

FROM DIRECTORS JULIAN BRAVE NOISECAT AND EMILY KASSIE AND ACADEMY AWARD®-NOMINATED PRODUCER KELLEN QUINN



DOCUMENTARY
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SUGARCANE

“A MUST-SEE FILM...
BREATHTAKING”

The New York Times



NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC DOCUMENTARY FILMS PRESENTS IN ASSOCIATION WITH IMPACT PARTNERS AND FIT VIA VI A KASSIE FILMS AND HEDGEHOG FILMS PRODUCTION “SUGARCANE”
MUSIC BY MALI OBOMSAWIN EDITED BY NATHAN PUNWAR AND MAYA DAISY HAWKE DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY CHRISTOPHER LAMARCA CINEMATOGRAPHY EMILY KASSIE
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS CAROLYN BERNSTEIN BILL WAY ELLIOTT WHITTON JENNY RASKIN GERALYN WHITE DREYFOUS TEGAN ACTON EMMA POMPETTI GRACE LAY SUMALEE MONTANO
SABRINA MERAGE NAIM DOUGLAS CHOI ADAM & MELONY LEWIS MEADOW FUND JANALEE CHERNESKI & IAN DESAI DAVID & LINDA CORNFELD MAIDA LYNN
ROBINA RICCIETELLO NINA & DAVID FIALKOW CO-EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS KELSEY KOENIG LAUREN HABER MERYL MEIN JENNIFER PELLING PRODUCED BY EMILY KASSIE AND KELLEN QUINN
DIRECTED BY JULIAN BRAVE NOISECAT AND EMILY KASSIE



VARIANCE
FILMS

natgeo.film/sugarcane

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NOTE TO TEACHERS/FACILITATORS



This guide uses historicization as an organizing framework. Historicization means that, rather than treating present-day social norms, values, or objects as universal and eternal, it reveals them as contingent, temporary, and shaped by distinct historical and political contexts. In 2026, these materials were curated and created by members of Journeys in Film. At this time, people in their 40s and older experienced life before artificial intelligence, social media, Zoom meetings, asynchronous online education, smart phones, 9/11, cell phones, home internet, 24-hour news cycles, and on-demand entertainment. These technologies have changed our way of life — how we learn, think, and communicate with the world and those who matter most to us.

Engagement with media and technology changes the user. Allowing your learner to simply read, listen, or watch these primary and secondary source materials is enough. Not everything will resonate with every learner, and not every thought needs to be shared. Giving learners space to have their own private thoughts and responses to the material is a luxury in a world saturated with information.

When learners view sources through a mediated framework, such as a scanned document, photographs of an artifact, or a website link, differentiating between primary and secondary sources can be a conceptual challenge. As a result of new technologies and media possibilities, governing bodies in North America are listening to Native American, Indigenous, and First Nations survivors and re-examining surviving primary sources. Scholars, educators and learners are now viewing the surviving documentation that led up to the Indian Civilization Act Fund in 1819 and the period that followed, extending to 1996, when the last federally run Native American boarding school closed. Many are questioning previously held understandings and views of the history of this time.

To transition into the subject matter, listen to a 17-minute time capsule from September 2025, in the podcast [State of the Field for Busy Teachers: Native American History featuring Ned Blackhawk](#) (Howard R. Lamar Professor of History at Yale University)

Scaling and Usage Guidance

Sugarcane contains challenging subject matter. These materials and worksheets invite learners to engage with primary sources with minimal context, to look at media and source material with fresh eyes, to be in dialogue with those materials, and to ask their own questions, thereby embarking on a lifelong practice of consuming and producing information responsibly.

You know your learning space the best. Use all the materials or pick and choose, adapt them for your discipline, or let them become a springboard for creating your own assignments and learning resources.



DIGITAL DEEP DIVE

Resources

[Americans - A Dialogue Toolkit for Educators](#)

[Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center](#)

[Dawes Records of the Five Civilized Tribes | National Archives](#)

[Digital Collections - Indian Removal Act: Primary Documents in American History - Research Guides at Library of Congress](#)

[Infinity of Nations: Art and History in the Collections of the National Museum of the American Indian - George Gustav Heye Center, New York](#)

[Native American Boarding Schools | Classroom Materials at the Library of Congress](#)

[Native American | Immigration and Relocation in U.S. History | Classroom Materials at the Library of Congress](#)

[Native American Primary Sources - Native American and Indigenous Studies * - Research Guides at University of Southern California](#)

[An Overview of the Congressional Record and Its Predecessor Publications](#)

[Primary Source Sets | DPLA](#)

[National Indian Boarding School Digital Archive](#)

[Smithsonian NMAI YouTube Channel](#) (The National Museum of the American Indian)

[Statement on Standards of Professional Conduct \(updated 2023\)](#)

[Tribal Leaders Directory](#)

[What Does It Mean to Remove a People? - Teacher Materials - Full Lesson](#)

FACILITATION GUIDELINES



Filmmakers use immersive storytelling to produce intense thoughts and emotions in the viewer. **Journeys in Film** uses this powerful medium as a springboard for meaningful dialogue around humanity's most pressing issues. In this guide, you will find suggestions for leading productive conversations that broaden perspectives, increase global competency, encourage empathy, and build new paradigms for education.

- When watching a film or having a powerful discussion, normalize taking breaks and exercising bodily autonomy. Acknowledge that conversations around complex topics can be vulnerable, complicated, and challenging. Encourage members to voice and do what is right for them without needing to explain or apologize.
- People do their best when they know what to expect. Start and end your meetings on time.
- Share or co-create your intentions for the meeting.
- Create your space. If possible, share snacks or find other ways to create an inviting, comfortable atmosphere.
- Create a trustworthy space. Maintain confidentiality and only speak to your own experience.
- Minimize distractions while you are together. Silence cell phones and devices so you can give your full attention to the conversation.
- Practice whole-body listening. Listen to words, tone, body language, and the feeling in the atmosphere.
- Acknowledge voices that may be absent. Is there a lived experience that isn't represented in your group? Who are the bridge people who might be able to connect you with other people in your community who might bring new perspectives to the table?
- Adopt an attitude of positive intent. If someone says something that bothers you, assume positive intent and ask for more information.
- Ignite your curiosity around other people's views and opinions. Listen to understand, not to respond. You don't need to agree with others in your group or make it known that you are "right" to have a worthwhile conversation.
- Words matter. Be open to learning and practicing new ways to communicate with others.
- Be clear, direct, and kind in your communication. Nobody benefits when you bottle your opinions.
- Everyone has blind spots and biases; cultivate a space of grace as you enter into new territory together.
- If a conversation gets heated, practice acknowledging the tension, pausing as a group, and taking a collective breath together before diving back in or taking a longer break to reset.
- Privilege your relationships with others over the content or agenda of the meeting. Show each other kindness.
- Create a closing ritual that celebrates the time you've spent together and either gives closure or gives members something to think about before your next meeting.



SUPPORTING LEARNERS WITHOUT ACCESS TO BIOLOGICAL FAMILY HISTORIES

Some lessons center on genealogical research, family history, and ancestral memory. However, educators should be mindful that not all learners have access to information about their biological families. Some may be adopted, in foster care, estranged from family members, displaced by migration, or lacking records due to war, incarceration, or historical trauma. Others may simply not feel comfortable discussing family matters.

To ensure an inclusive learning environment:

1. Broaden the definition of “family history.”

Instead of focusing solely on biological lineage, invite learners to explore:

- chosen family
- cultural or community traditions
- important adults in their lives
- neighborhood or local histories
- community archives or public records
- collective identities they participate in

2. Provide multiple entry points into genealogical inquiry.

Students may:

- research local historical sites
- interview a mentor or community elder
- analyze a cultural practice meaningful to them
- reflect on stories from their community, school, or neighborhood
- explore a historical event connected to their identity

No learner should be required to disclose personal or sensitive information.

3. Offer alternatives to sharing personal stories.

Include options such as private journaling, fictionalized narratives, archival exploration, or creative projects that do not require personal family details.

4. Avoid assumptions.

Use inclusive language such as “people who influence you,” “stories connected to your community,” or “a tradition that shapes your identity” to prevent placing learners in uncomfortable positions.

5. Build psychologically safe environments.

Genealogical and historical inquiry can evoke strong emotions. Offer opportunities to opt out, step away, or choose a different activity. Normalize diverse family experiences and emphasize that identity is shaped by many forces, not only ancestry.

By creating flexibility, honoring privacy, and recognizing diverse lived experiences, educators can ensure that all learners can engage meaningfully with the film’s themes of memory, identity, justice, and repair.

INTRODUCTION TO THE FILM



A stunning tribute to the resilience of Native people and their way of life, the Oscar-nominated documentary *Sugarcane*, from directors Julian Brave NoiseCat and Emily Kassie, is an epic cinematic portrait of a community during a moment of international reckoning.

In 2021, evidence of potential unmarked graves was discovered on the grounds of an Indian residential school in British Columbia run by the Catholic Church. After years of silence, the forced separation, assimilation, and abuse many children experienced at these segregated boarding schools was brought to light, sparking a national outcry against a system rife with abuse, designed to assimilate and disempower Indigenous communities. Set amidst a groundbreaking investigation, *Sugarcane* illuminates the beauty of a community breaking cycles of intergenerational trauma and finding the strength to persevere.

