

Indian Children and families

- How did we get here?
- Where are we today
- What direction should we be headed?

The Curious Paradox

A Brief History of the Boarding School Policy

The Indian Boarding School policy has been a collaboration of the Christian churches and the federal government since its earliest inception, beginning with the Indian Civilization Act Fund of March 3, 1819.⁽¹⁾

The Act's purpose was the "civilization" of Native Americans; transforming them into Christian farmers or laborers.

The role of Churches

Churches were funded by the federal government to accomplish this transformation.

- The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) was created in 1824, within the Department of War, primarily to administer the funds to the churches from the Civilization Fund.⁽²⁾
- In 1824, the Indian Civilization Fund subsidized 32 schools that enrolled more than 900 Indian children. By 1830, the Indian Civilization Fund supported fifty-two schools with 1,512 enrolled students.⁽³⁾

There was “some” disagreement...

- “The Indians have a right, under the Constitution, as much as any other person in the Republic, to the full enjoyment of liberty of conscience; accordingly they have the right to choose whatever Christian belief they wish, without interference from the Government.”⁽⁷⁾

In 1872, the Board of Indian Commissioners allotted seventy-three Indian agencies to various denominations:

- Methodists fourteen agencies in the Pacific Northwest (54,743 Indians),
- Orthodox Friends ten (17,724),
- Presbyterian nine in the Southwest (38,069),
- Episcopalians eight in the Dakotas (26,929),
- Catholics seven (17,856),
- Hicksite Friends six (6,598),
- Baptists five in Utah, Idaho and the Indian Territory (40,800),
- Reformed Dutch five (8,118),
- Congregationalists three (14,476),
- Christians two (8,287),
- Unitarians two (3,800),
- American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions in the Indian territory of Oklahoma (1,496),
- Lutherans one (273). ⁽¹³⁾

Education as a part of the “civilizing” function



CROW FOOT
Son of Sitting Bull.
Killed with his father on Dec. 15, 1890 by
Indian Police. Crow Foot surrendered his
father's gun to Major Beatherton at West

“If it be admitted that education affords the **true solution** to the Indian problem, then it must be admitted that the **boarding school** is the very key to the situation.

However excellent the day school may be, whatever the qualifications of the teacher, or however superior the facilities for instruction of the few short hours spent in the day school is, to a great extent, offset by the habits, scenes and surroundings at home — if a mere place to eat and live in can be called a home. Only by complete isolation of the Indian child from his savage antecedents can he be satisfactorily educated. . . .”

— John B. Riley, Indian School Superintendent⁽¹⁴⁾

“If it be admitted that education affords the true solution to the Indian problem, then it must be admitted that the boarding school is the very key to the situation.

However excellent the day school may be, whatever the qualifications of the teacher, or however superior the facilities for instruction of the few short hours spent in the day school is, to a great extent, **offset by the habits, scenes and surroundings at home** — if a mere place to eat and live in can be called **a home**. Only by complete isolation of the Indian child from his savage antecedents can he be satisfactorily educated. . . .”

— John B. Riley, Indian School Superintendent⁽¹⁴⁾

“If it be admitted that education affords the true solution to the Indian problem, then it must be admitted that the boarding school is the very key to the situation.

However excellent the day school may be, whatever the qualifications of the teacher, or however superior the facilities for instruction of the few short hours spent in the day school is, to a great extent, offset by the habits, scenes and surroundings at home — if a mere place to eat and live in can be called a home. **Only by complete isolation** of the Indian child from his savage antecedents can he be satisfactorily educated. . . .”

— John B. Riley, Indian School Superintendent⁽¹⁴⁾

BIA boarding schools

BIA boarding schools



1878 the Hampton Institute, a school for freed slaves, accepted Indian prisoners in an assimilation experiment.







Still being separted from their families, Native Americans are stripped of their culture & religion by schools.

**In 1879 Carlisle Indian School,
patterned after the military
model, opened.**



Education was supposed to be the Solution to the “Indian Problem”



...in the museum at Haskell



The Goal Was Cultural eradication.

Children were punished for speaking their native language, banned from acting in any way representative of traditional or cultural practices, stripped of traditional clothing, hair and all things and behaviors reflective of their culture.





**Reverend A. J. Lippincott, at a Carlisle
commencement, 1898.⁽¹⁰⁾**

Abuse and neglect.

