Santa Fe Indian School (1890 – present)

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 federal boarding schools: the Albuquerque Indian School 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. Saint Catherine’s Industrial Indian School was established in 1886.

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.

In 2003 Santa Fe Indian School staff created a statement that would measure the success of its students and the institution, the “Ideal Graduate.” As part of the institution’s plan to continuously improve its operations, the statement honors native knowledge and the need to prepare students with skills to become critical thinking problem solvers that engage in the world at large and in their respective communities.

The Ideal Graduate statement:
Santa Fe Indian School graduates will understand the issues facing tribes in the Southwest and will be committed to maintaining Native American cultural values. They will participate in the culture of their communities and will have the skills to pursue the education or careers that will benefit them, their families, and their people. These skills include: Creative problem solving, using the analysis of complex problems, the synthesis of collected data, and the communication of clear solutions; Critical, confident, independent and interdependent, life-long learning; Working productively with all types of people and making good choices.

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

To listen to recorded oral history of students who attended the Santa Fe Indian School, visit the online Collection: Santa Fe Indian School: The First 100 Years Project | New Mexico Archives Online (unm.edu)

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Ramona Industrial School for Indian Girls of the Southwest (1885-1890)

As part of the treaties signed for land cessions, the United States was obligated to provide education to tribes on their reservations. Beginning in the late 1800s, the federal government took Indian children from their families and forcibly placed them in boarding schools that utilized militarized and identity-alteration methodologies to strip them of their language and culture; education focused on manual labor and vocational skills. After the Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania was established in 1879, the Presbyterian Church opened the Albuquerque Indian School for Navajo, Pueblo, and Apache students which operated from 1881 to 1981. Children from New Mexico tribes were also sent to boarding schools located out of state.

A quote from U.S. Indian Agent Fletcher J. Cowart describes the seizure of Mescalero and Jicarilla Apache children during the 1800s and the resistance from chiefs and the tribal nations which resulted in Indian police forcibly removing the children from their homes:

> "When called upon for children, the chiefs, almost without exception, declared there were non-suitable for school in their camps. Everything in the way of persuasion and argument having failed, it became necessary to visit the camps unexpectedly with a detachment of Indian police, and seize such children as were proper and take them away to school, willing or unwilling. Some hurried their children off to the mountains or hid them away in camp, and the Indian police had to chase them like so many wild rabbits."

On May 11, 1881, the University of New Mexico was inducted on ten acres of land in Santa Fe. Classes began on Sept. 12, 1881, in the home of the university's first president, Horatio O. Ladd, who was also a Reverend of the Congregational Ministry of Protestant churches, while a three-story building for the university was being constructed. The building would be completed in 1887 at the corner of Garfield and Guadalupe streets, and include dormitories for 25 students, three classrooms, a library, and gymnasium.

In July 1883, 200 Pueblo and 50 Mescalero Apache including chief San Juan traveled to Santa Fe to be part of the Tertio-Millenial celebration. The event was held for several days and included a Grand Mining and Industrial Exposition with displays on modern industry, and Native American and Mexican ethnographic material. During the event, chief San Juan found an interpreter and made a speech complaining about the mistreatment of the Mescalero by the government. He also pleaded for the same education to be given to the Apache children as white boys and girls received. Chief San Juan reported that some of his children were sent to the Carlisle Indian School where many children died of tuberculosis. Horatio Ladd was in attendance of the Tertio-Millenial event and became interested in founding an Indian Industrial school based on San Juan's plea.

In a publication dated January 1, 1884, Horatio Ladd reported on the present condition and need of the University of New Mexico. His statement provides reasons why support for the university was needed noting that a large population of Protestant residents were moving to the state and although many businesses were flourishing, few leaders could communicate in English. He added that the majority of inhabitants of New Mexico spoke the Spanish language, an estimated forty-five percent of the state was illiterate, and the Roman Catholic religion was dominant, greatly influential, and in control of the legislation –all of which was considered "a danger to the Union". Ladd also stated that although twenty-five percent of the territorial taxes were to be used to maintain a common school system, only three or

four localities in the state had schools, therefore private Christian education provided by the benevolence of government and “the enlightened part of our country” (donors) was the only possible recourse. He further explained that the needs of the university included a permanent endowment for teachers’ salaries and tuition scholarships for both American and Mexican whom without common (public) schools have no opportunity for education.