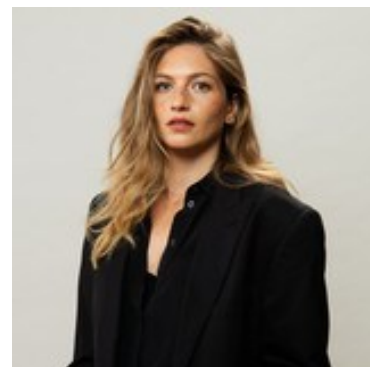
Sugarcane premiered at the Sundance Film Festival, where Julian and Emily won the Directing Award in the U.S. documentary competition. It has since been honored with more than 50 nominations and over 30 wins, including two Critics Choice Awards, the National Board of Review award for best documentary, and an Academy Award nomination.



DIRECTORS' STATEMENT

This film was born of haunting truths and mythic forces. It was made through the combined perspectives of insiders and outsiders.

From the outset, we knew that *Sugarcane* needed to convey how the past is present for the survivors of residential schools and their descendants, and how the death toll from a century-long colonial effort by the Church and government continues to rise. So, for nearly three years, we lived alongside participants, feeling the rawness of their pain and bearing witness to the bravery in their resilience, while documenting a vibrant world in a moment of historic reckoning.



Sugarcane Directors Julian Brave NoiseCat and Emily Kassie

Throughout, we were drawn to the contradictions we saw in the lives of our subjects: of faith and culture; of the beauty and weight of home and family, when those things have been so fundamentally broken; and of the pursuit of truth, which can both liberate and kill. But we also connected to the parts of this experience that transcended: of the humanity that called the film's participants to a greater, lasting purpose at the moment it mattered most; of the connection between departed ancestors and loved ones and the people they left behind; and of the forces that, for some reason, brought us together to tell this story.

To tell that kind of story, our filmmaking aimed to be at once intimate and epic. We took time to revere the awe-inspiring mountains, lakes and rivers of British Columbia and the dusky history of the Vatican — the Indigenous homelands and the imperial metropole that besieged them. We were alongside the film's participants as they dug graves for their friends, searched for painful truths in the recesses of their memories, and mustered the courage to confront representatives of the Church, the government, and their own families. You can feel their hesitation, the twitch of their fingers, the catch in their breath as they struggle to confront their deepest secrets and give voice to their shame.

We approached this project with common values and a shared vision — based as much on heart as intellect, and on vulnerability as much as experience. At many turns, making this film was the most significant experience of our lives. It brought us closer to Creation and whatever that thing is that is beyond and greater than ourselves.

Residential schools nearly annihilated the Indian way of life — a life imperiled by the pain and injustices of colonialism, yes, but also, overwhelmingly, a beautiful life full of family, culture and love. Our film aims to transform these dark truths into powerful legends that can endure and be remembered by future generations.

Julian Brave NoiseCat and Emily Kassie



Brief Timeline of Federal Indian Policy and Indian Boarding Schools in the United States

Colonization and Early U.S. Expansion (1492–1871)

European colonization and the expansion of the United States resulted in the displacement of Indigenous peoples, warfare, land dispossession, treaty-making, and efforts to assimilate Native peoples into settler society.

Treaty-Making Era (1778–1871)

The United States entered into hundreds of treaties with Tribal Nations. During this period, many Indigenous communities were forcibly removed from their homelands, including through the Indian Removal Act of 1830. Congress ended treaty-making with Tribal Nations in 1871.

Reservation, Allotment, and Assimilation Era (1870s–1934)

Federal policy increasingly focused on confining Indigenous peoples to reservations and assimilating Native peoples into Euro-American society. Indian Boarding Schools became a central tool of this policy.

Carlisle Indian Industrial School Opens — 1879

Founded by Richard Henry Pratt in Pennsylvania, Carlisle became the model for the federal Indian Boarding School system and hundreds of schools that followed.

Compulsory Boarding School Attendance Authorized — 1891

Congress authorized federal officials to compel Native children to attend school and withhold rations from families who resisted, significantly expanding the reach of the boarding school system.

Allotment and Assimilation Period — 1887–1934

The Dawes Act of 1887 authorized the division of communally held Tribal lands into individual allotments. During this period, Indian Boarding Schools reached their greatest extent. By 1926, more than 80 percent of school-age Native children were enrolled in boarding schools or other federal educational institutions.

Indian Reorganization Act — 1934

The Indian Reorganization Act marked a shift away from allotment and encouraged limited Tribal self-government, although many assimilationist policies remained in place.

Termination and Relocation Era (1953–1968)

Federal policy sought to terminate the government-to-government relationship between Tribal Nations and the United States and encouraged Indigenous people to relocate from reservations to urban centers.

Self-Determination Era (1975–Present)

Federal policy increasingly recognized Tribal sovereignty and supported Tribal control over education, health care, and other governmental services.



Closure of the Last Federally Operated Indian Boarding School — 1996

The final federally operated off-reservation Indian Boarding School, Intermountain Indian School in Utah, had closed earlier, but the boarding school era is generally considered to have extended into the late 20th century, with the last federally operated boarding school closing in 1996.

Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative Announced — 2021

The U.S. Department of the Interior launched a nationwide investigation into the history and legacy of the federal Indian Boarding School system.

Truth, Healing, and Accountability Efforts — 2022–Present

Federal, Tribal, state, and local initiatives continue to investigate boarding school histories, identify burial sites, document survivor experiences, and advance truth-telling and healing efforts.

Truth and Healing Commission Legislation Advances in Congress — 2025–2026

Bipartisan legislation to establish a Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies in the United States was reintroduced in Congress, reflecting growing national attention to the history and legacy of the boarding school system.

Extensive Historical Timeline of Documents:

An overview of significant events, policies, legislation, and documents in the history of Indigenous/non-Indigenous relations in what is now the United States.

<https://amin.las.iastate.edu/historical-timeline/>

Maps

Interactive Time-Lapse Map Shows How the U.S. Took More Than 1.5 Billion Acres From Native Americans (Source: [Slate Magazine](#))

National Atlas, Indian Tribes, Languages and Cultures (Source: [Library of Congress](#))

[Indian Boarding School Map](#) (Source: Boarding School Healing)

[Interactive Map of Indigenous Boarding Schools in the United States](#) (Source: Boarding School Healing)



THE HISTORY OF INDIAN BOARDING SCHOOLS IN THE UNITED STATES

For thousands of years before the arrival of Europeans, Indigenous peoples across what is now the United States maintained diverse nations, governments, languages, cultures, and educational systems. Children learned from parents, grandparents, elders, and community members through traditions and knowledge systems that had sustained Indigenous societies for generations.

The Indian Boarding School system emerged during a period of rapid U.S. expansion, warfare, and the forced displacement of Indigenous peoples. In 1824, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) was established within the U.S. War Department, reflecting the close relationship between federal Indian policy, military campaigns, and territorial expansion. Although the BIA was transferred to the Department of the Interior in 1849, federal policies toward Indigenous peoples continued to link education with broader efforts to control Indigenous lands, cultures, and communities.

Long before the creation of federally operated boarding schools, Indigenous children were separated from their families through mission schools, military institutions, captive schooling, and other forms of coerced education. By the late 19th century, federal officials increasingly embraced boarding schools as the preferred method of educating Native children. Policymakers believed that removing children from their families, languages, cultures, and Tribal Nations would accelerate their assimilation into American society.

Indian Boarding Schools were not simply educational institutions. They were one component of a larger federal project that included military campaigns, treaty violations, land allotment policies, and restrictions on Indigenous governance. By separating children from their families and communities, government officials hoped to weaken Indigenous nations, undermine cultural continuity, and facilitate the transfer of Indigenous lands into non-Indigenous control.

Attendance at boarding schools was frequently coerced. Federal agents, missionaries, and local authorities pressured families to surrender their children, often using threats, withholding rations, restricting access to resources, or other forms of coercion. In some cases, children were forcibly taken from their homes, and parents who resisted faced arrest, imprisonment, or other penalties. Many Indigenous families went to extraordinary lengths to protect their children, hiding them in remote camps, mountains, and forests to avoid school authorities.

In 1879, Captain Richard Henry Pratt founded the Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Pennsylvania, widely recognized as the first off-reservation Indian Boarding School in the United States. Carlisle became the model for hundreds of schools that followed. Pratt's philosophy was summarized in the phrase "Kill the Indian, and save the man," reflecting the belief that Indigenous identities, languages, and cultures should be eradicated and replaced with dominant Euro-American values and ways of life.

Over time, the boarding school system expanded across the country. The U.S. Department of the Interior has identified 526 federally supported Indian Boarding Schools that operated throughout the United States. By 1900, an estimated 75 percent of school-age Native children were enrolled in boarding schools or other federal educational institutions. By 1926, that figure had risen to more than 80 percent.

