

Indian Boarding Schools
Primary Source Documents

Directions: Use the primary documents to answer the following questions in **Cornell notes style** and **complete sentences**. You must include one piece of textual evidence to support your answer and include the author's name.

Beginning in the 1880s, the federal government attempted to "Americanize" Native Americans, largely through the education of Native youth. By 1900 there were thousands of Native Americans studying at almost 150 boarding schools around the United States.

Government Reasoning

Captain Richard Pratt founder of the Carlisle Schools

"The most effectual way of getting civilization into the Indian is to get Indian into civilization... Kill the Indian in him, and save the man...It is a great mistake to think that the Indian is born an inevitable savage. He is born blank, like all the rest of us. Left in the surroundings of savagery, he grows in savagery. Transfer the savage-born infant to the surroundings of civilization, and he will grow to possess a civilized language and habit. The school at Carlisle is an attempt on the part of the government to do this. Carlisle fills young Indians with the spirit of loyalty to the stars and stripes, and then moves them out into our communities to show by their conduct and ability that the Indian is no different from the white or the colored...it says to him that, if he gets his living by the sweat of his brow, and demonstrates to the nation that he is a man, he does more good for his race than hundreds of his fellows who cling to their tribal communistic surroundings...Indians cannot understand American citizenship theoretically taught to them on Indian reservations. They must get into the swim of American citizenship. They must feel the touch of it day after day, until they become saturated with the spirit of it and thus become equal to it. "

- 1. According to Captain Richard Pratt, what was the purpose of the Carlisle Boarding School?**

Parent Reactions to the Carlisle School: Sioux Indians

"My Dear Daughter- Ever since you left me I have worked hard and put up a good house, and am trying to be civilized like the whites, so you will never hear anything bad from me. When Captain Pratt was here he came to my house, and asked me to let you go to school. I want you to be a good girl and study. I have dropped all the Indian ways, and am getting like a white man, and don't do anything but what the agent tells me. I listen to him. I have always loved you, and it makes me happy to know you are learning. I get my friend Big Star to write. If you could read and write, I should be very happy. You Father- Brave Bull

Why do you ask for moccasins? I sent you there to be like a white girl and wear shoes."

- 2. Why did parents want to send their children to the Carlisle School?**

Student Memories of their experiences

Lone Wolf of the Blackfoot tribe, remembered:

"[Long hair] was the pride of all Indians. The boys, one by one, would break down and cry when they saw their braids thrown on the floor. All of the buckskin clothes had to go and we had to put on the clothes of the White Man. If we thought the days were bad, the nights were much worse. This is when the loneliness set in, for it was when we knew that we were all alone. Many boys ran away from the school because the treatment was so bad, but most of them were caught and brought back by the police."

Sun Elk, a Taos Pueblo Indian said of his time at the Carlisle School in the 1880s:

"A white man took us to the Carlisle Indian School and I stayed there for 7 years...they told us that Indian ways were bad. They said we must get civilized...It means "be like the white man." I am willing to be like the white man, but I did not believe the Indian ways were wrong. But they kept teaching us for seven years. And the books told us how bad the Indians had been to the white men- burning their towns and killing their women and children. But I had seen white men do that to the Indians. We all wore white man's clothes and ate white man's food, and went to the white man's church and spoke white man's talk. And so after a while we began to say Indians were bad. We laughed at our own people and their blankets and cooking pots and sacred societies and dances. I tried to learn the lessons."

Ojibwe student Merta Bercier wrote:

"Did I want to be an Indian? After looking at the pictures of the Indians on the warpath — fighting, scalping women and children, and Oh! Such ugly faces. No! Indians were mean people — I'm glad I'm not an Indian, I thought."