In February 1884, Ladd’s proposal to build an industrial Indian school was approved by General Whittlesey, secretary of the board of Indian commissioners in Washington, D.C. and of Charles Howard, inspector of Indian schools. Permission and offers to supply pupils for the schools was granted by General Price of the Indian bureau of the Department of the Interior and superintendent of the Indian schools.

In 1884, Horatio Ladd spent six months in Washington, D.C. and other states in the east speaking at Protestant and Christian churches about the vast natural resources of New Mexico and the need for funding to complete a new building. He acquired sufficient donations, from prominent Santa Fe residents such as T.B. Catron, Antonio Ortiz, J.H. Taylor, W.W. Spielberg, Sol Spielberg, Doctor Lonwell, Messrs. Gildersleeve, and donors from his trip east to establish an Industrial Indian School in buildings close to the college. The University of New Mexico’s Industrial Indian department opened on April 1, 1885. During the first year, forty-four pupils, boys and girls, from eight different Pueblos and Apache tribes attended the school. Attendance by tribal students increased in the subsequent year.

By 1886, the success of the Indian Department of the University of New Mexico aroused opposition and rivalry from the Roman Catholic church who had established St. Catherine’s Industrial School in Santa Fe the same year. Priests presented misinformation about the University of New Mexico’s Industrial Indian School to the parents of Pueblo pupils and as a result, all Pueblo pupils were forcibly removed from the school and became students at St. Catherine’s Industrial School, leaving only fifteen Apache pupils who became the first students of the Ramona Industrial School for Indian Girls of the Southwest.

Between 1884 - 1891, Apache people, particularly of the Jicarilla and San Carlos tribes, were held as prisoners of war at Fort Union –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.

The Ramona school utilized financial support from New England church groups for missionary undertakings. Ladd contracted with the U.S. government to sponsor Apache children that were confined as 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. Funding for the industrial school provided by the government covered the cost of housing and feeding pupils – the land and donations of almost $60,000 were garnered to erect the memorial building, Ramona.

The Ramona School was a memorial of Helen Hunt Jackson who authored a book, “Ramona”, which became a romantic bestseller in 1884 with 300 copies sold. The story is set in Southern California after

the Mexican-American War with a plot that portrays the life of a mixed-race Scottish–Native American orphan girl, who suffers racial discrimination and hardship. The 1888 edition includes a prologue from José Martí (translated from Spanish by Esther Allen).

The Ramona Industrial School for Indian Girls of the Southwest was moved to three 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 that included three adobe buildings containing 17 rooms and a 60-fruit tree orchard; the former property of J. H. Taylor. 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".

A third school location was built one mile south of the downtown plaza on land donated in 1887 that encompassed 4 ½ acres and included an orchard. The school was situated on the south side between present-day Don Gaspar Avenue and Waldo Street, with an entrance facing Coronado Road (formerly Carleton Avenue). When the Santa Fe Indian School opened in 1890, the federal government withdrew its support for the Ramona School. Unable to raise funds to continue its operations, students were relocated to other schools. Before closing, the school operated with six teachers and fifty students from Apache tribes in attendance. The school building was leased to private individuals before it burned in 1900. An article in the New Mexican newspaper, dated September 13, 1929, notes the property where the Ramona Indian School once stood was transferred back to the heirs of Charles Gildersleeve for the reason that the real estate given was for a specific purpose and it failed.