Life in the schools was highly regimented. Children were prohibited from speaking their Indigenous languages, practicing their cultures, or maintaining traditional forms of dress and appearance. Hair was cut, Indigenous names were replaced, military-style discipline was imposed, and students were expected to adopt Euro-American cultural and religious practices. Many schools operated on a labor-based model in which children spent substantial portions of their day performing agricultural, industrial, or domestic work rather than receiving academic instruction.

A central feature of the system was the “outing” program, first developed at Carlisle. Through this program, students were placed in white households, farms, and businesses, where they worked as domestic servants, laborers, and farmhands, often for little or no compensation. Supporters described the program as educational, but it also supplied nearby communities with a source of inexpensive labor and further separated children from their families and cultures.

Abuse was widespread throughout the boarding school system. Survivors have documented physical, emotional, psychological, cultural, and sexual abuse, as well as chronic neglect, overcrowding, malnutrition, and inadequate medical care. Students were often punished for speaking their languages, practicing their traditions, or maintaining connections to their communities. Disease spread rapidly in many schools, and thousands of children died from illness, malnutrition, neglect, accidents, violence, and other causes. Children had few avenues to report mistreatment or seek protection.

Despite these conditions, Indigenous children, families, and communities continually resisted. Students spoke their languages in secret, practiced their cultures underground, ran away from schools, maintained connections to their communities, and later used their education to advocate for Indigenous rights, sovereignty, and cultural survival. Indigenous resilience helped preserve languages, traditions, and identities that federal policy sought to erase.

The last federally operated Indian Boarding School closed in 1996, but the effects of the system continue to be felt today. The forced separation of children from their families disrupted the transmission of language, culture, parenting practices, and community relationships across generations. Survivors and their descendants continue to experience the impacts of this history, while Indigenous communities continue efforts to revitalize languages, recover cultural knowledge, locate missing children, and support healing.

In recent years, investigations have identified marked and unmarked burial sites at former boarding school locations, prompting renewed public attention to the history and legacy of the system. The U.S. Department of the Interior’s Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative has documented thousands of student deaths and continues to investigate the full scope of the boarding school system and its impacts.

Efforts to address this history are ongoing. Tribal Nations, survivors, descendants, researchers, educators, and community organizations continue to document boarding school experiences, recover the names of children who never returned home, protect burial sites, and advance truth-telling and healing initiatives. Across the United States, communities are working to confront this history and its lasting consequences while supporting Indigenous-led efforts toward remembrance, accountability, and healing.

We also recommend the [Historical Context of Indian Boarding Schools](https://pubs.nctm.org/view/journals/jrme/57/1/article-p8.xml?print) published by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics. It provides rich historical context and resources through the context of mathematical education in the United States, but this information is applicable for understanding the impact of Indian Boarding Schools on education more broadly in the United States. <https://pubs.nctm.org/view/journals/jrme/57/1/article-p8.xml?print>



Note on Language

Language shapes how people understand history, identity, and relationships. Words and terms can influence how individuals, communities, and events are perceived, and their meanings often change over time. Different communities, scholars, institutions, and governments may use the same terms in different ways.

The history of Indigenous peoples in North America is often described using terminology that reflects particular historical, legal, political, or cultural perspectives. For this reason, it is important to consider how terms are defined, who is using them, and the context in which they are used.

The definitions in this guide are intended to support learning and understanding. Readers are encouraged to engage thoughtfully with the language they encounter and to recognize that terminology can carry different meanings in different contexts.

Assimilation

Assimilation is a process through which individuals or groups adopt the language, cultural practices, values, or social norms of another society, often the dominant society. In discussions of Indigenous history, assimilation commonly refers to policies and practices intended to encourage or compel Indigenous peoples to abandon aspects of their cultural identities and adopt those of the broader society. When these changes are imposed through government policies or institutions, the process may be described as forced or coerced assimilation.

Captive Adoption

Captive adoption refers to practices in which captives are incorporated into a family, community, or nation and may assume social roles and responsibilities within that group. Such practices existed in a variety of societies, including some Indigenous nations in North America, and differed significantly across cultures and historical periods. Captive adoption should not be confused with later government-directed child removal policies, which often separated Indigenous children from their families and communities through schools, foster placements, or adoption programs.

Cultural Genocide

Cultural genocide is a term used by scholars, Indigenous communities, and some commissions of inquiry to describe policies or practices intended to destroy the cultural foundations of a group, including its language, traditions, institutions, cultural practices, and the transmission of knowledge between generations. The term is often used in discussions of Indigenous boarding and residential schools because these institutions sought to suppress Indigenous languages, cultures, and identities.

Dispossession

Dispossession refers to the loss of land, property, resources, or access to traditional territories through government actions, legal policies, forced removal, settlement, or other forms of coercion. In Indigenous history, dispossession is often used to describe the processes through which Indigenous peoples were deprived of lands and resources that had sustained their communities, economies, and ways of life.



Doctrine of Discovery

The Doctrine of Discovery refers to a set of legal and religious principles developed by European powers beginning in the 15th century. These principles were used to justify claims to lands inhabited by non-Christian peoples on the basis of “discovery.” Over time, the doctrine influenced colonial policies and legal concepts concerning land ownership and sovereignty. In the United States, its influence can be seen in legal decisions such as *Johnson v. M’Intosh* (1823), which helped establish federal doctrines regarding Indigenous land rights and titles. Many Indigenous nations and organizations continue to challenge the Doctrine of Discovery and its influence on law and policy.

First Nation

A First Nation is an Indigenous nation or community in Canada that is distinct from Inuit and Métis peoples. First Nations have diverse cultures, languages, histories, governance systems, and traditional territories. The term *First Nations* is commonly used in Canada to refer collectively to many of the Indigenous peoples who are neither Inuit nor Métis, while recognizing that each First Nation is a distinct people with its own identity and traditions.

Genocide

The United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1948) defines genocide as any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group: (a) killing members of the group, (b) causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group, (c) deliberately inflicting conditions of life calculated to bring about the group’s physical destruction in whole or in part, (d) imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group, or (e) forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

Ground-Penetrating Radar (GPR)

Ground-penetrating radar is a non-invasive geophysical technology used to identify and map subsurface features. GPR can detect anomalies and buried structures beneath the ground, but it cannot by itself confirm the presence of human remains.

Indian Reserve

An Indian reserve is a tract of land set aside by the Canadian federal government for the use and benefit of a First Nation. Reserves were established through historical treaties, government policies, and other processes that shaped relationships between Indigenous peoples and the Canadian state.

Indian Boarding Schools / Indian Residential Schools

Indian boarding schools (primarily in the United States) and Indian residential schools (primarily in Canada) were government-supported residential education systems that removed Indigenous children from their families and communities. These institutions sought to assimilate Indigenous children into Euro-American or Euro-Canadian society by discouraging or prohibiting Indigenous languages, cultural practices, and traditions.

Indigenous Peoples

Indigenous peoples is a collective term for the original peoples of a region and their descendants who maintain historical, cultural, and social connections to those lands and territories. In Canada, Indigenous peoples include First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples. In the United States, the term includes Native American, Alaska Native, and other Indigenous peoples, each with distinct nations, cultures, languages, and systems of governance.

Inuit

Inuit are a distinct Indigenous people whose homeland, Inuit Nunangat, encompasses the Arctic regions of Canada. Inuit have their own cultures, languages, histories, and systems of governance that are distinct from those of First Nations and Métis peoples.

Intergenerational Trauma

Intergenerational trauma refers to the ways in which the effects of trauma experienced by one generation may influence subsequent generations. This transmission can occur through family relationships, community experiences, cultural disruption, social conditions, and other psychological and social factors. Researchers continue to study the mechanisms through which trauma may affect future generations.

Manifest Destiny

Manifest Destiny was a 19th-century belief that the expansion of the United States across North America was justified, inevitable, or divinely ordained. The idea influenced U.S. policies and westward expansion, often at the expense of Indigenous peoples and their lands.

Métis

Métis are a distinct Indigenous people with their own histories, cultures, communities, and governance traditions. The Métis Nation emerged from the historical relationships between Indigenous and European peoples in what is now Canada and is recognized as one of Canada's three Indigenous peoples, alongside First Nations and Inuit.

Natal Alienation

Natal alienation is a concept used by historians and sociologists to describe the forced separation of individuals from their family, kinship networks, ancestry, and cultural inheritance. The term is often used in discussions of slavery, child removal policies, and other systems that disrupt the transmission of identity, community, and belonging across generations.

Powwow

A powwow is an Indigenous gathering that may include dance, song, celebration, and community activities. Powwows vary across Indigenous nations and communities and serve as important spaces for cultural expression, social connection, and the sharing of traditions.

Reconciliation

Reconciliation refers to efforts to address the impacts of past harms and improve relationships between individuals, communities, or institutions. In Indigenous contexts, reconciliation may involve truth-telling, acknowledgment of historical injustices, accountability, education, healing, and actions intended to strengthen relationships and support Indigenous rights.

Reparations

Reparations are measures intended to address harms caused by past injustices. They may include financial compensation, restitution of property or land, official apologies, memorialization, rehabilitation programs, policy reforms, or other actions intended to acknowledge and remedy historical harms.



Residential School Survivor

A residential school survivor is a person who attended a residential school and lived through that experience. The term is commonly used to recognize both the experience of attending the school and the lasting impacts that residential schools have had on individuals, families, and communities.

