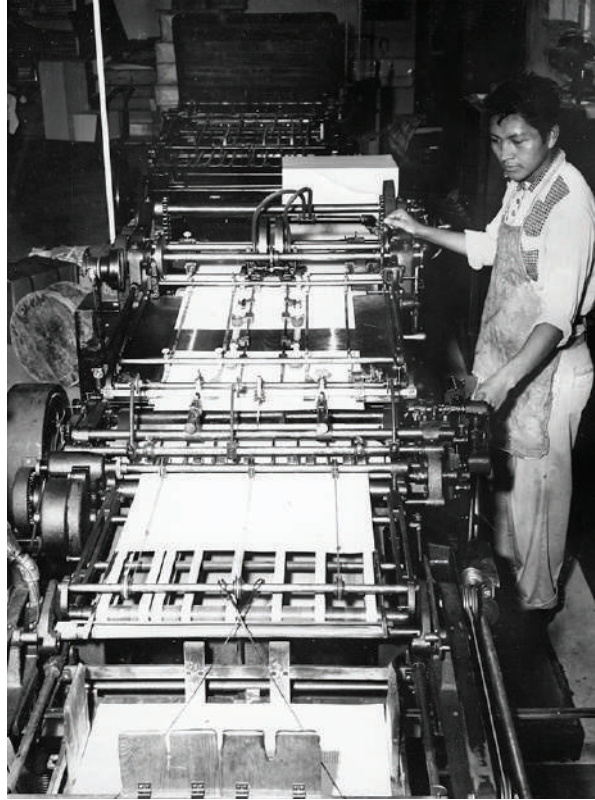
balanced meals and enough to eat. Children had their weight monitored and underweight children were fed in between meals. Doctors were hired to provide preventive and emergency care.

During the 1930s, also known as the Great Depression, the government did not invest in improving Indian boarding schools. The government chose to close down several schools instead. By 1941, the number of boarding schools had decreased from 77 schools serving 21,000 American Indian children to 49 schools with 14,000 students.

The Meriam Report recognized the need for reflection and reforms regarding the Indian boarding schools. The curriculum began allowing classes in Indian art and the use of bilingual texts. School clubs celebrating Native tradition were allowed, such as the "Indian Club" or an Apache dance group. Some schools even took measures to prepare students for tribal responsibilities once they left school. These changes were limited as Anglo-culture continued to dominate the instruction and culture of the boarding schools.

After World War II, the Indian boarding schools emphasized preparing students to live in cities. Boys learned trades such as printing, welding, bricklaying, and auto mechanics, in addition to the vocational training already taking place at the schools.

By the 1960s, parents and tribes became increasingly dissatisfied with how the Indian boarding schools were functioning, and their lack of participation in the schools. Many reservations no longer felt that the Indian boarding schools should operate without American Indian input and tribes began calling for American Indians to control the schools.



ABOVE: Student operating printing press at Phoenix Indian School, 1950-1960. Bureau of Indian Affairs, Phoenix Area Office, Arizona.



ABOVE: Students repairing a wall at Phoenix Indian School, n.d. Billie Jane Baguley Library and Archives, Heard Museum, RC284(1):1.320.



ABOVE: Students typing in classroom at Phoenix Indian School, c. 1956-57. Billie Jane Baguley Library and Archives, Heard Museum, RC284(1):1.467.

Vocational training of the type offered at Indian Boarding Schools should prepare Indian youth for effective citizenship more efficiently than any other method known. Indian youth is naturally shy and timid and needs to come in contact with tradesmen, tools, materials and processes... in order to make the adjustments necessary for social efficiency."

*Chilocco Indian Agricultural School, 1934 Annual Report*

The business that we were taught was manual labor, vocational. Girls were taught to be secretaries; that was it. Boys were taught welding, auto mechanics and bricklaying. These were the only things we were told we were good at. We were told not to aspire to be a doctor or a pilot because they said you were good with your hands. We weren't allowed choice only as far as it was manual labor or vocational training."

*Chilocco Indian Agricultural School, 1934 Annual Report*

## Native Control of Indian Boarding Schools

The struggle for Native American tribes to control the Indian boarding schools continued from the 1960s into the 1970s. They did not wish them closed as schooling was part of original treaty agreements with Native Americans in exchange for their land. Also, the resources and infrastructure of the boarding schools tended to be better funded than the reservation schools. American Indians did, however, push to control curriculum and transform the schools into places where students could receive a decent academic education while at the same time learn more about their heritage as a Native American and be proud of that heritage.

