

## Santa Fe Indian School

In 1879, General Richard Henry Pratt created the first boarding school in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. Through the Indian Civilization Act Fund of March 3, 1819 and the Peace Policy of 1869, the United States initiated an Indian Boarding School Policy which supported a system designed to assimilate American Indian and Alaska Native children to white customs at boarding schools across the nation during the 19th and 20th centuries.

The term, "Kill the Indian to save the man," came from General Pratt who stated, "A great general has said that the only good Indian is a dead one, and that high sanction of his destruction has been an enormous factor in promoting Indian massacres. 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."

According to the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition, nearly 370 Indian boarding schools operated in the United States between 1869 - 1960s. Hundreds of thousands of Native American children attended with widespread reports of physical and sexual abuse.

Native American children either volunteered or were forcibly removed from their homes and taken to an Indian Boarding school outside their community, often hundreds of miles away. Many suffered physical and sexual abuse, neglect, and in many cases torture for speaking their Native languages. The primary goal of boarding schools was assimilation into the dominant society achieved by prohibiting children from wearing traditional clothing, hair styles, personal belongings and behaviors reflective of their native culture.

In New Mexico, there were two boarding schools: the Albuquerque Indian School, which was opened in 1881, and the Santa Fe Indian School, established in 1890. These two schools educated Native American children from many tribes throughout the southwest. During the mid-1880s, the Ramona Industrial School, located close to Santa Fe's historic plaza, housed mostly Apache students whose parents were being held prisoner by the U.S. Army at Fort Union.

By 1900, there were 20,000 children in Indian boarding schools across the nation, and by 1925, a recorded 60,889. Many children died while at the boarding schools, and an untold number ran away — their fates have yet to be accounted for by the U.S. government.

In June 2021, Interior Secretary Deb Haaland launched the nation's first comprehensive investigation into Indigenous boarding schools; a project that aims to locate boarding schools across the country and their burial sites, then determine how many children perished while attending those schools, locate unmarked graves, and identify the names and tribal affiliations of children who were sent to them.

"I know not many people are aware of the history of Indian boarding schools, and I know it's not taught in schools—but our country must do better to acknowledge our real history and push for truth and reconciliation." — Secretary Haaland

In July 2021, the disinterred remains of nine Native American children who died more than a century ago while attending a government-run school in Pennsylvania, were returned to their relatives on the Rosebud Sioux reservation in South Dakota. It is likely that as more remains of Native American children that are disinterred will be returned to tribes as more boarding schools and burial sites are uncovered.

“The biggest part of the work starts with the truth, and that includes not only truth from the federal government in this case and the churches that ran the schools, but hearing the truth from the perspective of the people who experienced it, listening to the testimony of survivors and descendants and understanding the full scope and impact of these experiences.” — Christine Diindiisi McCleave, CEO and citizen of the Turtle Mountain Ojibwe Nation

In 1975, the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act, Pub. L. 93-638, gave Indian tribes the authority to contract with the Federal government to operate programs serving their tribal members and other eligible persons. The All Pueblo Council of Governors, utilizing P.L. 93-638 was the first Indian organization to contract for the education of their children. In 1988, under the Education Amendments P. L. 95-561, and the technical amendments P. L. 98-511 and P. L. 100-297 allowed the Santa Fe Indian School to become a tribally controlled school governed by a Board of Trustees. Through the signing of the Santa Fe Indian School Act in 2000, the land was turned over to be held in trust for the 19 Pueblo Governors of New Mexico, which granted the school the right and responsibility to educate New Mexico Indian children in a manner that supports their cultural and traditional belief systems.

“The truth about the U.S. Indian boarding school policy has largely been written out of the history books. The wounds of the boarding schools are still open in Indian Country. An accurate historical record needs to be created. Once the magnitude of what occurred is known – including neglect, abuse and worse – the nation can begin working toward true healing.” — Albuquerque Journal Editorial Board, July 28th, 2021

In 2021, hundreds of unmarked graves were discovered on the grounds of former residential schools in British Columbia and Saskatchewan. Canada’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission reported that more than 4,000 Indigenous children died either from neglect or abuse in residential schools, many of which were run by the Catholic Church.

After decades of requests for a papal apology for the harm inflicted for decades on Indigenous children, Pope Francis apologized to Canadian indigenous leaders for the Catholic Church’s role in the abuse of Canada’s indigenous people, particularly in residential schools.

In a public address on April 1, 2022 the Pope said that he feels “sorrow and shame for the role that a number of Catholics, particularly those with educational responsibilities, have had in all these things that wounded you, in the abuses you suffered and in the lack of respect shown for your identity, your culture and even your spiritual values.”

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## Ramona Indian School

In 1883, Horatio Ladd, a member of the Congregational Ministry, founded the Ramona Indian Girls School in Santa Fe using financial support from New England church groups for missionary undertakings. Ladd contracted with the U.S. government to sponsor Indian children that were being held prisoners along with their parents at Fort Union. He sent teachers from the Ramona school to Ft. Union in an effort to obtain Indian students for the school.

Between 1884 - 1891, Apaches, particularly of the Jicarilla and San Carlos tribes, were held as prisoners at Fort Union as a punitive measure by the U.S. military to control the activities of Apache leaders. Prisoners were held at the fort for several months, and in some cases many years, with a substantial number of the confined being Apache women and children. Some prisoners were physically restrained and held in the guardhouse under lock and key, while the majority of prisoners resided in makeshift tents scattered within the fort's premises.