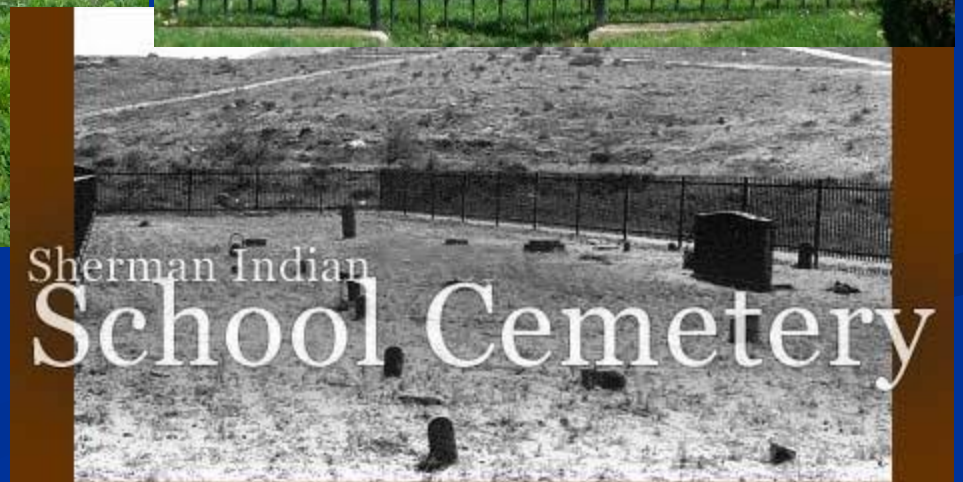
- **Children were bullied and assaulted by the adults as well as by older children under the modeling and instruction of staff.**
- **They observed and suffered physical, emotional, psychological and sexual abuse.**
- **Willful over-enrollment at Carlisle led to insufficient supplies, unsanitary conditions, high rates of illness, lack of food sanitation, and a disregard for policies meant to safeguard student health. ⁽¹¹⁾**

Many died of disease and broken hearts.



- **There are reports of the disappearance of children born to boarding school students as the result of rape. ⁽⁷⁾**
- **Unaccounted for thousands of children died from disease, malnutrition, loneliness and abuse.**
- **Survivors reported that many of the dead were buried anonymously, some in mass graves, on the grounds of the residential schools.**

The remains of thousands of Native children have never been reunited with their families and tribes.



Sherman Indian
School Cemetery

By 1890 attendance was enforced through threats of cessation of rations and supplies.



Involved Parents: Nineteen Hopi men designated as "Hostiles" were taken into custody by the U.S. Army on November 25, 1894 and incarcerated at **Alcatraz**. Their crime - they opposed the forced removal and education of their children in government boarding schools.



- **The terms of their confinement on Alcatraz dictated that they were to be "held in confinement, at hard labor, until ... they shall show ... they fully realize the error of their evil ways ... [and] until they shall evince, in an unmistakable manner, a desire to cease interference with the plans of the government for the civilization and education of its Indian wards." The men remained on the Rock for seven months.**
 - *Craig Glassner*, park ranger, Alcatraz Island.

- The terms of their confinement on Alcatraz dictated that they were to be "held in confinement, at hard labor, until ... they shall show ... **they fully realize the error of their evil ways ...** [and] until they shall evince, in an unmistakable manner, a desire to cease interference with the plans of the government for the civilization and education of its Indian wards." The men remained on the Rock for seven months.
 - *Craig Glassner*, park ranger, Alcatraz Island.

- **The terms of their confinement on Alcatraz dictated that they were to be 'held in confinement, at hard labor, until ... they shall show ... they fully realize the error of their evil ways ... [and] until they shall evince, in an unmistakable manner, a desire to cease interference with the plans of the government for the civilization and education of its Indian wards.'** **The men remained on the Rock for seven months.**
 - *Craig Glassner*, park ranger, Alcatraz Island.

Early “approved” curricula prohibited teaching of reading & writing.



Early “approved” curricula prohibited teaching of reading & writing.



Early “approved” curricula prohibited teaching of reading & writing.



**Succeeded in breaking
intergenerational teaching in Indian
communities. Language, religious
practices, cultural knowledge were
targeted**



Part of the process of acculturation was to hire children out as servants, cleaning women, and farm hands.

CARLISLE INDIAN SCHOOL

CARLISLE, PENNSYLVANIA Nov. 8 1900

M. FRIEDMAN, SUPT.

Sir:

I want to go out into the country.

If you will send me I promise to OBEY MY EMPLOYER, TO KEEP ALL THE RULES OF THE SCHOOL.

I will attend Sunday School and Church regularly.

I will not absent myself from my farm home without permission of my employer and will not loaf about stores or elsewhere evenings or Sundays.

I will not make a practice of staying for meals when I visit my friends.

I will not use tobacco nor any spirituous liquors in any form.

I will not play cards nor gamble, and will save as much money as possible.

If out for the winter I will attend school regularly and will do my best to advance myself in my studies.

I will bathe regularly, write my home letter every month, and do all that I can to please my employer, improve myself and make the best use of the chance given me.

Very respectfully,

Alice M Bellanger, Pupil.

NOTE:—This request is to be signed in triplicate, one copy to be kept by pupil, one retained in Superintendent's office, and one sent to employer.

Generations learned to parent from BIA dorms





The failure of Federal oversight.

The Problem of the Indian Administration, known as the 1928 Miriam Report (Commissioned by the Secretary of the Interior in 1926) concluded that:

“The survey staff finds itself obligated to say frankly and unequivocally that the provisions for the care of the Indian children in boarding schools are **grossly inadequate.**”

The boarding schools provided poor diet, were overcrowded, did not provide sufficient medical services, and were supported by student labor.