The Indian Boarding Schools that were created to change the Indian were ultimately transformed by Native Americans into institutions that served their communities, places that emphasized cultural heritage, practice and values, where students strengthened their sense of pride in being American Indian.

The American Indian controlled boarding schools ceased to teach Christianity in school but maintained the same academic subjects, sports

teams, visual and performing arts.

Clubs devoted to understanding Native American history, culture and identity continued to grow.

Under American Indian control, the schools improved their academics and included college prep courses which opened up greater opportunities for American Indians to study in higher education and obtain advanced degrees.

Boarding schools became a place where there was an open exchange of song and ceremony from different tribes. This cultural exchange enabled Native Americans to form a sense of unity and common identity while celebrating their tribal differences. Two examples of this are Native American powwows and the Native American Princess Pageant which is a source of empowerment and pride for many American Indians.



ABOVE: Students greet each other upon arrival at Phoenix Indian School, c. 1950s. Billie Jane Baguley Library and Archives, Heard Museum, RC284(1):1.11.

BELOW: Santa Fe Indian School Campus, November 26, 2017. Craig Smith (Photographer), Billie Jane Baguley Library and Archives, Heard Museum.



“...you meet people from different tribes. They all have like different religions and different stories and backgrounds.... It’s just fun.”

*Scott Dumars, Sisseton Dakota,  
Student Council president, Flandreau Indian School*

“I don’t think I appreciated my Indianness until I... became a senior in high school, when we had our Indian Club here, and I joined the Indian Club.”

*Ohkay Owingeh, Pueblo, student  
at Santa Fe Indian School, 1927*

“I live in a white society and it wasn’t working out for me. It wasn’t about my personality or who I was inside, it was the outside of me they judged. I felt comfortable with all these other Indians here so I stayed here[.] I came back every year.”

*Christine Begay, Navajo, student at  
Sherman Institute, 1999*



Miss Sherman at Sherman Indian High School, 1999. Billie Jane Baguley Library and Archives, Heard Museum, RC125(7):1.2.74.

## Enduring legacy of the Indian Boarding Schools

The history of the Indian Boarding Schools is complex, challenging and contradictory. Generations of Native Americans returned to their homes traumatized from their experience at the schools, and others discovered they no longer belonged in their communities. The impact this has had on Native Americans continues to be addressed through healing projects such as the Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition.

In contrast, some students did have positive experiences at the schools which gave them the ability to work and provide for themselves through specialized trades. Many returned home to their communities, while others lived off-reservation to find work. Boarding school alumni have worked as teachers, for tribal governments or have become tribal leaders.

And, in later years, the boarding schools provided an infrastructure for American Indian tribes to teach their history and culture to new

### IMAGINE IF

your school decides to include one aspect from your heritage in the school day. Is there something specific from your family background that you would like taught at school (a traditional instrument, cooking a specific meal, a type of art or craft)? Would that change how you feel about school?

generations as a source of empowerment and pride.

The schools enabled access to education beyond what the reservation schools were able to offer, and brought together members of different tribes from all over the country. The unifying of American Indians had a lasting impact. Many people from all over the country were brought together to become friends, fall in love and create a community after leaving the school.

In addition, uniting American Indians, providing English as a common language, and teaching students about government and politics, created the basis for Pan-Indianism that was fundamental to Native Americans organizing a movement to demand more rights in the 1960s and 1970s. This movement included the passage of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975, a law that enabled American Indians to assume control over the boarding schools.

Knowing the history of the Indian Boarding Schools is one way to incorporate the history of American Indians, both their struggles and their cultures, into our collective knowledge of U.S. history. This is our shared history.



Sherman Indian High School Cheerleaders, 1999. Billie Jane Baguley Library and Archives, Heard Museum, RC125(7):1.2.41.

BELOW: Graduation at Santa Fe Indian School, 1984. Harold Hanson (Photographer), Palace of the Governors Photo Archives (NMHM/ DCA), HP.2014.14.1383.

“ [Boarding schools] were started to stamp out the Indian from the Indian, you know, make us all into white people, and you know, it didn’t work. Actually... it was the exact opposite: it made us stronger as Indian People. It made us more aware of and more proud of who we were.”