3. What were the students' experiences at the Indian Boarding Schools?

4. What memory of the children do you find most disturbing and why?

Elders Reactions to American Education

According to Benjamin Franklin, Native American elders in 1660s, when they were invited to send their sons to the College and William and Mary, told Virginia missionaries and government officials:

"But you, who are wise, must know that different nations have different conceptions of things: and you will therefore not take amiss, if our ideas of this kind of European education happen not to be the same with yours. We have had some experience with it. Several of our young people were formerly brought up at the Colleges of the Northern provinces; they were instructed in all your sciences, but when they came back to us, they were bad runners, ignorant of every means of living in the woods, unable to bear either cold or hunger, knew neither how to build a cabin, take a deer, or kill an enemy, spoke our language improperly, were therefore neither fit for hunters, warriors, nor counselors, they were totally good for nothing. We are however not the less —→

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obliged by your kind offer, though we decline accepting it, and to show our grateful sense of it, if the Gentlemen of Virginia will send us a dozen of their sons, we will take great care of their education, instruct them in all we know, and make men out of them.”

5. **How did the Native American elders view the changes their children experienced while at European/American schools?**

Indian Boarding Schools
Native American Boarding Schools Pictures

Use the pictures from the Carlisle Indian School to answer the following questions in **Cornell notes style** and **complete sentences**.

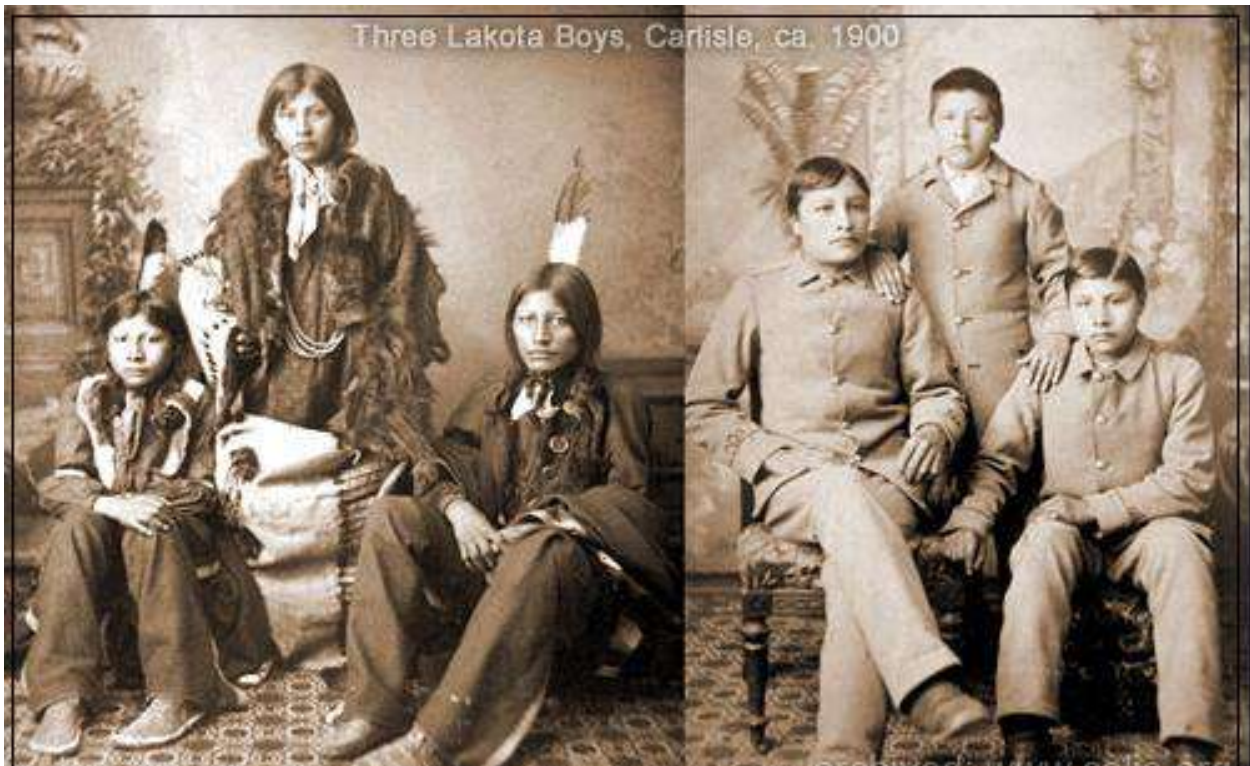
1. What were the photographers trying to convey (show) with the before and after photographs?
2. Why would the Indian Boarding Schools want to publish these photographs?
3. How was the education of Indian Boarding Schools different than what was taught on reservations? Why?
4. What differences between male and female education do you notice from the pictures?
5. On the wall are letters that read “Labor Conquers All Things,” what can you infer about what values the schools were trying to instill (teach)?