Settler Colonialism

Settler colonialism is a form of colonialism in which settlers establish permanent communities on Indigenous lands. Scholars use the term to describe the systems, institutions, and policies through which Indigenous peoples were displaced and settler societies were established. The concept is frequently used to analyze the historical and ongoing relationships between Indigenous peoples and settler states, including Canada and the United States.

Settler Schooling

Settler schooling refers to educational systems established or supported by settler governments, religious institutions, or colonial authorities. In Indigenous history, the term is often used to describe schools that sought to integrate Indigenous children into the dominant society, including mission schools, Indian boarding schools, and residential schools.

Trauma

Trauma refers to the emotional, psychological, physical, or social effects of experiencing or witnessing distressing events or circumstances that overwhelm an individual's ability to cope. The effects of trauma vary widely and may be short-term or long-lasting.

Tribal Nation

A Tribal Nation is an Indigenous government with inherent political authority that predates the establishment of the United States. Federally recognized Tribal Nations maintain government-to-government relationships with the U.S. federal government and exercise authority over their citizens, governments, and internal affairs as recognized through treaties, federal law, and court decisions.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada was a national commission established to document the history and impacts of the Indian Residential School system. Between 2008 and 2015, the commission gathered testimony from survivors, produced a historical record of the residential school system, and issued 94 Calls to Action aimed at advancing reconciliation in Canada.

CHIEF JOSEPH: REPRESENTATION, TRANSLATION, AND INTERPRETATION



Read: [6.2: Primary Source- Chief Joseph on Indian Affairs \(1877, 1879\) - Social Sci LibreTexts](#).
(This speech was translated and interpreted into written English.)

Representation, Translation, and Interpretation

Answer the following questions:

1. In the speech, what is Chief Joseph's main criticism of the "good words" spoken by the U.S. government?
 - A. The words are spoken in a language the Nez Percé do not understand.
 - B. They are spoken without any sincere intention of being backed by actions.
 - C. The government promises to provide horses, but only provides cattle.
 - D. They contradict the treaties drafted by General Miles.

2. Which persuasive appeal is Chief Joseph using in this quotation: "If the white man wants to live in peace with the Indian he can live in peace. There need be no trouble. Treat all men alike. Give them all the same law."
 - A. *Pathos* (Emotional appeal)
 - B. *Ethos* (Appeal to authority/ethics)
 - C. *Logos* (Appeal to logic and reason)
 - D. *Kairos* (Appeal to time-sensitivity)

3. What rhetorical purpose is served by Chief Joseph's repetition (anaphora) of the phrase "Good words" throughout his address?
 - A. It highlights the vast difference between empty government promises and the harsh realities of Native American life.
 - B. It shows his agreement with the U.S. policy regarding reservation management.
 - C. It acts as a tribute to the missionaries who taught his people to read.
 - D. It serves as a respectful greeting to the Congressmen in the audience.

4. Chief Joseph states, "All men were made by the same Great Spirit Chief. They are all brothers." What is he arguing through this comparison?
 - A. That Native Americans and white Americans should have equal political, legal and human rights.
 - B. That the Nez Percé and the U.S. military share the same religious beliefs.
 - C. That the government has a divine obligation to assimilate tribes.
 - D. That white settlers should surrender their land to the tribes.



5. Identify one quote from the speech where Chief Joseph utilizes *pathos* (appeal to emotion). Explain how this specific quote would have influenced the white, American political audience he was addressing. (Short essay answer)

Representation, Translation, and Interpretation

View and Read [Chief Joseph, the Nez-Percé](#), written by Charles Erskine Scott Wood (1852–1954) published in 1884 in *The Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine* (often called *Century Magazine*), one of the most prominent and influential American periodicals of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Charles Erskine Scott Wood was a U.S. Army lieutenant who was present at Chief Joseph's surrender in 1877. Though Wood is credited with transcribing Joseph's famous "I will fight no more forever" speech, historical consensus suggests Wood likely embellished and shaped the eloquent text based on a rough translation.

1. How do you think translation and interpretation of the same event (Chief Joseph's translated speech and C.E.S. Wood's account) landed differently on literate Euro-American audiences?



2. What is the advantage of telling a story in your first language to others who share your culture?



3. Are there advantages to hearing a story told from someone outside your culture?
4. What obstacles to understanding arise when reading or hearing an account of a culture you are not intimately familiar with?
5. What strategies, tools, or attitudes would you employ if your goal were a peaceful, mutually beneficial resolution to a culture clash?
6. Native American policies were controversial across the United States throughout its history, but ideas of “civilizing” people and the United States being a “melting pot” became part of the U.S. fabric. What do you think about these ideas today?

Representation, Translation, and Interpretation

1. In the speech, what is Chief Joseph's main criticism of the "good words" spoken by the U.S. government?
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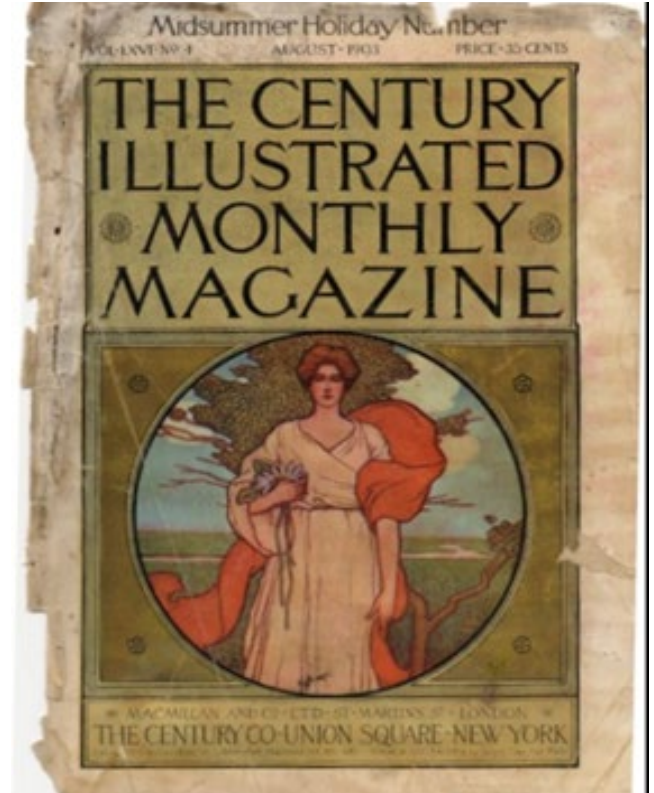
Short Essay Analysis: Answer will include:

1. Students pull a quote from the speech that resonates with them emotionally. The quote likely includes emotional language, perhaps emphasizing hope, suffering, grief, desperation, exile, or the moral pain of betrayal (for example, describing broken promises or loss of home/people).
2. Students hypothesize or infer how the quote (in the context of the larger article and the geopolitical situation) might have affected a Euro-American settler reader. In other words, the student explains how they believe Chief Joseph used pathos to strengthen his argument for that specific audience.

Representation, Translation, and Interpretation Answer Key

View and Read [Chief Joseph, the Nez-Percé](#). written by Charles Erskine Scott Wood (1852–1954) published in 1884 in *The Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine* (often called *Century Magazine*), one of the most prominent and influential American periodicals of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

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1. How do you think translation and interpretation of the same event (Chief Joseph’s translated speech and C.E.S. Wood’s account) landed differently on literate Euro-American audiences?

Expected points (in any combination):

- A translation/interpreter can shift tone, word choice, and emphasis, especially when there is no one “literal” English equivalent (or the literal equivalent is not known to the interpreter/translator).
- C.E.S. Wood’s account was written for a Euro-American magazine audience and may therefore have been styled specifically to fit Euro-American literary expectations in the late 1800s.
- Because Wood was a United States officer present at the surrender, his version may have seemed more credible to some readers.
- Even if the core meaning remained similar, the version that reads as “more eloquent” can influence how audiences *emotionally* and *morally* interpret the event (sympathy vs. condemnation, respect vs. dismissal) depending on their cultural framework or expectations.

2. What is the advantage of telling a story in your first language to others who share your culture?

Possible points:

- Greater emotional accuracy and cultural nuance (ability to use idioms, shared values, and culturally specific relational terms).
- Shared understanding of context (history, social norms, references, humor, spiritual meanings).
- Stronger community ownership and authenticity — your audience already understands much of your worldview and recognizes your “right” to an opinion.



3. Are there advantages to hearing a story told from someone outside your culture?

Advantages may include:

- The story may reach a wider audience who might not otherwise hear (in this case) Native voices directly.
- It may foster cross-cultural awareness, motivate empathy, and draw political attention, potentially bringing a local issue to a broader audience and bridging connections across time, space, and culture.
- (Potential disadvantage) Misunderstandings and misinterpretations can also occur, so it's a mixed benefit and requires the listener to be engaged in critical thought.

4. What obstacles to understanding arise when reading or hearing an account of a culture you are not intimately familiar with?