Horatio Oliver Ladd, was a researcher, writer and educator of Southwest history and minister. He was born in Hallowell, Maine on August 31, 1839, and educated at Bowdoin and the Yale Divinity School. In 1879 he was appointed principal of the Santa Fe Academy. After an unsatisfactory relation with the Academy school board, he helped found the University of New Mexico at Santa Fe in 1881. He served as the first and only President of the University. After founding the Ramona Industrial School for Indian Girls of the Southwest, he left New Mexico in 1889, returning to the east to enter the ministry of the Episcopal Church. He died February 16, 1932, in Brookland, Massachusetts.

Aftermath of Boarding Schools

In 1928 the Meriam Report criticized the physical condition of Indian school facilities, use of child labor, and the removal of children from their homes. The report recommended relevant curriculum adapted to the culture of the children. Forty years later in 1969, Senate Resolution 165 Congress, authorized an investigation into the education of Indian children and published its findings, known as the Kennedy Report. The findings at public schools included the lack of Indian participation or control; coursework which rarely recognized Indian history, culture, or language; and anti-Indian attitudes on the part of school administrators and teachers. Federal schools were found to be grossly underfinanced, deficient in academic performance, unsatisfactory in quality and effectiveness of instruction, seriously deficient in guidance and counseling programs, and characterized by a rigid and impersonal environment.

A report published May 2022 by the U.S. Interior Department, disclosed atrocities committed at boarding schools designed and run by the federal government. The report acknowledges the use of

federal government money from Indian Trust Funds to pay schools, even those run by religious organizations. Beginning in the late 1800s, the federal government took Indian children from their families in an effort to strip them of their cultures and language. A total of 408 federal Indian boarding schools were identified which operated across 37 states operated between 1819 and 1969; New Mexico had at least 43 schools. These schools used "militarized" tactics to assimilate Native American children as young as 4-years-old in environments described in the report as fostering, "rampant physical, sexual, and emotional abuse; disease; malnourishment; overcrowding; and lack of health care."

The Interior Department investigation shared, "Even the youngest of students were forced into manual labor such as lumbering, railroad, carpentering, irrigation, well-digging and construction." An example at the Mescalero Boarding School in New Mexico shows that in 1903 Mescalero Apache, "boys sawed over 70,000 feet of lumber and 40,000 shingles and made upward of 120,000 bricks."

Evidence of these tactics is apparent in a statement by Chief Natzili in February 1891, after Natzili's children, Len and Lucy Smith, fled a boarding school in Kansas due to mistreatment. Natzili, leader of a band of plains Apaches brought his people to Mescalero in 1877. He told an Indian agent that he preferred having his children attend school at home and said, "People have been displeased because instead of being taught to read and write, the children (were used for) menial labor." The small children, he added, should be left with their mothers.

In 1888, the first Apache student at the all-boys Indian school on the Mescalero reservation died of tuberculosis. The death was blamed on the physical conditions of overcrowded and unventilated dormitories. Deaths continued to rise until Indian agent James Carroll, reported to the U.S. government on the inhumane conditions stating, "the school's dormitory, dining hall, kitchen, and laundry are, without doubt, the most wretched, uninviting and uninhabitable to be found through the service." The Mescalero agency doctor blamed the deaths of twelve boys on "the lamentable condition of the dormitory" and proposed burning it down. An Indian inspector later condemned the buildings.

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.

The federal government evaded rules regarding separation of church and state by paying schools run by churches to take in Native American students. It was not until 1908 Supreme Court case Quick Bear vs. Leupp's ruling that allowed the federal government to use money held in Indian treaties and trust accounts to fund children that were, "induced or compelled to attend Indian boarding schools that were operated by religious institutions or organizations." New Mexico became the 47th state in the Union on January 6, 1912.

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St. Catherine's Industrial Indian School (1886 – 1998)

Saint Catherine's Industrial Indian School was established in 1886, 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 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."

The site of St. Catherine's school was vacant and in a state of disrepair in 2022. All of the buildings' windows were boarded up, roofs had caved in on a few structures, and a couple of the buildings that were utilized as vocational shops showed damage 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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