No meaningful change resulted.

Indian Education: A National Tragedy, a National Challenge,

the 1969 Kennedy Report declared Indian education "a national tragedy."

Teachers in 1969 still saw their role as that of “civilizing the native.” Schools failed to “prepare students academically, socially, psychologically, or even vocationally for the urban life to which the schools directed them. As a result, many returned to their reservations disillusioned, to spend the rest of their lives in economic and intellectual stagnation.”

The Legacy of the Boarding Schools.

- **Those victimized** in the schools, their children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, have become the legacy of the boarding schools and the federal policy that established and sustained them.
- Many of those that returned to their communities came as **wounded human beings**.
- Denied the security and safety necessary for healthy growth and development, they retained only fractured cultural skills to connect them with their families and communities.

The Legacy of the Boarding Schools.

- **Those victimized** in the schools, their children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, have become the legacy of the boarding schools and the federal policy that established and sustained them.
- Many of those that returned to their communities came as **wounded human beings**.
- Denied the security and safety necessary for healthy growth and development, they retained only fractured cultural skills to connect them with their families and communities. **[Read: resiliency]**

The Legacy of the Boarding Schools.

- For many of the girls and boys, **the only touch** they received from the small population of adults stationed at the schools, were the beatings or, perhaps worse, forced sexual contact with adults, or older students who themselves had been victims.
- Kept at the boarding school year round, many grew up **solely in the company** of other children, under the control of a few adults, who shared the perception that their wards were savages and heathens to be managed, tamed and “civilized”.

The Legacy of the Boarding Schools.

- The survivors of boarding schools were left with varying degrees of scars and skills, but most profoundly, of **psychological subordination**.
- Many report **feeling self-hatred** for being Indian; Bereft of spirit, knowledge, language and social tools to reenter their own societies.
- With only limited labor skills, exacerbated by the subordinated spirit trained into them, too many carried **undefined and unremitting anxieties** that drove them to alcoholism, drug abuse, violence against their own families and communities, and suicide.

Today

- We have learned little from the lives altered by policies targeted at removing children from “problem” homes. [all kids in the system today?]
- Did removal work for Indian children?
- Now we are removing other children with the same notion of “saving” them
- Layman’s definition of “insanity”
- Doing the same thing, over and over...
 - And Hoping for a Different Result

Currently in Child Welfare

- We know children do best in families
- And yet we continue to place children in foster care and institutions
 - Even very young children
 - Older children as “placements”

Today

- ~~ONE HALF MILLION~~ **420,000** children in foster care – Unclaimed children
 - 800,000 during the year
 - Twice number from 1980s
- Average child spends
 - 2 yrs in foster care & 3 placements
- 20%
 - Spend over 5 years in foster care

Problem : Foster Care

- **Children growing up without families they can count on**
 - **[NWest Foster Care Alumni Study]**
 - [ave. 24.2 years]
 - **Mean length of time in care: 6.1 years**
 - **Mean placement change: 1.4 per year**
 - **65% experienced 7 or more school changes**
 - **Same HS “completion” rate, but 6x GED rate*****

Problem : Foster Care

- 1.8% complete bachelor's degree
- Within 12 months of study: 54.4% w/ diagnosed disorders
 - 25.2% PTSD [2x Vietnam vet rate]
 - 20.1 % Major depression
 - 17.1% social phobia
- Higher unemployment rate
- 16.8 % public assistance
- 33.2% at or below poverty level
- 33% no health insurance

Problem – aging out

- 23,000 will age out of the “system”
- “Aging out” of system carries risks
 - Who among us would be able to make only “good” decisions at 18 or 19?
 - Correct and learn from our mistakes?
 - Survive without our own “cheerleaders” encouraging us?
 - Not give up when life knocks us down and no one picks us up?

Problem :

- Risks for 23,000 will age out of the “system”
- 60% of kids who age out will be:
 - Homeless
 - In jail
 - Dead
- Relationships can make a difference

Update

- Numbers:
- WestED bulletin published Jan 2012:
 - Within 2 – 4 years –
 - 51 % unemployed
 - 25 % homeless
 - 20 % incarcerated

Spirit of ICWA

- **Preserving or Re-building the connections** necessary for our children to be good parents when it is their turn
- **Active Efforts – for all**

Goals

- **A better life**
- **Safety**
- **Well-being**
- **When it is their turn-**
- **These children should be ready to be good parents**
 - **...and grandparents**

**OUR CHILDREN
ARE NOT YOURS TO TAKE**

RESPECT THE INDIAN CHILD WELFARE ACT OF 1978
RESPECT TRIBAL SOVEREIGNTY



RESPECT TRIBAL SOVEREIGNTY
RESPECT THE INDIAN CHILD WELFARE ACT OF 1978

RESPECT THE INDIAN CHILD WELFARE ACT OF 1978