Obstacles may include:

- Missing cultural context (history, relationships, legal structures, spiritual meanings).
- Translation problems (words with no direct equivalent, differences in language structure/grammar/tone that are not easily conveyed).
- Stereotypes or preconceived beliefs shaping interpretation.
- Power imbalance affecting the interpretation of information (i.e., the dominant culture may treat its version as “official” truth or create justifications for not giving credibility to another culture’s experience or value structure).

5. What strategies, tools, or attitudes would you employ if your goal were a peaceful, mutually beneficial resolution to a culture clash?

Strategies, tools, or attitudes may include:

- Active listening and patience. Avoid assuming “one” correct worldview and give adequate time to work through issues.
- Seeking multiple sources and opinions, including voices from the affected community.
- Mutually define (and use) respectful communication and confirm understanding (clarify terms).
- Prioritize fairness, shared decision-making, and the well-being of all parties.
- Focus on actionability and accountability when creating agreements (treaties/contracts) based on current and anticipated human needs.

6. Native American policies were controversial across the United States throughout its history, but ideas of “civilizing” people and the United States being a “melting pot” became part of the U.S. fabric. What do you think about these ideas today?

Answers will vary, but student may discuss:

- Positive and negative connotations of the term “civilizing” and “melting pot.”
- Complications between intention and impact when these ideas were written into implicit and explicit American values,” and government and educational policy as they relate to languages, beliefs, and identities.
- A more modern/ethical view: cultural pluralism — people can contribute while keeping their identity.

Take It Further

Check out current Native American creators and influencers:

[How comics change mainstream narratives about Native Americans](#)

[Celebrate Our Heritage with These Twenty Native American Heroes | DC](#)

[Indigenous personalities are taking on social media | InFocus](#)

[Unrooted Podcast — The Indigenous Foundation](#)

[Comics by Indigenous Creators - A Reading List](#)

[Indian Day School by Thomas Edison, 1898](#)

[Century Magazine, Vol. 6 - 1884B](#)

[Land of the Spotted Eagle](#) by [Luther Standing Bear](#)

[© 2012 The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History \[www.gilderlehrman.org\]\(http://www.gilderlehrman.org\) Speech Excerpts Excerpt 1: Tecumseh Quotation](#)

ZITKÁLA-ŠÁ: ART AND ACTIVISM



Zitkála-Šá (“Red Bird”), aka Gertrude Simmons Bonnin, was born on the Yankton Indian Reservation in South Dakota on February 22, 1876. Zitkála-Šá was part of a broader movement of Indigenous leaders, writers, artists, and activists working to protect Native cultures and advocate for Native rights.

Her mother was of Sioux Dakota heritage, and her father was of French descent. When she was eight years old, she convinced her mother to send her to a Quaker-run boarding school in Wabash, Indiana, after being recruited by missionaries from the White’s Manual Labor Institute. After Zitkála-Šá graduated from White’s Manual Labor Institute, she enrolled in a teacher-training program at Earlham College and, by 1900, was teaching music and speech at the Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

Zitkála-Šá left the position at Carlisle within two years and worked for the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) at Standing Rock Indian Reservation as a clerk while continuing to write. After marrying Captain Raymond Talephause Bonnin, she moved to Utah, lived on the Uintah and Ouray Reservation for 14 years, and had a son, Raymond Ohiya Bonin. A talented musician and violinist, she wrote the libretto and songs for *The Sun Dance Opera* (1913), and wrote about Dakota history and culture, as well as government corruption regarding the reservation system and U.S. policies concerning Native Americans, including *American Indian Stories* (1921) and *Oklahoma’s Poor Rich Indians* (1927). Her essays and short stories appeared in national magazines such as *The Atlantic Monthly* and *Harper’s Monthly*.

She joined the Society of American Indians (SAI) in 1911, an organization founded for and by Native Americans to challenge the wardship status of Native Americans and their lack of U.S. citizenship, and became its secretary in 1917, moving to Washington, D.C. A vocal advocate, she spoke at the National Women’s Party headquarters in 1918. When the Nineteenth Amendment was ratified in 1920, at least one-third of Native adults lacked U.S. citizenship and therefore still could not vote. Zitkála-Šá urged white American women who now had the vote to help support an Indian citizenship bill. In 1924, in part due to Zitkála-Šá’s advocacy, Congress passed the Indian Citizenship Act, which granted full citizenship rights to all native-born people in the country.

In response, some states began to adopt strategies to disenfranchise Native people (similar to Jim Crow laws). Zitkála-Šá and her husband traveled across the country to register voters, connecting the political activism of Natives to advocate for rights and representation in the U.S. government by forming the National Council of American Indians in 1926. She died on January 26, 1938, and is buried at Arlington National Cemetery, sharing a headstone with her husband.



Zitkála-Šá
(“Red Bird”/Gertrude Simmons Bonnin)

<https://www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/zitkala-sa>

Abridged from Marisa Mathia, National Women’s History Museum



THE CUTTING OF MY LONG HAIR.

This excerpt from American Indian Stories was taken from a collection of largely autobiographical pieces by Zitkálá-Šá first collected and published in 1921. [The entire ebook is available on Project Gutenberg](#). This section uses period-specific language that reflects the power dynamics of the time.

The first day in the land of apples was a bitter-cold one; for the snow still covered the ground, and the trees were bare. A large bell rang for breakfast, its loud metallic voice crashing through the belfry overhead and into our sensitive ears. The annoying clatter of shoes on bare floors gave us no peace. The constant clash of harsh noises, with an undercurrent of many voices murmuring an unknown tongue, made a bedlam within which I was securely tied. And though my spirit tore itself in struggling for its lost freedom, all was useless.

A paleface woman, with white hair, came up after us. We were placed in a line of girls who were marching into the dining room. These were Indian girls, in stiff shoes and closely clinging dresses. The small girls wore sleeved aprons and shingled hair. As I walked noiselessly in my soft moccasins, I felt like sinking to the floor, for my blanket had been stripped from my shoulders. I looked hard at the Indian girls, who seemed not to care that they were even more immodestly dressed than I, in their tightly fitting clothes. While we marched in, the boys entered at an opposite door. I watched for the three young braves who came in our party. I spied them in the rear ranks, looking as uncomfortable as I felt. A small bell was tapped, and each of the pupils drew a chair from under the table. Supposing this act meant they were to be seated, I pulled out mine and at once slipped into it from one side. But when I turned my head, I saw that I was the only one seated, and all the rest at our table remained standing. Just as I began to rise, looking shyly around to see how chairs were to be used, a second bell was sounded. All were seated at last, and I had to crawl back into my chair again. I heard a man's voice at one end of the hall, and I looked around to see him. But all the others hung their heads over their plates. As I glanced at the long chain of tables, I caught the eyes of a paleface woman upon me. Immediately I dropped my eyes, wondering why I was so keenly watched by the strange woman. The man ceased his mutterings, and then a third bell was tapped. Every one picked up his knife and fork and began eating. I began crying instead, for by this time I was afraid to venture anything more.

But this eating by formula was not the hardest trial in that first day. Late in the morning, my friend Judéwin gave me a terrible warning. Judéwin knew a few words of English; and she had

overheard the paleface woman talk about cutting our long, heavy hair. Our mothers had taught us that only unskilled warriors who were captured had their hair shingled by the enemy. Among our people, short hair was worn by mourners, and shingled hair by cowards!

We discussed our fate some moments, and when Judéwin said, "We have to submit, because they are strong," I rebelled. "No, I will not submit! I will struggle first!" I answered.

I watched my chance, and when no one noticed, I disappeared. I crept up the stairs as quietly as I could in my squeaking shoes, — my moccasins had been exchanged for shoes. Along the hall I passed, without knowing whither I was going. Turning aside to an open door, I found a large room with three white beds in it. The windows were covered with dark green curtains, which made the room very dim. Thankful that no one was there, I directed my steps toward the corner farthest from the door. On my hands and knees I crawled under the bed, and cuddled myself in the dark corner.

From my hiding place I peered out, shuddering with fear whenever I heard footsteps near by. Though in the hall loud voices were calling my name, and I knew that even Judéwin was searching for me, I did not open my mouth to answer. Then the steps were quickened and the voices became excited. The sounds came nearer and nearer. Women and girls entered the room. I held my breath and watched them open closet doors and peep behind large trunks. Some one threw up the curtains, and the room was filled with sudden light. What caused them to stoop and look under the bed I do not know. I remember being dragged out, though I resisted by kicking and scratching wildly. In spite of myself, I was carried downstairs and tied fast in a chair.

I cried aloud, shaking my head all the while until I felt the cold blades of the scissors against my neck, and heard them gnaw off one of my thick braids. Then I lost my spirit. Since the day I was taken from my mother I had suffered extreme indignities. People had stared at me. I had been tossed about in the air like a wooden puppet. And now my long hair was shingled like a coward's! In my anguish I moaned for my mother, but no one came to comfort me. Not a soul reasoned quietly with me, as my own mother used to do; for now I was only one of many little animals driven by a herder.



Art & Activism: Zitkála-Šá (“Red Bird”)/Gertrude Simmons Bonnin)

Read “The Cutting of My Long Hair” and Zitkála-Šá’s abridged biography and answer the following questions.

