

Boarding Schools and Broken Promises: Researching Indigenous and Tribal History in Government Documents

Hon. Eugenia Charles Newton, Navajo Nation Council

Rob Mead, State Law Librarian, Washington Supreme Court

and Depository Library Council Member



- Interior Secretary Deb Haaland is the first indigenous cabinet secretary, sworn in on March 23, 2021
- Member of Pueblo of Laguna
- 35th generation New Mexican
- Elected to the U.S. House in 2019, she is the first indigenous woman to have served as Representative



Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative Investigative Report

May 2022

- Volume 1 released May 11, 2022
- https://www.bia.gov/sites/default/files/dup/inline-files/bsi_investigative_report_may_2022_508.pdf

Secretary Haaland - “The consequences of federal Indian boarding school policies—including the intergenerational trauma caused by the family separation and cultural eradication inflicted upon generations of children as young as 4 years old — are heartbreaking and undeniable. We continue to see the evidence of this attempt to forcibly assimilate Indigenous people in the disparities that communities face. It is my priority to not only give voice to the survivors and descendants of federal Indian boarding school policies, but also to address the lasting legacies of these policies so Indigenous Peoples can continue to grow and heal.”

Historical Background

- Indigenous Population Decline of 95% by 1900

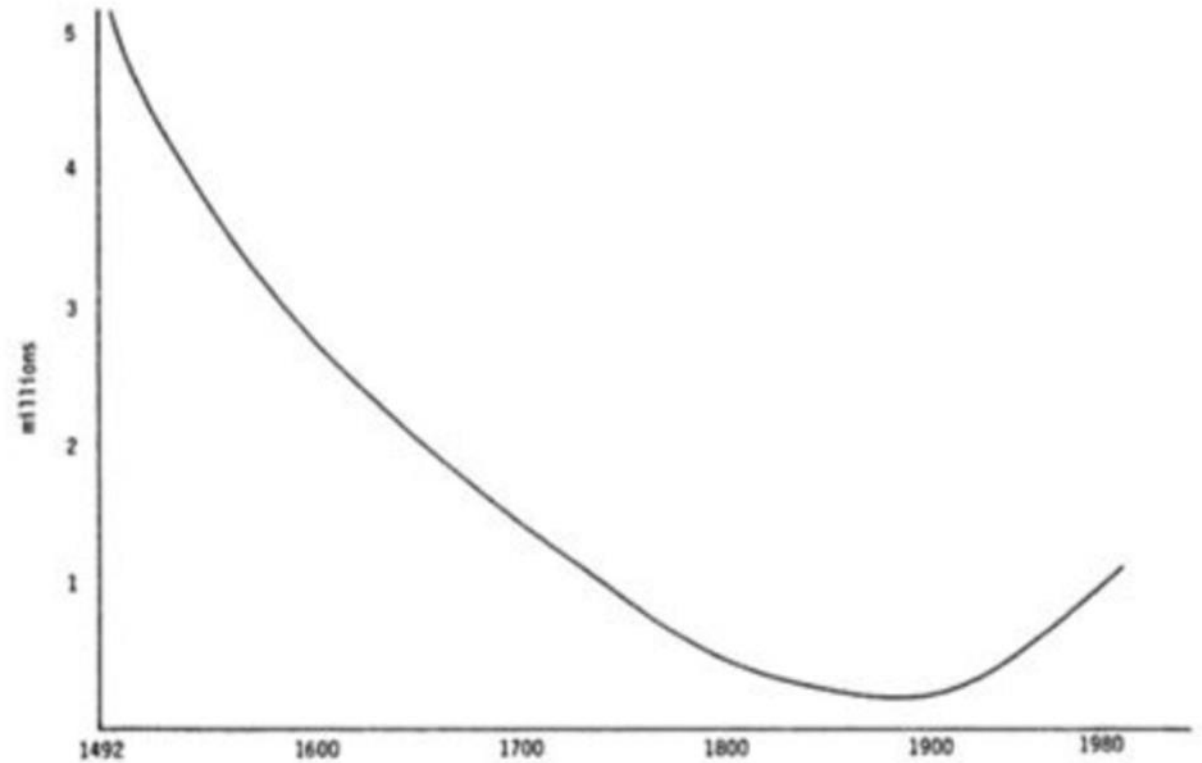


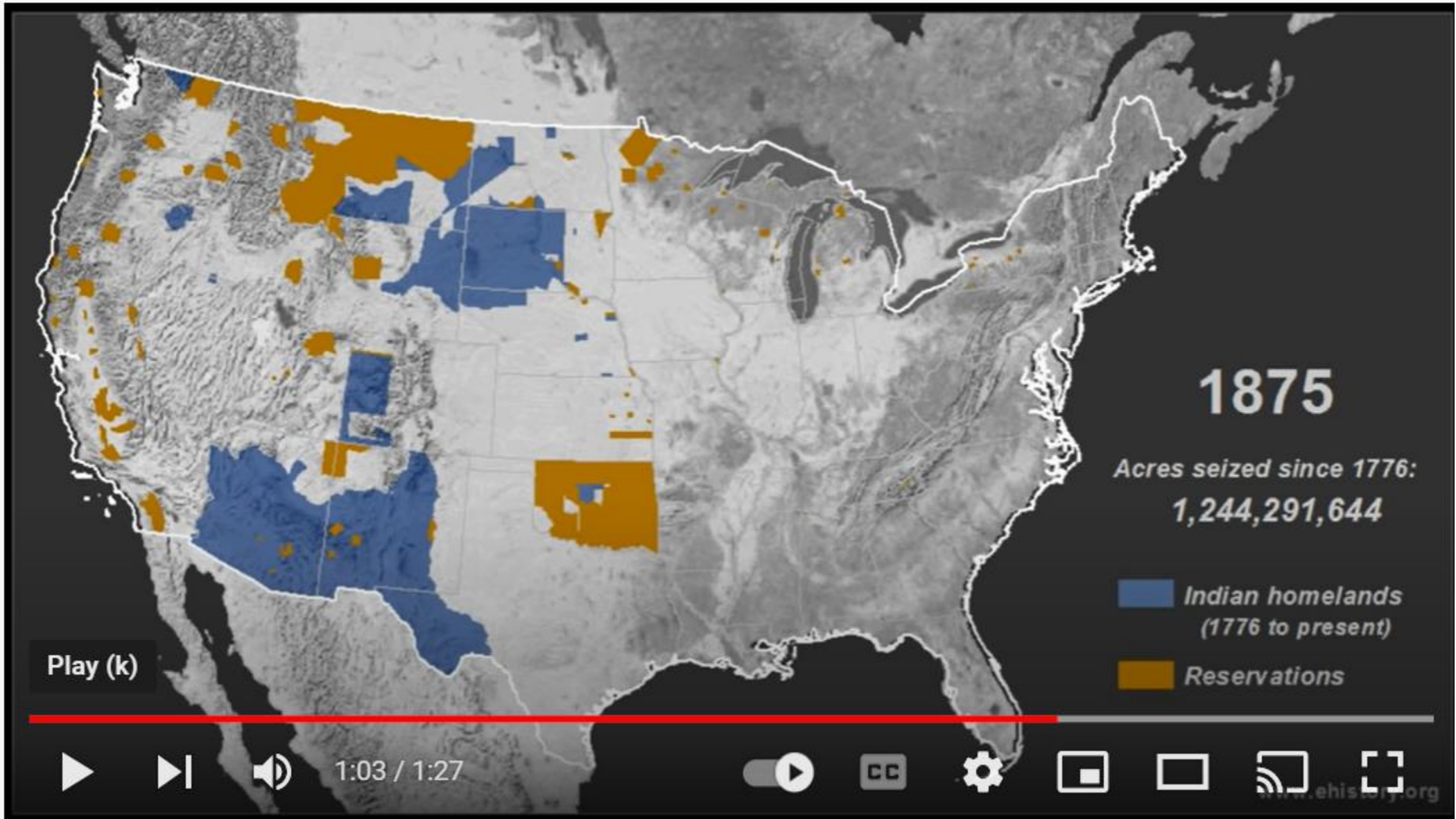
Fig. P-1. American Indian Population Decline and Recovery in the United States Area, 1492–1980