*Ruthe Blalock Jones, Delaware/Shawnee/Peoria*



# Activity #1: Pre- Reading Questions

**Standards:** SS Strand 1, Concept 1, PO3

**Materials:**

Notebook and pen  
Chart paper or poster board  
Markers

**EXPLAIN:** Tell students they are about to learn about the boarding schools where American Indian children were placed over the course of about one hundred years.

**ASK:** Before beginning the Student Text, ask students to brainstorm (either individually, in pairs, or small groups) a list of questions they have regarding the topic.

**SHARE:** Ask students to share their questions and create a list of questions.

**DISPLAY:** Hang the questions somewhere visible in the classroom so students can reference the questions during the unit.

**GO A STEP FURTHER:** Make the activity into a game where students get 1 point for each question they thought of that no one else thought of. As students share their questions with the class have students signal if they have the same question and put a check next to their question if it's already been said, and a star if no one has. Consider giving a prize for the individual, partners, or small group that came up with the most original questions.

**GO ONE STEP FURTHER:** After finishing the Indian Boarding School Student Text, ask students to answer the questions and have the class share their answers.

## Activity #2: Essay

**Note:** This activity requires access to links on the Heard Museum Boarding School website that are still in progress. Links will be available soon.

**Standards:** SS Strand 1, Concept 1, PO5  
English 9-10.W.1

**Materials:**

- Indian Boarding Schools Student Text
- Interviews on Heard Museum Website
- Maps and Timeline on Heard Museum Website
- Notebook and pen or computer

**READ:** Have students read the Indian Boarding Schools Student Text and take notes while they read.

**EXAMINE:** The map and timeline on the Heard Museum website. Have students take notes.

**LISTEN:** To interviews with former boarding school students on the Heard Museum website. Have students take notes.

**ASK:** Students to read the following quote and then use the Student text as well as their notes to write an essay answering the following questions:

“ I don’t believe that we can talk too harshly about what we have suffered, we Indian people have suffered from that particular point in our history, I call it... the Hiroshima, of Indian education, because it basically destroyed the fiber of our family life.”

*Rosemary Christiansen, Minnesota, interviewed on National Public Radio’s All Things Considered, 1991*

Why would Christiansen say that the American Indian boarding schools “destroyed the fiber of our family life”? How so? Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?

**SHARE:** Have students share their essays with the class. If possible, display the essays somewhere in the classroom or in the school for others to read.

*Note: The length of the essay is at the teacher’s discretion. Since you know your group best, you should decide how many pages and drafts are required.*



## Activity #3: Create a Timeline

**Standards:** SS Strand 1, Concept 1, PO 4

**Materials:**

Indian Boarding School Student Text  
 Timeline graphic organizer included in this curriculum  
 Pen or colored pencils/markers

**EXPLAIN:** Let students know that they are going to use their knowledge of history to gain a deeper understanding of the Indian Boarding Schools and the American Indian experience

**READ:** The Student Text. Once students have finished, have them highlight the dates and important events mentioned in the text.

**CREATE:** A timeline of important events related to American Indians and the Indian Boarding Schools using the graphic organizer provided in this curriculum.

**SHARE:** Have students share their results. Are they generally the same? What are the differences? How do your students account for the differences?

**Note:** *This activity can be accomplished in one class period. However, it will probably be necessary to have students work in pairs or small groups to achieve this.*