- 1.** Which Native American tribe was Zitkála-Šá born into?
 - A. Navajo Nation
 - B. Yankton Dakota Sioux
 - C. Cherokee Nation
 - D. Ojibwe

- 2.** At what age did Zitkála-Šá leave her reservation to attend a missionary boarding school?
 - A. 5
 - B. 8
 - C. 12
 - D. 15

- 3.** In addition to being a political activist, in which artistic field(s) did Zitkála-Šá excel?
 - A. Painting and sculpture
 - B. Music and literature
 - C. Filmmaking
 - D. Ballet

- 4.** What was the name of the assimilationist boarding school she first attended in Wabash, Indiana?
 - A. Carlisle Indian Industrial School
 - B. White’s Indiana Manual Labor Institute
 - C. Hampton Institute
 - D. The Chilocco School

- 5.** Zitkála-Šá was a passionate advocate for which major civil rights movement of her era?
 - A. Women’s suffrage (voting rights)
 - B. The abolitionist movement
 - C. Labor union laws
 - D. The Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s

Respond to each question in 2–4 complete sentences.

1. Why do you think Zitkála-Šá used both her Dakota name (meaning “Red Bird”) and her European-American name (Gertrude Simmons Bonnin) throughout her life and career?
2. How did Zitkála-Šá use the arts (such as co-composing the Native American opera *The Sun Dance*) to challenge the forced assimilation of Indigenous peoples?
3. Read the following quote and write a short paragraph in response (5–7 sentences) supporting your position with examples.

“The melancholy of those black days has left so long a shadow that it darkens the path of years that have since gone by. These sad memories rise above those of smoothly grinding school days. Perhaps my Indian nature is the moaning wind which stirs them now for their present record. But, however tempestuous this is within me, it comes out as the low voice of a curiously colored seashell, which is only for those ears that are bent with compassion to hear it.” — Zitkála-Šá

Reflection Question: Based on this quote and your understanding of her activism, how do you think her experiences at assimilationist boarding schools shaped her later writings and activism? For the quote above, who do you think is Zitkála-Šá’s intended audience? Why?



Art & Activism: Zitkála-Šá (“Red Bird”)/Gertrude Simmons Bonnin)

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Respond to each question in 2–4 complete sentences.

1. Why do you think Zitkála-Šá used both her Dakota name (meaning “Red Bird”) and her European-American name (Gertrude Simmons Bonnin) throughout her life and career?

Answers will vary. Possible answer:

Access to dual identities: Zitkála-Šá used both names to navigate and bridge two distinct worlds. Her Dakota name honored her heritage, while her European-American name allowed her to communicate effectively with white audiences and institutions to advocate for Native American rights.

2. How did Zitkála-Šá use the arts (such as co-composing the Native American opera *The Sun Dance*) to challenge the forced assimilation of Indigenous peoples?

Answers will vary. Possible answer:

*Cultural preservation: She used European artistic mediums like literature and opera to showcase the depth, beauty, and validity of Native culture. By co-composing *The Sun Dance Opera*, she brought culturally specific sounds and themes to mainstream audiences, defying government bans on Indigenous religious practices.*

3. Read the following quote and write a short paragraph in response (5–7 sentences) supporting your position with examples.

“The melancholy of those black days has left so long a shadow that it darkens the path of years that have since gone by. These sad memories rise above those of smoothly grinding school days. Perhaps my Indian nature is the moaning wind which stirs them now for their present record. But, however tempestuous this is within me, it comes out as the low voice of a curiously colored seashell, which is only for those ears that are bent with compassion to hear it.” — Zitkála-Šá

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Answers will vary. Key elements may include:

- Defining her audience as any people who are compassionate and paying attention.
- Acknowledgment of sadness and persistent memories that have not been resolved.
- Curiosity around the origins of her Indian heritage is the motivation for needing to share her memories/stories as a means of advocating for change.
- Specific connection/references pulled directly from the biography handout or her autobiographical writing.

Take It Further: Current Connections

[Ruth H. Burns on Historical Trauma as a Native Woman | Atmos:](#)

Ruth H. Burns discusses the experience of being notified that hair clippings from her dead relatives were being reclaimed from the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology at Harvard University as part of repatriation efforts by the Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate tribe. The clippings were likely connected to the forced hair cuttings at boarding schools. *“This is the sacred hoop of life being mended. This is a mighty wrong, being set right.”*

[My Son’s Hair is Part of a Thousand-Year-Old Tribal Culture. His School Called it a ‘Fad.’ | American Civil Liberties Union:](#) Ashley Lomboy discusses being told by her son’s school that his hair violates the school’s “grooming standards” for boys. As a member of the Waccamaw Siouan Tribe of North Carolina, her son wears his hair in accordance with his cultural and spiritual traditions.

[Letter to School Board Trustees | American Civil Liberties Union](#)

[Legacy of Trauma: The Impact of American Indian Boarding Schools Across Generations:](#) Dr. Denise K. Lajimodiere of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa in Belcourt, North Dakota, discusses both the personal and broad cultural implications for families affected by Indian Boarding Schools. She is one of the founders of the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition (N-NABS-HC) and was named a North Dakota state Poet Laureate. At the end of the article is an extensive “Additional Resources” list.



RUTH MUSKRAT: PRIMARY RESOURCE IN A SECONDARY FRAME



Ruth Muskrat presenting *Red Man in the United States* to President Coolidge.

<https://alumnae.mtholyoke.edu/blog/ruth-musk rats-speech-to-president-coolidge-december-13th-1923/>

Ruth Muskrat's Speech to President Coolidge, December 13, 1923

"This volume of the *Red Man in the United States* is presented to the 'Great White Father' in behalf of the many Indian students of America. It is a book which bears the best we have to offer — the story of our struggles and our tragedies, of our victories and our developments. The volume presents the results of an exhaustive investigation made under the auspices of what is now known as the Institute of Social and Religious Research. It gives, for the first time, a comprehensive account of the social, economic, and religious conditions among my people as they are today. It is the only study of its kind that has ever been undertaken, and it will perhaps remain unique in this respect since we may reasonably hope that when the time would ordinarily be ripe for another such study, what is known as 'the Indian problem' will have ceased to exist.

"Back on the Cheyenne reservation in Oklahoma, Indian women have worked with loving and painstaking care to make this gift worthy for the 'Great White Father,' weaving into this beaded

cover the symbolic story of our race — the story of the old type of Indian, greeting with the hand of friendship the founders of this great nation, and the story of the new Indian emerging from his semi-barbaric state, tilling the soil, and building for citizenship under the guidance of school.

"There have been so many discussions of the so-called Indian problem. May not we, who are Indian students of this generation, who must face the burdens of that problem, say what it means to us? You know that in the old days there were mighty Indian leaders — men of vision, of courage, and of exalted ideals. History tells us of Chief Powhatan, who met strange people on the shores of his country, and called them brothers: Massasoit, who offered friendship, and shared his kingdom. Then appeared another type of leader, the war chief, fighting to defend his home and his people. The members of my race will never forget the name of King Phillip, of Chief Joseph, of Tecumseh. To us they will be revered as great leaders who had the courage to fight, 'campaigning for their honor, martyrs to the soil of their fathers.' Again the order changes, and we have other leaders coming forth to find new paths. Cornstalk, the great orator; Red Jacket of the Senecas; and Sequoyah of the Cherokees. It was not an accident that these leaders were great. There was some hidden energy, some great driving inner ambitions, some keen penetration of vision that urged them on.

“What made these older leaders great still lives in the hearts of the Indian youths of today. The same potential greatness lies deep in the souls of the Indian students who today must become the leaders of the new era. Our old life has gone. A new trail must be found, for the old one is not good to travel farther. We are glad to have it so. But these younger leaders who must guide their people along new and untried paths have perhaps a harder task before them than the fight for freedom our older leaders made. Ours must be the problem of leading this vigorous and by no means dying race of people back to their rightful heritage of nobility and greatness. Ours must be the task of leading through these difficult stages of transition into economic independence, into a more adequate expression of their art and awakened spiritual vigor. Ours is a vision as keen as any penetrating as any vision of old. We want to understand and to accept the civilization of the white man; we want to become citizens of the United States and to share in the building of this great nation that we love. But we want also to preserve the best that is in our own civilization. We want to make our own unique contribution to the civilizations of the world — to bring our own gifts to the altar of that great spiritual and artistic unity which such a nation as America must have. This is the Indian problem which we who are Indians find ourselves facing.

“In order to solve it, we must have schools; we must have encouragement and help from our White Brothers. Already we have many schools, but the number is pitifully inadequate. And already the beginnings toward an intelligent and sympathetic understanding of our needs and our longings have been made through efforts as this book represents. For reasons today, as never before, the trail ahead for the Indian looks clear and bright with promise. But it is yet many long, weary miles until the end.

“It is out of gratitude for the opportunities for education and culture which have been afforded us by the interest of the white man, and our love for this nation to which we are eager to contribute our best, that this book is presented to our ‘Great White Father’ in behalf of the Indian students of America.”