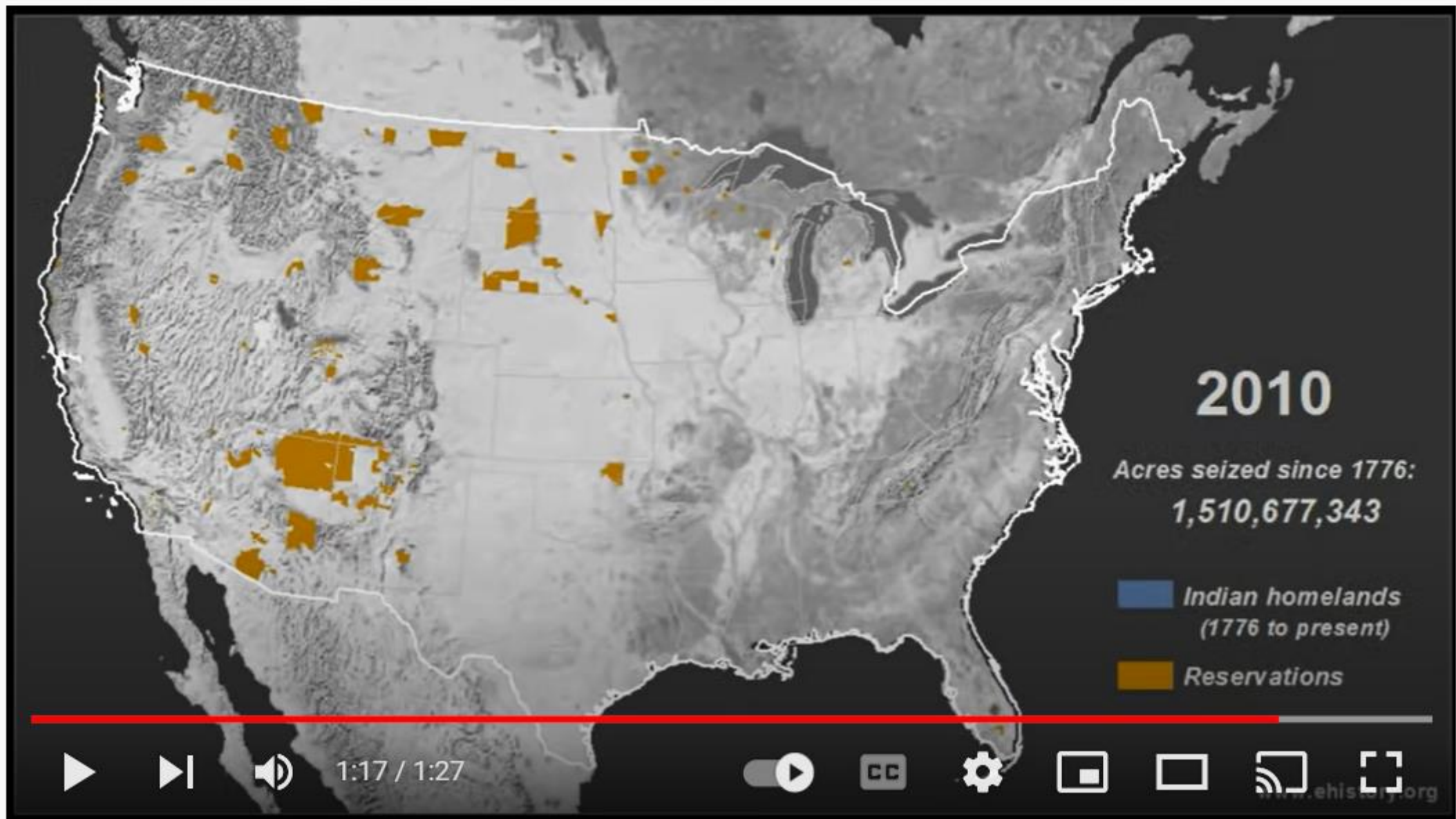
American Indian Holocaust and Survival: A Population History Since 1492 Russell Thornton, University of Oklahoma Press, 1987, pg. xvii.

Historical Background

- Indigenous Population Decline of 95% by 1900
- Loss of 99% tribal lands to American settlers between 1776 and 1887 – over 1.5 billion acres - Claudio Saunt – Institute of Native American Studies, University of Georgia - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pJxrTzfG2bo>