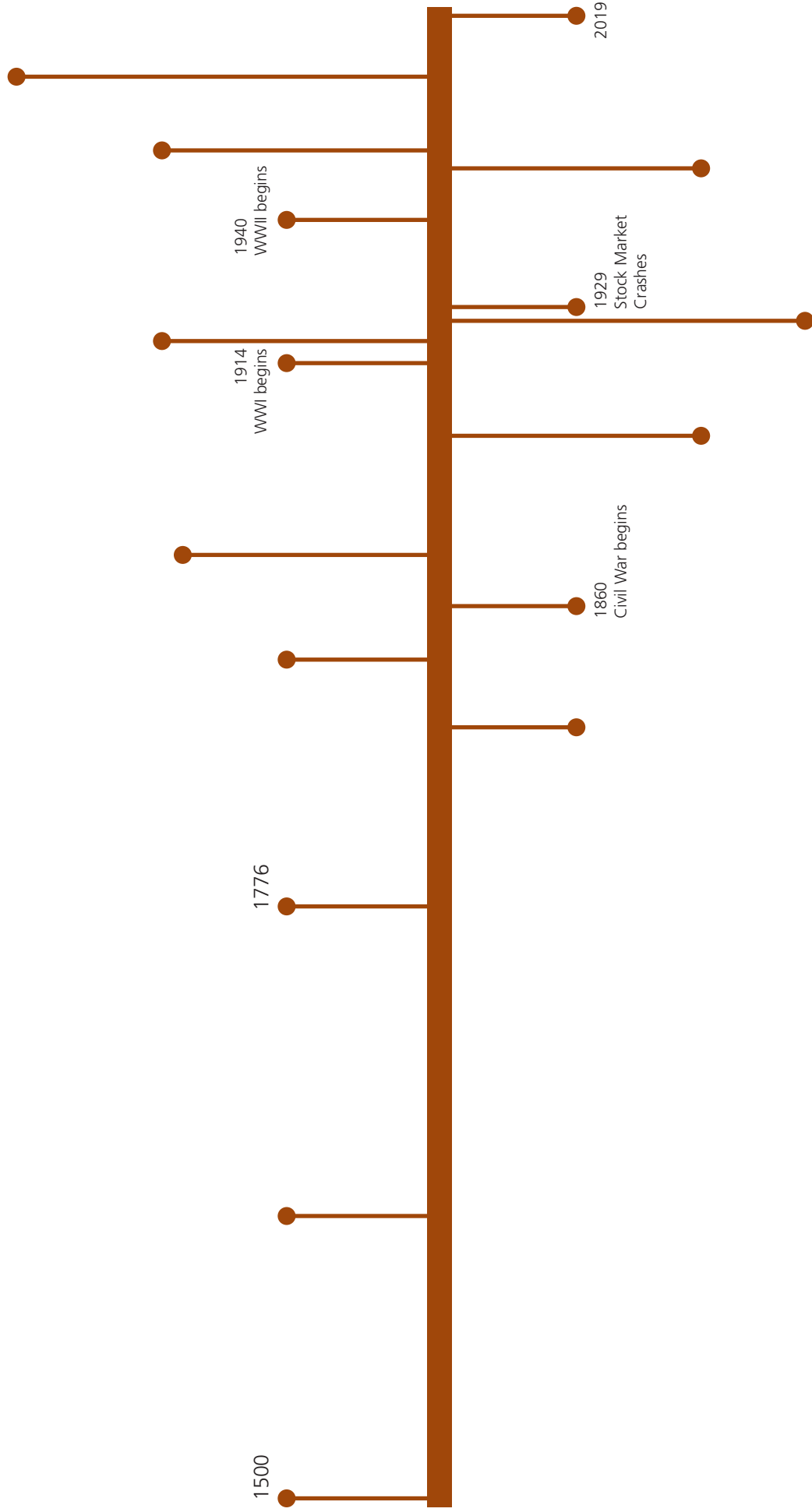
**GO A STEP FURTHER:** Have students create a poster of the five events they chose to illustrate with their supporting quotes. Posters can then be presented and/or displayed.

**Answers:** 1600s Mission Schools; 1819 Indian Civilization Act; 1830 Indian Removal Act; 1879 Carlisle Indian Industrial School opens; 1898 Compulsory attendance of boarding schools; 1917 Commission of Indian Affairs stops withholding rations, etc. from families; 1928 Meriam Report published; 1975 Indian Self-determination and Education Assistance Act; 1978 ICWA; 1990s several boarding schools close

# Graphic Organizer #1 Timeline

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Directions: Read through the Indian Boarding Schools Student Text and locate all of the dates and important events mentioned in the text. Add the dates and important events to the timeline BELOW. Then choose five events to illustrate with a supporting quote from the text.



## Activity #4: Photo Analyzing Essay

**Standards:** SS Strand 1, Concept 1, PO 5  
English 9-10.W.1

**Materials:**  
Indian Boarding School Student Text  
Notebook, pen or computer

**ASK:** Students to observe the photos in the Student Text. Ask them to closely examine the formal school photos and the informal photos taken of students at the school.

**WRITE:** Students will write an essay using what they have learned about the Indian Boarding Schools by answering the following questions:

What message(s) were the schools giving to the public through the official photo(s)? Does this message differ from the real life experience of the students? In what ways? (Use evidence from the photos to support your ideas).

