

The truth about native american boarding schools



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In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, after the Indian Wars, the United States government outlawed the practice of traditional Native American religious ceremonies. The Government then established Christian boarding schools which Native American children were required, by law, to attend. While the intended purposes of the Native American boarding schools were to ??? Americanize??? and ??? civilize???, for some Native Americans the experiences and barbaric treatment that was inflicted upon them were anything but civilized. History Indian Wars is the name used to describe conflicts between the Federal Government and the indigenous people of North America. The Indian Wars generally resulted in the opening of Native American lands to continued colonization. The major before-after effect on Indians was the change from living wherever they wanted (and in many cases, having a nomadic lifestyle) to being put on reservations. A second important effect that goes along with the first, came when the Americans started to try to assimilate the Indians by changing their culture. This was done especially through the use of boarding schools where Indian children were expected to lose their Indian ways and become culturally more like white Americans. While documentation is limited to Native American life before European colonization a poem titled ??? My Dreams???, by Etta Bavilla found in *To Walk in Two Worlds-Or More Challenging a Common Metaphor Of Native Education*, by Rosemary C. Henze and Lauren Vanett gives us some insight on how it may have been: Leaders of the past, masked, Moved in rhythm with sounding drums, Our land was free and unspoiled, As animals that dwell in the sea. Harmony reigned among the

land, the sea, and my people. The peace is gone with forgotten dreams. The gold we seek cannot satisfy.

Stories and songs long to be in my veins, Yet I am lost. I cannot find the way. Mournful land touches shrieking sea as my people weep. Once we danced in the midnight sun, Found our joy in the land, respected ourselves. Now those memories are mere whispers. I ache to love what my mothers loved. Change has come.

Two worlds hold my people. Will there come a day of return When my people will know ancestral ways Will we see spiritual leaders dancing on mountains Will the ancient drums speak to our souls Will these things reawake in the hearts of my people A hunter waits for a seal and teaches us patience. My people must learn from both worlds as they collide Ettas poem, paints us a picture of a very tranquil and serene existence for Native Americans before European colonization. She also passively expresses the longing her and her people felt for the return of that life after colonization.

The taking of the children For many Native American children and the families from which they came, the attendance of Christian run boarding schools was only the second half of their horror. The ways in which the government went about removing the children from their homes was an extremely traumatic experience for all involved. While some families allowed their children to be taken away to the schools peacefully, there were others that attempted to hide their children away in order to prevent them from being taken. When this occurred children were forcefully taken away to the schools. In Going to Carlisle, a poem by Sandra LeBeau, she writes about the

experiences of her Grandpa Brave on the night he was taken away to the Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania.

Sandra's grandfather was taken at the age of seven and did not return to his family until the age of twenty-one...

Soldiers came that afternoon that's how he got his name. When the men were gone. The second time, soldiers kicked him. Only women, pounding chokecherries in the eye, through the wagon cover.

for patties, and the old men. After that, we only looked out at night. Asleep in the August shade, in the morning they gave us coffee. We were left in camp with us. and cold biscuits, then nothing else all day. We tried to run; then fight. At night we spread blankets under the wagons like our uncles taught us, and drew paths home through the stars. but they captured us- The girls mourned as for the dead; even the girls. The Milky Way echoed their cries. Our mothers wailed and cut their hair; Most of all I miss the sweet, warm milk. We could hear them from the wagons from my mother's breast. Looks-Out-Twice saw them, I knew we would all die. Sandra's words capture the true horror felt by her grandfather and his people on the day he was taken. She describes to us the violence inflicted upon Native Americans before even entering the boarding schools.

However, nothing could prepare them for what was to come. The boarding schools proved to be a place where there would be none of the tranquility and comfort that was known to Native Americans before colonialism. Purpose The boarding schools were introduced to the Native Americans as a way to educate, civilize, and transform their ways of life into that more suitable for <https://assignbuster.com/the-truth-about-native-american-boarding-schools/>

coexistence with European America. In order for this to happen at the boarding schools the officials had to break the strong spirit of the Native American. The boarding schools were a way to keep the communities on Reservations in compliance with White Americas laws.

After all most people would remain in a docile and agreeable state if their children were practically being held hostage by the government. A quote by Charla Bear , in, American Indian Boarding Schools Haunt Many, proves this point, ??? They very specifically targeted Native nations that were the most recently hostile.....

There was a very conscious effort to recruit the children of leaders, this was also explicit, essentially to hold those children hostage. The idea was it would be much easier to keep those communities pacified with their children somewhere far away??? (2). While this factor was a huge part of the United States Governments reasoning behind the boarding schools, as mentioned before another reason was to ??? civilize???. By civilizing, the intention was to change the Indians way of life, the way they thought, the way they spoke, the way they dressed, and the way they prayed.

To condition the children to these changes was an easy way to ensure that future generations would possess the so called ??? civilized qualities??? that the government desired. An Army officer named Richard Pratt, founded the first of these schools. He based it on an education program he had developed in an Indian prison (Bear 1).

In 1892 Pratt came up with a motto which was , ??? Kill the Indian.... Save the Man???. Pratts philosophy was still common fifty years later.

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Abuse Once arriving at the boarding schools the Native American children experienced a long list of abuses which included, but were not limited to, excruciating labor, physical abuse, as well as sexual abuse and harassment. For generations school officials tried to basically beat the Indian out of them. In *Civilize Them With a Stick*, author Mary Crow Dog, describes in detail the abuse that was inflicted upon her at the school and states that her mother and grandmother, whom had also attended the same boarding school were also abused during their stay. ??? They used a horse and buggy whip on my grandmother.... she was put back in the attic???" for two weeks???" (Crow Dog 305).

One can only imagine the severe damage that a horse whip would cause to the human flesh of a child. While still young the children has very little defense against the abuse that they were subjected to, but as they grew older and stronger they would often rise up against school officials in self defense, resulting in violent encounters. The nuns and the girls in the two top grades were constantly battling it out physically with fists, nails, and hair-pulling (Crow Dog 307).

Education Systems When we think of a school, we think of a place where one can learn a curriculum of academics. This however, was not the case at the Native American boarding schools. The school systems really didnt emphasis academics at all, instead the systems were geared more towards the outward appearance of civilization. This left Native Americans at a huge disadvantage. If they lacked education and they were being stripped of their culture then their future as true Native Americans was very bleak. In an essay titled, *Educating Indian Girls at Nonreservation Boarding Schools 1878-*
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1920, author Robert A. Trennert explains the ways the boarding school targeted Indian girls with hopes to annihilate the Native American culture.

The concept of educating Native women first gained momentum among eighteenth-century New England missionaries who recommended Indian girls might benefit from formal training in housekeeping..... by the 1840s the federal government had committed itself to educating Indian girls in the hope that woman trained as good housewives would help their mates assimilate (271-272). This clearly demonstrates how the lack of Native American education at the boarding schools helped aid the government in the repression of the culture and beliefs of Native Americans. Conclusion Native American boarding schools arent something that most other Americans are taught about in grammer school history books.

Though many people, especially todays youth know very little about the many adversities Native Americans had to overcome, they are a very real part of the Native American past. The horrific times spent at the boarding schools will surly haunt many American Indians for a long time to come. These establishment have left behind a terrible legacy that has ultimately become part of the Native American identity. Works Cited Henze, Rosemary C. and Vanett, Lauren. ??? To Walk in Two Worlds or More???.

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