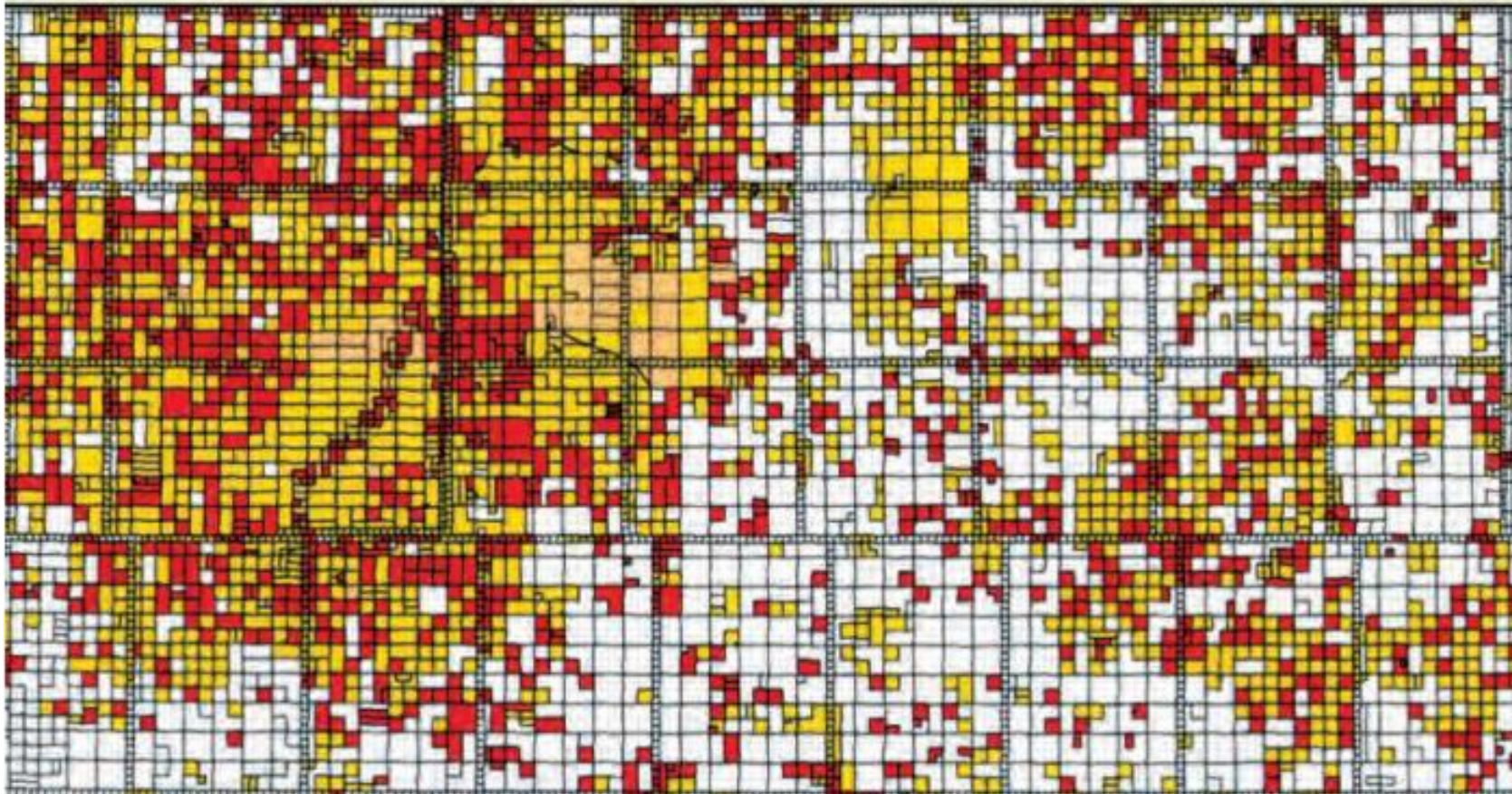
Dawes Act of 1887

- General Allotment Act
- Pushed farming and assimilation by dividing tribal lands into family plots of 160 or 320 acres
- Required enrollment with the BIA – only path to citizenship was through enrollment
- 90 million acres of land were transferred to American settlers
- National Park Service – “The desired effect of the Dawes Act was to get Native Americans to farm and ranch like white homesteaders. An explicit goal of the Dawes Act was to create divisions among Native Americans and eliminate the social cohesion of tribes.”
<https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/dawes-act.htm>

Rosebud Reservation

Checkerboard effect of tribal/allotted/fee lands

Allotted ■
Fee □
Tribal ■
Reserve ■



Indian Land Tenure Foundation - <https://iltf.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Message-Runner-1-lowres.pdf>

Historical Background Cont.

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- **House Resolution No. 108, 83rd Congress (August 1, 1953). In this resolution, Congress "announced their support for a new Indian policy: 'termination.'"**

Historical Background Cont.

- Truman 1946 - “It would be a miracle if in the course of these dealings—the largest real estate transaction in history—we had not made some mistakes and occasionally failed to live up to the precise terms of our treaties and agreements with some 200 tribes. With the final settlement of all outstanding claims which this measure ensures, Indians can take their place without special handicap or special advantage in the economic life of our nation and share fully in its progress.”

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- 1947 Hoover Commission Report – ““The basis for historic Indian culture has been swept away. Traditional tribal organization was smashed a generation ago....Assimilation cannot be prevented. The only questions are: What kind of assimilation and how fast?”

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- Special Message to Congress on Indian Affairs on July 8, 1970, President Richard Nixon denounces the Truman/Eisenhower-era policy of terminating Indian nations and announces a policy of “Self-Determination without Termination” under which “the Indian future is determined by Indian acts and Indian decisions.”