Many children of the prisoners were taken to the Ramona Indian School in Santa Fe. Their parents were given "passes" to leave the fort to visit their children once or twice a year. Passes were also given to prisoners to hunt and fish off the premises, and to serve as contract laborers, scouts, and trail guides.

According to archives of the Palace of the Governors, the Ramona Indian School was moved to four different locations. The first location was in the former federal state house at the head of Lincoln Avenue. When the school's leadership changed, the school moved to a private property of 7 1/2 acres situated along the bank of the Santa Fe River, in an area on or near an "adobe" brick plant. The property included three buildings that contained 17 rooms, and a 60-fruit tree orchard.

By 1890, a new building was built 1 mile south of the plaza. This building burned in 1900, by which time the students had been relocated to other schools. This location may be referenced in a letter written in 1921, by a former student, found in the "Papers of Horatio Ladd" Collection at the Center for Southwest Research at the University of New Mexico. The student described the location of the school "as being within sight of the plaza on a hill close to the original state capital building".

According to an article in the New Mexican newspaper, dated September 13, 1929, the property of 4 1/2 acres where the Ramona Indian School once stood, was transferred to the heirs of Charles Gildersleeve. The building where the boy and girls lived, was located between Galisteo and Don Gaspar, possibly having an entrance along what was Carleton Street, now Cordova.

Sources:

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### St. Catherine's Industrial Indian School

Saint Catherine's Indian School was established in 1886-87, by Mother Katharine Drexel. It was the first of many schools for the education of Native Americans and African Americans across the nation that Katharine sponsored with her own money. Katharine Drexel was the second of three sisters. When their father died in 1885, the Drexel daughters became some of the wealthiest women in the country. The Drexels started making charitable donations to Indian missions around the nation.

In 1889, Katharine Drexel entered the Sisters of Mercy order. Two years later, she started her own convent, the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament for Indians and Colored People, and began construction on a new convent in Cornwell Heights, Pennsylvania. In 1895, Drexel purchased 200 acres in an area known as La Cienega Amarilla, located west of what would become the Arizona-New Mexico border, with the purpose of starting a school for Navajo children.

During her lifetime, Reverend Mother Katharine Drexel spent an estimated \$20 million to educate Native American and African-American students. Katharine spent her remaining years at the convent she built in Pennsylvania until her death on March 3, 1955. In 1964, Mother Katherine's canonization was introduced in Rome, she was declared venerable by Pope John Paul II in 1987, beatified in November 1988, and formally canonized on Oct. 1, 2000. Her feast day is March 3. Eagle Dancers from the Laguna tribe performed at the official canonization ceremony in Rome, and a Navajo woman spoke Diné Bizaad during the Vatican liturgy.

St. Catherine's Industrial Indian School was named for Drexel's patron saint, St. Catherine of Siena. The school was initially meant to serve as a boarding school for Indian girls. A dedication and blessing of the grounds was held on June 16, 1886. The Main Building was built in 1887, along with athletic fields, baking hornos, and a farm.

In 1893, the school closed due to an insufficient water supply for the school's agriculture program, and students were transferred to the Santa Fe Indian School, which was founded in 1890. Sisters of Blessed Sacrament were then recruited from Philadelphia to take over the St. Catherine school, reopening it as an industrial Indian school in 1894. Franciscan priests were also brought in to help the new institution that now offered both academic instruction and "industrial" or vocational training in such trades as tailoring, carpentry, farming, blacksmithing and laundry. Girls were admitted into the school by 1898; a two-story adobe dormitory behind the main building had been erected to accommodate them. The

campus grew to include more than 20 buildings, a two-story structure for carpentry and shoe shops, a red-brick chapel and convent for clergy members.

St. Catherine became a private education choice for neighboring tribes and residents of Santa Fe until the school became too financially difficult to maintain. From the time of its closure in 1998, the property has remained vacant. A few years later, the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament sold the campus to a cemetery developer. In April 2016, the school's 18-acre property went up for auction and the Santa Fe Civic Housing Authority purchased it for \$2 million, with the hope of providing affordable apartments for residents using federal Section 8 housing vouchers, however the City did not have an estimated \$5 million more in capital to restore the historic buildings.

In 2017, the campus was host for the feature film *Cliffs of Freedom*, a Greek war drama starring Christopher Plummer and Billy Zane.

In 2019, a lawsuit was filed against the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, Pennsylvania-based operators of the school, and the Franciscan Friars, province of St. John the Baptist of the Order of Friars Minor, which staffed the school with clergy who performed teaching, chaplain and dormitory duties. The lawsuit focused on misconduct involving Franciscan priest, Christopher Kerr, and also cited reports from the 1980 that claimed as many as 70 boys who attended the school, were sexually assaulted by at least two other clergy members and a security guard.

Kerr was accused of walking naked through the boy's dormitory at the school, and taking "pictures of the boys while they were naked and showering." The lawsuit also alleges that Kerr was removed from St. Catherine's after he "was found naked and drunk in the boys' shower and was taken for treatment at the center for troubled priests run by the Servants of the Paraclete in Jemez Springs".

In 2022, the site remains vacant and in a state of disrepair. All of the buildings' windows have been boarded up, roofs have caved in on a few structures, and a couple of the buildings that were utilized as vocational shops have been severely damaged by fires possibly started by the homeless seeking shelter on the vacant grounds. White headstones mark the graves of at least a dozen clergy who operated the school. Native American children who died during the late 1800s to early 1900s and could not be transported home, may also be buried at the site, the location of their remains is unknown.

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