Essay Question

After you have completed the Boarding School Pictures question, using at least two of the documents (text or pictures), write 2 paragraphs (5-7 sentences each) answering the following question on a separate piece of paper:

“What did the United States hope to accomplish with the Indian Boarding Schools and did they accomplish it?”

Native American Boarding Schools Pictures



When the students first arrived, Captain Pratt often took photographs of them wearing traditional clothing. The students were photographed later, after they had been groomed and dressed like white people. Here is a Navajo student when he arrived, and the same young man three years later. ARMY WAR COLLEGE



postcards like these were popular because they showed the “before and after”

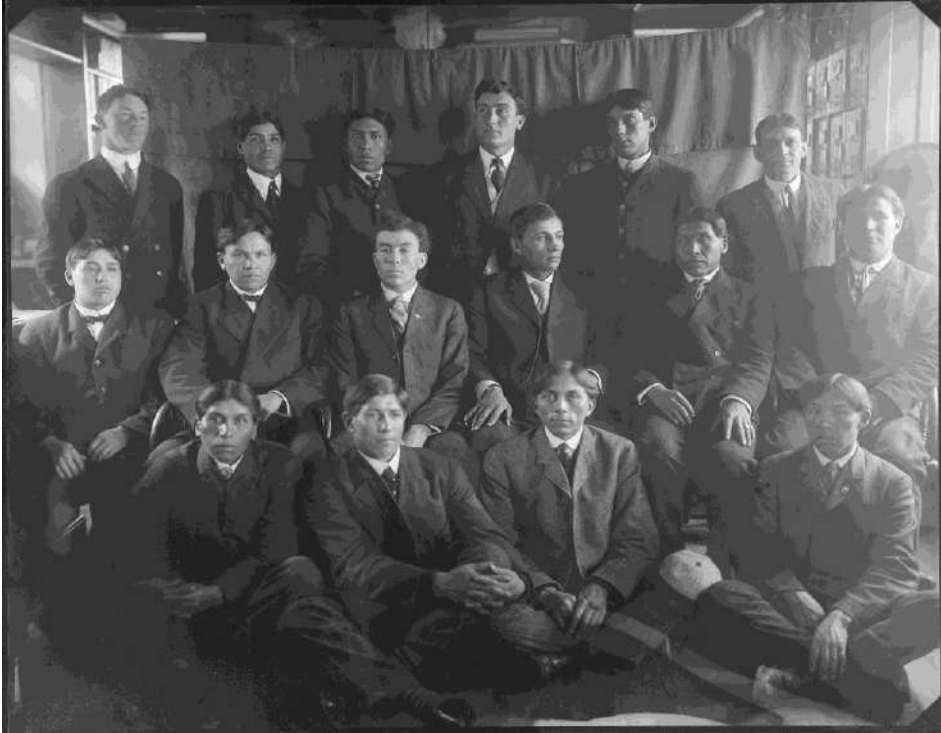


Thomas Moore before and after his entrance into the Regina Indian Residential School in Saskatchewan in 1874.

Library and Archives Canada / NL-022474



Carlisle Football team



Carlisle Debate Team