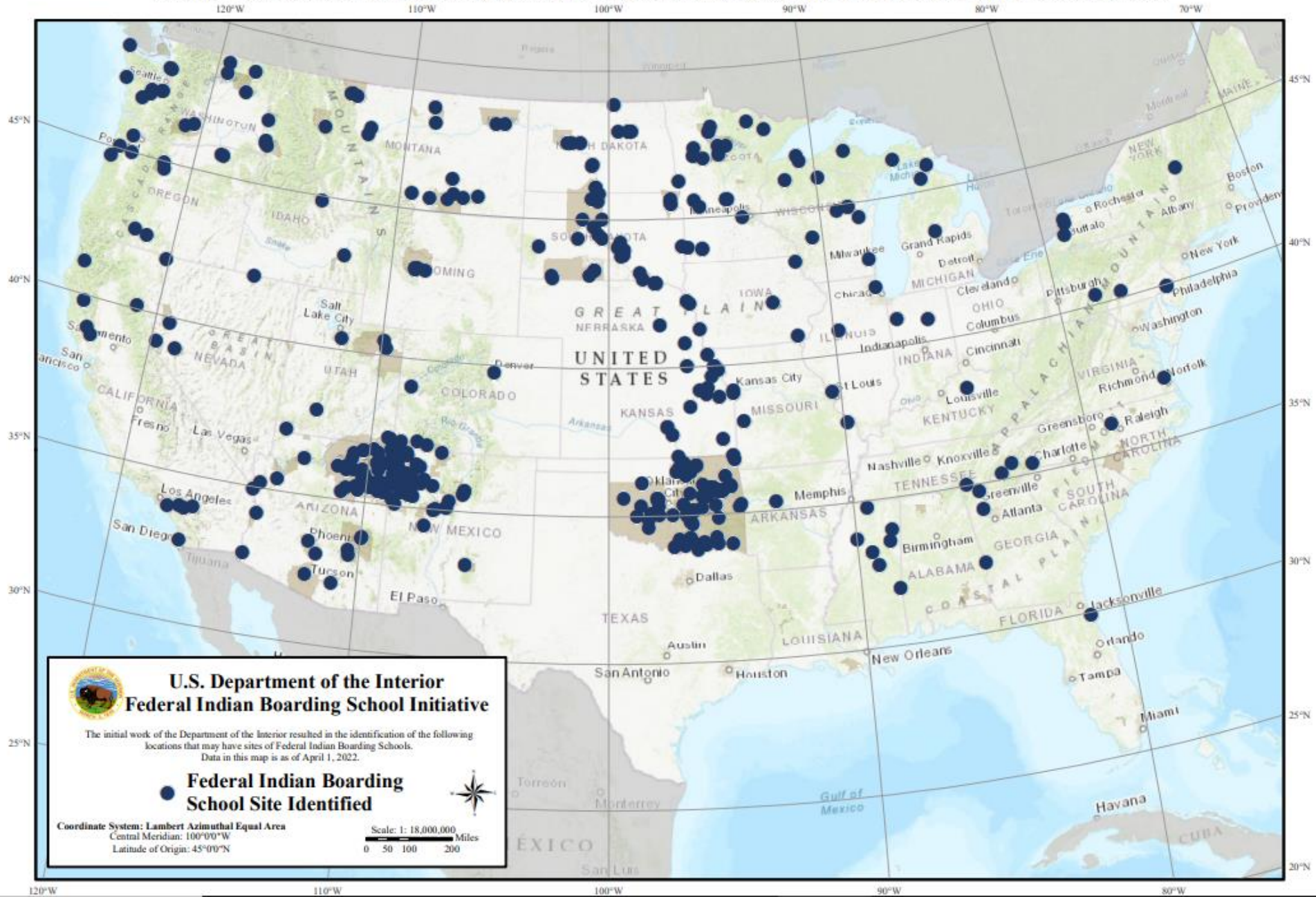
Boarding Schools

- Major tool of assimilation
- Hundreds of thousands of indigenous children were sent to boarding schools
- Many were church run