[Mt. Holyoke’s Presentation of Ruth Muskrat’s Speech to President Coolidge, December 13, 1923](#)



Analyzing Mt. Holyoke's Presentation of Ruth Muskrat's Speech

As you read the text of [Ruth Muskrat's Speech to President Coolidge, December 13, 1923 – Alumnae Association](#), look at the webpage layout and the images embedded on the webpage. Think like a historian to analyze the speech text as a **primary source** and the webpage presentation of the information as a **secondary source**.

Write down questions and ideas of what primary documents you could search for to create a more complete picture of the people, places, and times brought up in the original speech, and do the same for the creators who are contextualizing the information. In the blank column, jot down your notes as you view and read. This section uses period-specific language that reflects the power dynamics of the time.

What school's webpage is hosting Ruth Muskrat's speech?	
What details about who Ruth Muskrat is and where she comes from are in her speech?	
What questions about her are unanswered?	
What does the speech reveal about her history and point of view?	
Who do you believe was the intended audience for Ruth Muskrat's speech?	
Who do you believe is the intended audience for this webpage?	
What do you already know about Calvin Coolidge's policies regarding Native Americans?	
Which Native American leaders does Ruth highlight in her speech?	
What is Ruth's call to action in this speech?	
If you were a prospective student of this school, what assumptions would you make about it based on this webpage?	

IMAGE ANALYSIS: EVIDENCE OR POLITICAL THEATER?



Part 1: First Impressions

Look at all five images on the **Handout: Evidence or Political Theater?** Imagine you are seeing this group of images in a mass media format (on a TV show, film documentary, magazine, textbook, social media platform, or video game). For each image, in a short paragraph or using bullet points, describe the story these images tell about the relationship between the United States government and Native Americans.

Part 2: Image Focus

Choose one image from the **Handout: Evidence or Political Theater?** Use the [Photo Analysis Worksheet](#) created by the National Archives and Records Education staff to capture your impressions of the image.

Reset Form		Photo Analysis Worksheet	Print Form
Step 1. Observation			
A.	Study the photograph for 2 minutes. Form an overall impression of the photograph and then examine individual items. Next, divide the photo into quadrants and study each section to see what new details become visible.		
B.	Use the chart below to list people, objects, and activities in the photograph.		
	People	Objects	Activities
Step 2. Inference Limit response for each question to 5 lines of text			
Based on what you have observed above, list three things you might infer from this photograph.			
Step 3. Questions			
A.	What questions does this photograph raise in your mind?		
B.	Where could you find answers to them?		
Reset Form		Designed and developed by the Education Staff, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC 20408	Print Form



Image Analysis: Evidence or Political Theater?



On an 1870 cover of *Harper's Weekly*, President Ulysses S. Grant is shown greeting the Oglala Chief Red Cloud who came to visit him in Washington, D.C. Library of Congress

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/ulysses-grants-failed-attempt-to-grant-native-americans-citizenship-180971198/>



Charles Curtis with a Native American in 1929.

Harris & Ewing/Library Of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division;

<https://www.kcur.org/history/2020-11-09/the-countrys-first-vice-president-of-color-was-a-native-american-from-the-kansas-territory>



(Original Caption) Meeting the President. Washington: President Kennedy met with representatives of 90 American Indian tribes at the White House today and was presented with the Declaration of Indian Purpose. During the ceremony, Kennedy described the American Indian as the “First Citizen” and said all Americans have a strong obligation to improve the living conditions of the Indians. (Left to right) Eleanor Red Fawn Smooth, Mohawk-Cherokee Tribe, Connecticut; Kennedy; and Calvin W. McGhee, Atmore, Louisiana, representing the Creek Nation east of the Mississippi.

Image provided by Getty Images.

https://photos.com/featured/president-kennedy-with-native-american-bettmann.html?product=art-print&srlti-d=AfmBOorOsoqTUUxuCBi_01O7iFq7qiuDA9nbBhDrSA7os13RrhMrHaFA



President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama attended the Cannon Ball Flag Day Powwow in Cannon Ball, North Dakota, on June 13, 2014. Official White House Photo by Pete Souza
<https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2014/06/20/president-and-first-ladys-historic-visit-indian-country/>



President Donald Trump listens with Navajo Code Talkers in the Oval Office of the White House during an event to honor Native American code talkers who served in World War II, on Nov. 27, 2017 in Washington, DC. Brendan Smialowski / AFP - Getty Images
<https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/white-house/trump-calls-warren-pocahontas-event-honoring-native-americans-n824266>



Gaswéñdah: The Two Row Wampum, The Great Law of Peace (Kaianere'kó:wa), and U.S. Concurrent Resolution 28

Gaswéñdah: The Two Row Wampum

The Two Row Wampum, or *Gaswéñdah*, is one of the oldest foundational treaties between Indigenous and European peoples in North America. While the Dutch recorded the treaty on paper with silver chains, the Haudenosaunee preserved it orally and visually through the wampum belt. Established in 1613 between the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) and the Dutch, it outlines a relationship of peaceful coexistence, mutual respect, and strict non-interference. Today, it remains a vital philosophical and legal framework for Indigenous sovereignty, self-determination, and nation-to-nation relations.



<https://www.onondaganation.org/culture/wampum/two-row-wampum-belt-guswenta/>

The Symbolism

- The Purple Rows represent two separate vessels traveling down the River of Life side-by-side. One vessel is a canoe carrying Haudenosaunee culture, laws, and ways of life. The other is a European ship carrying the newcomers' laws, culture, and religion.
- The Principle of Non-Interference is represented by two paths that do not intersect, symbolizing that neither group will attempt to steer, control, or assimilate the other.
- The Three White Rows: Symbolize peace, friendship, and forever.

To explore more about the history and protocols of this living treaty, and to further understand its ongoing significance, visit the [Onondaga Nation Two Row Wampum](https://www.onondaganation.org/culture/wampum/two-row-wampum-belt-guswenta/) page or the [Canadian Museum for Human Rights](#) overview.



The Great Law of Peace (or Kaianere’kó:wa)

The Great Law of Peace (or Kaianere’kó:wa) is the oral constitution and foundational governance of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) Confederacy. Established well before European contact, it united original Indigenous nations — the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, and Seneca — under a shared vision of peace, justice, and democratic principles.

Some historians believe the Great Law of Peace served as a major structural inspiration for the United States Constitution, with figures like Benjamin Franklin drawing heavily on the Confederacy’s model of federalism and balance of power.

Key Principles and Mechanics:

- Democratic governance: It established one of the world’s oldest participatory democracies, featuring a Grand Council with checks, balances, and a division of powers among the member nations.
- Role of women: Haudenosaunee society is matrilineal. Clan Mothers hold the power to select or impeach male leaders (sachems) and exercise veto power over any council decisions regarding war.
- Fundamental rights: The law codified core societal rights, including freedom of speech, freedom of religion, and the right to collective consensus in decision-making.
- Wampum records: Instead of being written, the law was historically recorded and taught through intricate beaded wampum belts, which served as mnemonic devices to recall the Confederacy’s history and laws.
- Tree of Peace: The Confederacy is symbolized by an Eastern White Pine called the “Tree of Peace,” where the nations symbolically buried their weapons to maintain harmony.

To learn more about the oral traditions and continuing legacy of the Confederacy, you can read about it on the [Oneida Nation](#) or explore educational resources provided by the [Britannica](#) entry on Haudenosaunee society.

IMAGE: [Oren Lyon’s painting of the Tree of Peace](#), under which the Haudenosaunee Confederacy was formed many hundreds of years ago. The painting now appears in the brochure for Syracuse University’s new Certificate in Iroquois Linguistics for Language Learners brochure.



Concurrent Resolution

A Concurrent Resolution is an official document or statement passed by both chambers of Congress (the House of Representatives and the Senate). It is used to express the “will” or sentiment of Congress on a certain issue, handle internal business, or create a temporary joint committee. It does not have the force of law and does not need the President’s signature.

A High School Analogy

- A Bill = A New School Rule: Needs approval from the Principal (President) and applies to everyone. If broken, there are consequences (it becomes law).
- A Concurrent Resolution = A Student Council Statement: Both the junior and senior classes vote to agree on something. (E.g., “We think the dress code should be updated.”) It shows where the student body stands, but it doesn’t actually change the official school handbook.

Read [Concurrent Resolution 28](#) and review the handouts “*Gaswéñdah*: The Two Row Wampum” and “The Great Law of Peace (or *Kaianere’kó:wa*)”

Answer the following questions:

1. What cultural values are expressed in Concurrent Resolution 28?
2. In what ways is Concurrent Resolution 28 similar to the Two Row Wampum or The Great Law of Peace?
3. In what ways is Concurrent Resolution 28 different?
4. Reflect: In what ways do laws shape culture? In what ways does a culture shape its laws?



Take It Further

Explore these details on the [Indian Boarding School Commission Bill](#) from The National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition, which offers an update on both the House of Representatives Resolution and the Senate Bill being put forth to address the history and legacy of Indian Boarding Schools in the United States. It includes links to both the House and Senate documents as well as an advocacy toolkit.

Visit [September 30 – National Day of Remembrance for U.S. Indian Boarding Schools – NABS](#).

Visit [Close Up Washington D.C. – Indian Boarding Schools: The Truth and Healing Commission](#).