**SHARE:** Have students share their essays with the class. If possible, display the essays somewhere in the classroom or in the school for others to read.

*Note: The length of the essay is at the teacher's discretion. Since you know your group best, you should decide how many pages and drafts are required.*

# Activity #5: Create a Photo Essay

**Standards:** VA.CR.1.7 b.

**Materials:**

- Indian Boarding Schools Student Text
- Graphic Organizer included in this curriculum
- Cameras (cell phone cameras are fine)
- Photo paper and a printer or access to printing photos at a local store
- Paper to mount photos

**EXPLAIN:** Tell students how each photo taken at an Indian Boarding School tells a limited part of the history; however, when several photos of the same topic are analyzed, a fuller explanation and understanding is developed.

**ANALYZE:** Use the graphic organizer to analyze the photos from the student text.

**CREATE:** Ask students to choose their own topic that they will focus on. Have students take a series of photos of one thing, person, neighborhood, etc. to capture the different sides/aspects and provide the viewer with as complete an understanding of the topic as possible. They should take as many photos as they feel necessary.

**EXHIBIT:** Print and exhibit the photo essays for the class to observe.

**SHARE:** Each student presents their photo essay and listens to their classmates' comments to see if they were effective in conveying what they wished about their topic.

**Note:** *The feedback from students can be verbal, or students can be asked to write down their impressions of each photo essay.*

If printing photos is too difficult, students can create their photo essays and present them digitally.

Here are some links to photo essays that teachers can share with students as examples:

Camille Seaman (Shinnecock, African-American)

<http://www.camilleseaman.com/Artist.asp?ArtistID=3258&Akey=WX679BJN&ajx=1>

Lynsey Addario

<http://www.lynseyaddario.com/>

Matika Wilbur (Swinomish, Tulalip)

<http://www.project562.com/>

Shane Brown (Cherokee)

<https://www.shanebrownphotography.com/portfolio.html?loopTrack=1&folio=PHOTOGRAPHY>

Tom Harjo Muscogee (Creek), Seminole, Shawnee, Quapaw, Delaware, Cherokee

<https://www.trexharjo.com/standing-rock-page-listing>

**GO A STEP FURTHER:** Have students write a short explanation to accompany their photo essay of what they were trying to show through their photographs. Each photo essay and writing can then be displayed and students can view the exhibition with notebooks, writing their observations and whether or not they agree with what the student claims to have shown in their photo essay.

**GO IN A DIFFERENT DIRECTION:** If students do not have access to cameras and/or the resources to create photo essays, students can create collages using newspapers, magazines, drawings, etc. The first steps (EXPLAIN and ANALYZE) are the same as ABOVE: Then, the lesson continues with the following:

**CREATE:** Ask students to choose their own topic that they will focus on. Have students create collages on poster board that show the different sides/aspects of a topic, theme, person, moment in history, neighborhood, etc., in order to provide the viewer with as complete an understanding of the topic as possible.

**SHARE:** Each student presents their collage and listens to their classmates' comments to see if they were effective in conveying what they wished about their topic.

**Note:** *The feedback from students can be verbal or students can be asked to write down their impressions of each collage.*

In addition, the teacher may want to create an example collage so students can have an idea of the wide opportunities to use images, text, photos, etc.

The materials for the collage are: the Indian Boarding School Student Text, the graphic organizer included in this curriculum, poster board, glue, scissors, as many magazines and newspapers as possible, photographs and/or other art that students may want to create and include in their collages.

# Graphic Organizer #2 Photo Essay

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Directions: Examine each photo carefully. Choose at least 8 that you would like to further investigate. In the space provided under each photo, write down all of your observations, reactions, ideas and emotions that come to mind as you look at each photo.

	Image Title/ Caption	Create a sketch of the image	Observations (describe what you notice)	Ideas (what does it make you think of?)	Emotions (How do you think the people feel?)
1					
2					
3					
4					

	Image Title/ Caption	Create a sketch of the image	Observations (describe what you notice)	Ideas (what does it make you think of?)	Emotions (How do you think the people feel?)
5					
6					
7					
8					

## Activity #6: Narrative

**Note:** *This activity requires access to links on the Heard Museum Boarding School website that are still in progress. Links will be available soon.*

### Standards:

SS Strand 1, Concept 1, PO 5  
 SS Strand 1, Concept 1, PO 4  
 English 9-10.RI.7  
 English 9-10.RI.9  
 English 9-10.W.3