Federal Indian Boarding School Sites

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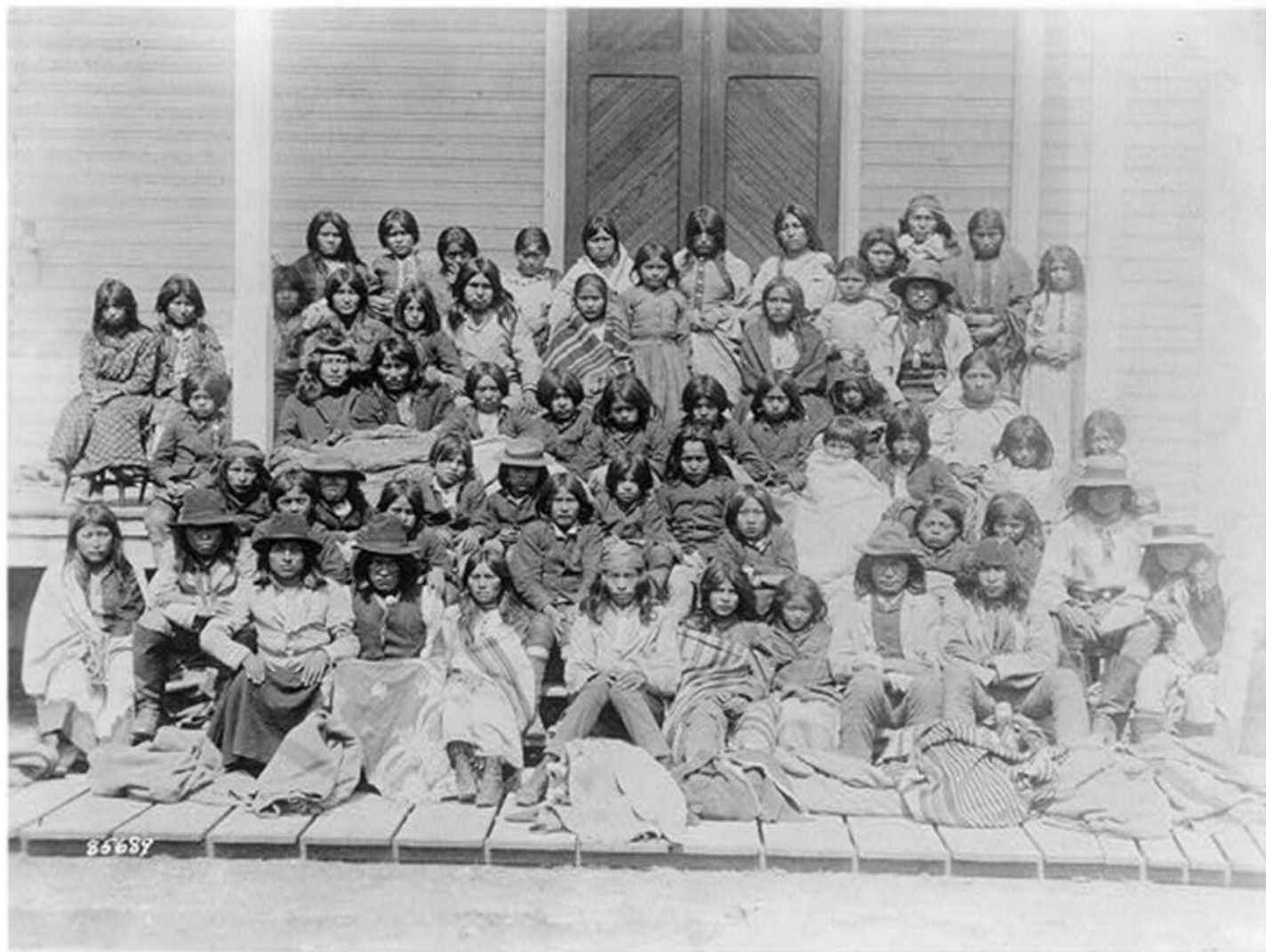


Carlisle Indian Industrial School 1879-1918

- Over 10,000 children from around the country
- Carlisle PA
- Col. Richard Henry Pratt



Chiricahua Apache children at Carlisle 1880s



Col. Richard Henry Pratt, 1901

"A great general has said that the only good Indian is a dead one. In a sense, I agree with the sentiment, but only in this: that all the Indian there is in the race should be dead. Kill the Indian in him, and save the man."