IMAGE ANALYSIS: RESPONDING TO PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SOURCES



In “Before-and-After Portraiture: Photography and Time at the Carlisle Indian Industrial School,” María Beatriz H. Carrión analyzes before-and-after portraits to discuss the legacies of Indigenous boarding education. She argues that while the photographs themselves were tools used to construct and deconstruct Native American “otherness,” a careful viewer will also find subtle signs of Native American resistance.

Before reading:

1. Quickly scan the photos. Jot down your initial impressions.
2. Now look more closely at each image. List the people, objects, and activities you see. What do you notice about their expressions, clothing, hairstyles, and posture?
3. Why do you think these photos were taken? Who might they have been for (e.g., government officials, charitable donors, other tribes)?
4. What *can't* you learn about a student (like Tom Torlino) just by looking at the photos? What other sources could a historian use to get a more complete picture of a moment captured in time?

Read

[“Before-and-After Portraiture: Photography and Time at the Carlisle Indian Industrial School” by María Beatriz H. Carrión – Rutgers Art Review](#)

After reading:

For each image analyzed by Carrión, ask and answer these two questions:

1. Do I see what she sees? (I.e., In what ways do I agree with her analysis?)
2. What do I disagree with or find confusing about her analysis?



“THE ADVANTAGES OF MINGLING...”

Close Read: “The Advantages of Mingling Indians with Whites”

by R.H. Pratt



Richard Henry Pratt (1840–1924) was a United States Army officer best known as the founder and longtime superintendent of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Pennsylvania. After fighting in the American Civil War, Pratt commanded African American “Buffalo Soldiers” on the western frontier during the Red River War. In 1875, Pratt was placed in charge of Native American prisoners of war at Fort Marion in St. Augustine, Florida. He implemented strict military protocols — including cutting men’s hair, enforcing English-only education, and requiring uniforms — believing this forced assimilation was a path to “saving” Indigenous people from extinction. Using his experience at Fort Marion, Pratt founded the Carlisle School in 1879. It was the first off-reservation, government-funded Native American boarding school in the U.S. and served as the model for dozens of similar institutions. His philosophy demanded the total erasure of Native languages, traditions, and family ties in order to assimilate Indigenous youth into Euro-American society.

Learn more here: [Richard Henry Pratt, His Family, and Teachers, 1901](#) | [Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center](#)

The National Conference of Charities and Correction (NCCC) was a premier American social welfare organization formed in 1874 to address systemic poverty, crime, and mental illness. It served as a vital forum for early social reformers to debate policies and professionalize the field. The NCCC was foundational in shaping modern social work, social policy, and the scientific approach to human relations. It pioneered the application of evidence to social problems and helped transition social assistance from informal, localized charity to organized, systemic social work as a recognized profession. Topics included prison and police reform, child welfare, mental health and disability, and urban poverty.

The organization evolved over time, eventually dropping “Charities and Correction” from its name in 1917 as the profession pivoted toward modern social work, becoming “The National Conference on Social Welfare.”

Archival collections on the [Social Welfare History Project](#) or search through the [University of Michigan Library Digital Collections](#).

Pratt’s worldview reflects a dominant assimilation/settler-colonial ideology of the time. Similarly, the work of NCCC also reflected the social and racial theories of this time period, including the way that social warfare often reinforced racial bias, settler ideologies, white supremacy, and classism.





Close Reading

As you read [“The Advantages of Mingling Indians with Whites” by R.H. Pratt in Proceedings of the National Conference of Charities and Correction, at the ... Annual Session held in ...](#), answer the following questions, pulling direct quotes from the document:

1. List the anecdotal evidence R.H. Pratt gave regarding how he saw individual Native Americans change after interacting with settler-colonial culture.

2. What does Pratt mean when he says “Kill the Indian in him, and save the man”? Based on the text, what specific cultural traits or practices does he want to erase?

3. How did Pratt characterize George Washington’s approach to Native Americans?

4. How did Pratt characterize Thomas Jefferson’s approach to the Native Americans?

5. Pratt cites Samuel Milroy’s (an agent for the Miami Indians, who then numbered about 700) reporting to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs in 1839. At the time of Pratt’s writing in 1892, what was the population of the same group of Miami Indians?

6. What sorts of documents could you research to check Pratt’s assertions?

7. What does Pratt, through his Osage graduate, say is the reason for population decline amongst the Osage?

8. Which Constitutional amendment does Pratt use to bolster his argument?

9. How does Pratt characterize white culture's hypocrisy when characterizing Native American scalping as inhumane?
10. What reasons does Pratt attribute a "chronic condition of helplessness"?
11. How does Pratt describe the reservation system? Why does he believe it is detrimental to both the Native peoples and the United States government?
12. What does Pratt give as solutions to the "chronic condition of helplessness"?
13. Pratt emphasizes how the environment shapes an individual and opposes segregation, two views widely accepted today. What parts of Pratt's argument make a modern audience cringe? What do you think American society has learned since this was written in 1892? How do you think we learned it?
14. How does Pratt describe the economic advantage of bringing Native Americans into the dominant culture of 1892?
15. How do the lived experiences shared in *Sugarcane* directly challenge Pratt's arguments?
16. According to Pratt, why does he argue that segregated "Indian schools" are counterproductive? What is his vision for integrating Native youth into white society?
17. In what ways does Pratt's argument seem logical, and in what ways does it rely on racial prejudices or flawed assumptions about Native cultures?
18. Pratt genuinely believed he was helping Native Americans. How does his speech reflect a "paternalistic" attitude? How do you reconcile good intentions with destructive outcomes?



“INDIAN NAMES” BY JULIAN NOISECAT

Media Studies: Broken Links, Digital Fragments, and Lost Context in a Digital Age

“Unlock this article after an Ad”

“This could be because the link you clicked was not formed properly
or because the page has been deleted”

404 - File or directory not found.

**The resource you are looking for might have been removed, had its name changed,
or is temporarily unavailable.**

We looked high and low. But alas! Page not found.

“You are not connected to the internet”

“Gain unlimited access, Subscribe here”

Current technological advances make it easy to believe that any information we seek is at our fingertips. However, along with sheer information overload, there are now digital fragments and broken links, paywalls, and being directed to misinformation via algorithms, as well as poorly cited or uncited works that students and professionals must investigate and put into context using either bias or best practices.

Sugarcane tells Julian Brave NoiseCat’s personal story of investigating his father’s origins, and connects it to the broader history of Canada’s residential schools. Researchers, investigators, anthropologists, and historians conduct fieldwork to preserve and pass on physical evidence and culture for present use and future generations. The film highlights how much can be lost within one generation due to internal and external acts of suppression.

As you engage with the history and legacy of Indian Boarding Schools, it is important to hone your research and critical thinking skills and understand how much time it takes (for you) to give a document your full attention.

Read

“Indian Names” by Julian Brave NoiseCat

As you read, fill out the graphic organizer to pull quotes, or add your own ideas and questions as they relate to the **Media Studies Key Terms Handout 2**.

Remember

Each person/student will take different amounts of time to do quality work and there is no expectation that you will finish the article within the time allotted for the assignment.

Pro Tip

Don’t worry about doing this “right” or if some parts of the article are more difficult to understand. Remember that learning is a creative process. Use this as a space to take notes if it helps you connect to Julian’s narrative and to identify what elements of this piece connect with you.

Representation	Audience	Institutions



Representation	Audience	Institutions

MEDIA STUDIES KEY TERMS



Institutions

The organizations and industries that produce media. This covers ownership (e.g., conglomerates), distribution methods, commercial factors (advertising), and government regulation.

Academic integrity

The commitment to act honestly, ethically, and responsibly in all educational and research activities. It is the foundation of the learning process and ensures that all ideas, research, and academic work are fairly represented and properly credited.

Cultural humility

A term borrowed from social work. For our purposes, we will define it as an ongoing practice of self-reflection to recognize one's own biases, honor others as experts of their own lived experience, and remain open to collaboration, correction, and updating one's beliefs when new information or experiences warrant it.

Cultural competence

Another borrowed term that for our purposes means (1) acknowledging that it is impossible to understand every aspect of someone else's culture and lived experience, (2) that cultural identity (whether one's own or another's) is ever changing and evolving, (3) that a single person often (if not always) has intersecting identities that make up their culture, and (4) committing to learning about and from others without an attitude of cultural superiority.

Cultural pluralism

(As defined by [oxford-review.com](https://www.oxford-review.com)) A societal framework in which multiple distinct cultures coexist harmoniously, each maintaining its unique identity while participating equally in the broader society. Unlike assimilation, which often expects minority groups to conform to the dominant culture, cultural pluralism celebrates diversity, promoting mutual respect and inclusivity. In a culturally pluralistic society, no single culture is seen as superior; instead, all cultures are recognized and valued for their contributions.

Media studies

An interdisciplinary field that examines how information and entertainment are produced, distributed, and consumed. The discipline is anchored by four fundamental pillars: Representation, Audience, Institution, and Language.

Media language

The tools and codes used to construct meaning (e.g., typography, camera angles, color theory, audio design, and narrative structure).

Representation

How media texts portray specific events, places, or groups of people. This concept explores the creation and reinforcement of stereotypes and power dynamics within society.



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