### Materials:

Indian Boarding Schools Student Text  
 Interviews on Heard Museum Website  
 Maps and Timeline on Heard Museum Website  
 Notebook and pen or computer

**EXPLAIN:** Tell students that they will do an activity where they have to see the experience of the Indian Boarding Schools from the point of view of the students. Ask them to write down important facts and details, their observations, and any emotions or reactions of the students that stand out to them as you take them through the following preparation:

**READ:** The Student Text and Student Stories in the curriculum

**EXAMINE:** The photographs in the Student Text and the map of Indian Boarding Schools on the Heard Museum website

**LISTEN:** To interviews with former students from Indian Boarding Schools on the Heard Museum website

**WRITE:** Use your notes as well as the resources you have in front of you to write a narrative as if you are a student at an Indian Boarding School. You may choose which school and location, the age of the student and the student's name (you do not have to use your own name).

**Note:** *This activity can be done with students working together in pairs. However, since this is primarily an exercise in empathy and demonstrating knowledge of the topic, individual narratives would be more effective.*

*The length of the assignment is at the teacher's discretion. Since teachers know their students best, each teacher should decide the appropriate number of pages their students be required to write.*



## Recommended Websites

### Heard Museum Boarding School Page

### Heard Museum Digital Library

<http://cdm262401.cdmhost.com/cdm/landingpage/collection/p16286coll2>

### Heard Museum Traveling Panels

<https://heard.org/education/museumcomestoyou/>

### Canadian Museum for Human Rights

<https://www.humanrights.ca/>

### Native American Rights Fund

<https://www.narf.org/>

### National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition

<https://boardingschoolhealing.org/>

### Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center

<http://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/>

## Recommended Books for Students

**\*Please review grade level suggestions before assigning to students.**

Younger Audience Grade 1-3

Littlefield, Holie. 2001. Children of the Indian Boarding Schools 1879 to present. Carolhoda Books.  
Loyie, Larry. 2002. As Long as the Rivers Flow. A Greenwood Book.

Grade 4-6

Jordan-Fenton, Christy. 2011. A Stranger at home. Annick Press.  
Jordon-Fenron, Christy. 2010. Fatty Legs: A True Story. Annick Press.

Grade 6-7

Sterling, Shirley. 1992. My Name is Seepeetza. A Greenwood Book.

Grade 8-12

McCluskey, M.L. The McCluskey Boys: Adventures in an Indian Boarding School.  
Olsen, Sylvia. 2001. No Time to Say Goodbye. Sono Nis Press.

Grade 10-12

Giago, Tim. 2006. Children Left Behind: The Dark Legacy Of the Indian Boarding Schools. Clear Light Publishing.  
Dunbar-Ortiz, Roxanne. 2014. An Indigenous People's History of the United States. Beacon Press.

# Recommended Educational Materials for Teachers

## Video

Heape, Rich. Our Spirits Do Not Speak English (2008). Circle of life" series (Rich-Heape Films)

## Books

Adams, David Wallace. 1995. Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928. University of Kansas Press.

Bahr, Diana. 2014. The Students of Sherman Indian School: Education and Native Identity since 1892. University of Oklahoma Press.

Churchill, Ward. 2004. Kill the Indian, Save the Man: The Genocidal Impact of American Indian Residential Schools. City Lights Books.

Cobb, Amanda. 2000. Listening to Our Grandmothers' Stories. The Bloomfield Academy for Chickasaw Females, 1852-1949. University of Nebraska Press.

Coleman, Michael. 1993. American Indian Children at School, 1850-1930. University Press of Mississippi.

Fear-Segal, Jacqueline & Rose, Susan. 2016. Carlisle Indian Industrial School: Indigenous Histories, Memories, and Reclamations. University of Nebraska Press.

Lomawaima, K. Tsianina, Bryan McKinley Jones Brayboy, and Teresa McCarty (editors)  
Native American boarding school stories [Special issue of the Journal of American Indian Education;  
issued as volume 57, number 1, spring 2018]  
Minneapolis, MN : University of Minnesota Press, 2018

Mauro, Hayes Peter. 2011. The Art of Americanization at the Carlisle Indian School. University of New Mexico Press.

Parkhurst, Melissa. 2014. To Win the Indian Heart Music at Chemawa Indian School. Oregon State University Press.