Tom Torlino, Navajo, Before and After. Circa 1882
Richard Henry Pratt papers, Yale University



- Pratt – “Segregating any class or race of people apart from the rest of the people kills the progress of the segregated people or makes their growth very slow. Association of races and classes is necessary to destroy racism and classism.”
- Gene Demby, NPR’s Code Switch – 2014 -
<https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2014/01/05/260006815/the-ugly-fascinating-history-of-the-word-racism>

Sources for Documents About Boarding Schools

- Native American Rights Fund, National Indian Law Library - <https://www.narf.org/nill/resources/education/reports-statistics.html>
- Dep't of Interior Boarding Schools Profiles - https://www.bia.gov/sites/default/files/dup/inline-files/appendix_a_b_school_listing_profiles_508.pdf

Jicarilla Apache Boarding School

Summary Elements

| Element | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|-----|
| Name: | Jicarilla Apache Boarding School | |
| Possible Other Name(s): | Jicarilla Apache Indian Boarding School, Jicarilla Indian School, Jicarilla Boarding School, Jicarilla Training School, Jicarilla (Southern Mountain) Sanatorium, Jicarilla Dormitory | |
| Associated School(s): | | |
| School Address | Dulce, New Mexico | |
| Start Date: | as early as 1903 | |
| End Date: | Open | |
| Currently Operating | | |
| Boarding School Definition Criteria | Housing | Yes |
| | Education | Yes |
| | Federal Support | Yes |
| | Timeframe | Yes |
| School Type | Reservation, Boarding School, Dormitory, Sanatorium | |
| General Notes | The Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs (IA Report) for the Year 1904, pg. 250, notes "[t]he Jicarilla training school opened October 19, and by January 15, there were 130 pupils in attendance, 5 more than the rated capacity of the school." The school operated as a day school from Jan. - June 1903 (footnoted on p. 40). Jicarilla Boarding was still operational in 1919, however, due to the high rate of tuberculosis among the students, Jicarilla Boarding School closed that year and the dormitory was converted into a sanatorium. Children who tested positive for tuberculosis were sent to the Jicarilla Southern Mountain Sanatorium. Most were under 10 years old. "In 1958, the Jicarilla Apache Indian Boarding School closed its doors when the State of New Mexico took over the academic portion of the education of Jicarilla children." (see "The Jicarilla Apache of Dulce"). Appears to be currently operational as a Bureau of Indian Education school. | |

Meriam Report 1928

THE PROBLEM OF INDIAN ADMINISTRATION

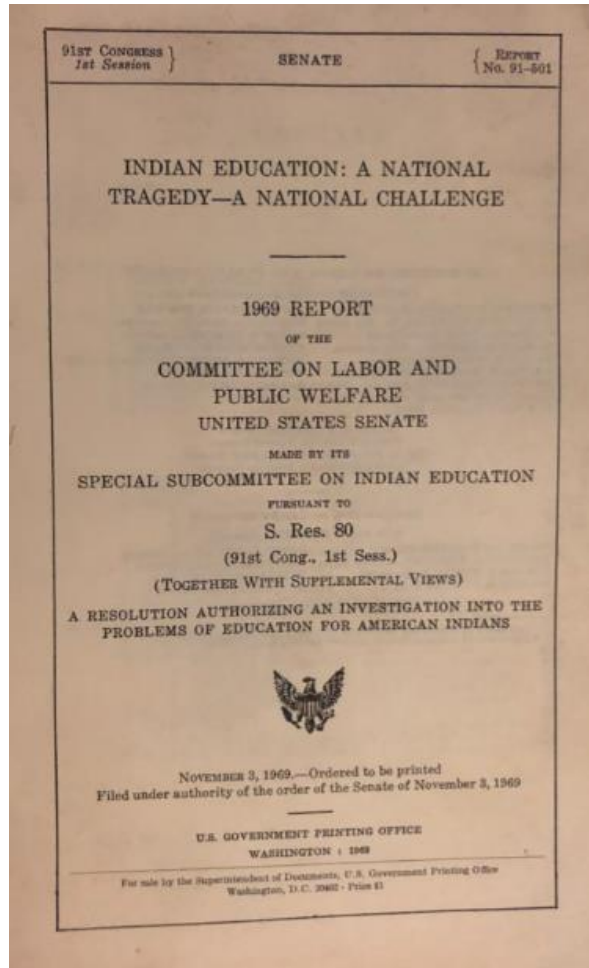
Report of a Survey made at the request
of Honorable Hubert Work, Secretary
of the Interior, and submitted to him,
February 21, 1928

SURVEY STAFF

LEWIS MERIAM
Technical Director
RAY A. BROWN
HENRY ROE CLOUD
EDWARD EVERETT DALE
EMMA DUKE
HERBERT R. EDWARDS
FAYETTE AVERY MCKENZIE
MARY LOUISE MARK
W. CARSON RYAN, JR.
WILLIAM J. SPILLMAN

- Finding “**frankly and unequivocally that the provisions for the care of Indian children in boarding schools are grossly inadequate.**”
- “In nearly every boarding school one will find children of 10, 11, and 12 spending four hours a day in more or less heavy industrial work: dairying, kitchen work, laundry, shop. The work is bad for children of this age, especially children not physically well-nourished; most of it is in no sense educational, since the operations are large-scale and bear little relation to either home or industrial life outside; and it is admittedly unsatisfactory even from the point of view of getting the work done.”

Kennedy Report 1969 – *Indian Education: A National Tragedy – A National Challenge*



- Federal Indian Boarding Schools “were designed to separate a child from his reservation and family, strip him of his tribal lore and mores, force the complete abandonment of his native language, and prepare him for never again returning to his people.”

Impact of Boarding Schools - Running Bear, et al Studies – NIH - PubMed

➤ [Qual Life Res.](#) 2018 Jan;27(1):153-157. doi: 10.1007/s11136-017-1742-y. Epub 2017 Nov 18.

The relationship of five boarding school experiences and physical health status among Northern Plains Tribes

[Ursula Running Bear](#)¹, [Calvin D Croy](#)², [Carol E Kaufman](#)², [Zaneta M Thayer](#)³, [Spero M Manson](#)²,
[AI-SUPERPFP Team](#)

Affiliations [+](#) expand

PMID: 29151147 PMCID: [PMC5856240](#) DOI: [10.1007/s11136-017-1742-y](#)

[Free PMC article](#)

➤ [Fam Community Health](#). 2019 Jan/Mar;42(1):1-7. doi: 10.1097/FCH.0000000000000205.

The Impact of Individual and Parental American Indian Boarding School Attendance on Chronic Physical Health of Northern Plains Tribes

[Ursula Running Bear](#)¹, [Zaneta M Thayer](#), [Calvin D Croy](#), [Carol E Kaufman](#), [Spero M Manson](#),
[AI-SUPERPPF Team](#)

Affiliations [+](#) expand

PMID: 30431464 PMCID: [PMC6241300](#) DOI: [10.1097/FCH.0000000000000205](#)

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Boarding school attendance in the Northern Plains has a direct affect on poor health outcomes:

- 44% greater chance of tuberculosis, arthritis, diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, kidney problems, stroke, high cholesterol, liver problems, thyroid problems, anemia, gall bladder disease, gynecological problems (women)/prostate problems (men), bladder or urinary problems, and cancer
- Participants whose fathers attended boarding school had on average a 36% greater chance of the same maladies – epigenetic rooted in stress from greater abuse of males
- Attendees have double the rates of tuberculosis and triple the rates of cancer

Dep't of Interior Investigative Report Findings

- **Goals –**
- Identifying Federal Indian boarding school facilities and sites;
- Identifying names and Tribal identities of Indian children who were placed in Federal Indian boarding schools;
- Identifying locations of marked and unmarked burial sites of remains of Indian children located at or near school facilities;
- Incorporating Tribal and individual viewpoints, including those of descendants, on the experiences in, and impacts of, the Federal Indian boarding school system.

- BIA worked closely with the Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition
- From 1819 to 1969, the Federal Indian boarding school system consisted of 408 Federal schools across 37 states or then-territories, including 21 schools in Alaska and 7 schools in Hawaii.
- Over 1000 additional schools that weren't part of the system
- Oklahoma – 76 (19%); Arizona 47 (12%); New Mexico 43 (11%)
- Of the 408 Federal Indian boarding schools, approximately 90 schools (22%) might still operate as educational facilities. However, not all 90 institutions still board children or are federally supported.
- Marked and unmarked burial sites at 53 of the schools

“The Federal Indian boarding school system deployed **systematic militarized and identity-alteration methodologies to attempt to assimilate** American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian children through education, including but not limited to the following:

- (1) renaming Indian children from Indian to English names;
- (2) cutting hair of Indian children;
- (3) discouraging or preventing the use of American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian languages, religions, and cultural practices; and
- (4) organizing Indian and Native Hawaiian children into units to perform military drills.” (7).

“Federal Indian boarding school rules were often enforced through punishment, including corporal punishment such as solitary confinement; flogging; withholding food; whipping; slapping; and cuffing. The Federal Indian boarding school system at times made older Indian children punish younger Indian children.” (8)

“Never-ending resistance by children in boarding schools...Running away was the most common way to resist, but there were also acts of nonparticipation and sabotage, secretly speaking their languages and practicing ceremonies. This surely accounts for their survival, but the damage is nearly incomprehensible.”

Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States* (214).

Conclusion

Secretary Haaland – “I know that this process will be long and difficult. I know that this process will be painful. It won’t undo the heartbreak and loss we feel. But only by acknowledging the past can we work toward a future that we’re all proud to embrace.”