



# “Native American Boarding Schools: Education for Cultural Genocide”

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# AGENDA

- History of Boarding Schools
- Testimonials
- National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition (N-NABS-HC)



# Brief History of Indian Boarding School Policy

- Indian Civilization Act Fund March 3, 1819
- President Grant's Peace Policy
  - To civilize and Christianize Native children through removal to remote off reservation boarding schools
  - Churches thus assumed charge of the intellectual and moral education of Native children and the eradication of their culture.



*“The only good Indian is a dead Indian”*

Pratt subscribed to the principle:


*“Kill the Indian in him and save the man.”*






## Pratt

“Transfer the savage-born infant to the surroundings of civilization, and he will grow to possess a civilized language and habit.”




*“It is cheaper to educate Indians than to kill them”*

Indian Commissioner Thomas Morgan speaking at the establishment of the Phoenix Indian School in 1891



“The Indian is *DEAD* in you. Let all that is Indian within you die!...you cannot become truly American citizens, industrious, intelligent, cultured, civilized until the *INDIAN* within you is *DEAD*.”

Reverend J.A. Lippincott at one Carlisle commencement



“I have taken much Pains to purge all the Indian out of him, but after all a little of it will sometimes appear.”

(Rev. Eleazar Wheelock, Founder of Dartmouth)



**“The only alternative left is civilization or annihilation, absorption or extermination”**

**(Indian School Superintendent, Kansas, 1888)**

**“Savage and civilized cannot live and prosper on the same ground – one of the two must die.”**

**(Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Henry Price, 1881)**




# First Boarding Schools

- Carlisle:
  - Established in 1879, Pennsylvania
  - By Pratt
  
- Chemawa
  - Established: February, 1880 Oregon
  - By: Capt. M. C. Wilkinson, detailed from the Army for purpose of creating the school



**“Kid snatching”**


**The Stolen  
Generation**



“They were literally kidnapped, loaded on wagons or trains, and all of them thought at any moment they were going to die.”

LaRee Bates, Heard Museum Boarding School Exhibit





“The agent grabbed me from the old Cree couple that raised me. They would tell me to run and hide in the bush. Put me on a train, it took three days and three nights to get to Chemawa. I couldn’t speak a word of English and every time I talked the matron would slap me.”

Leo Lajimodiere, 76. Chippewa. Chemawa records show he was nine years old entering the first grade.

# Haskell Babies





- **Arrival**

# Chemawa Train Station



# Arrival

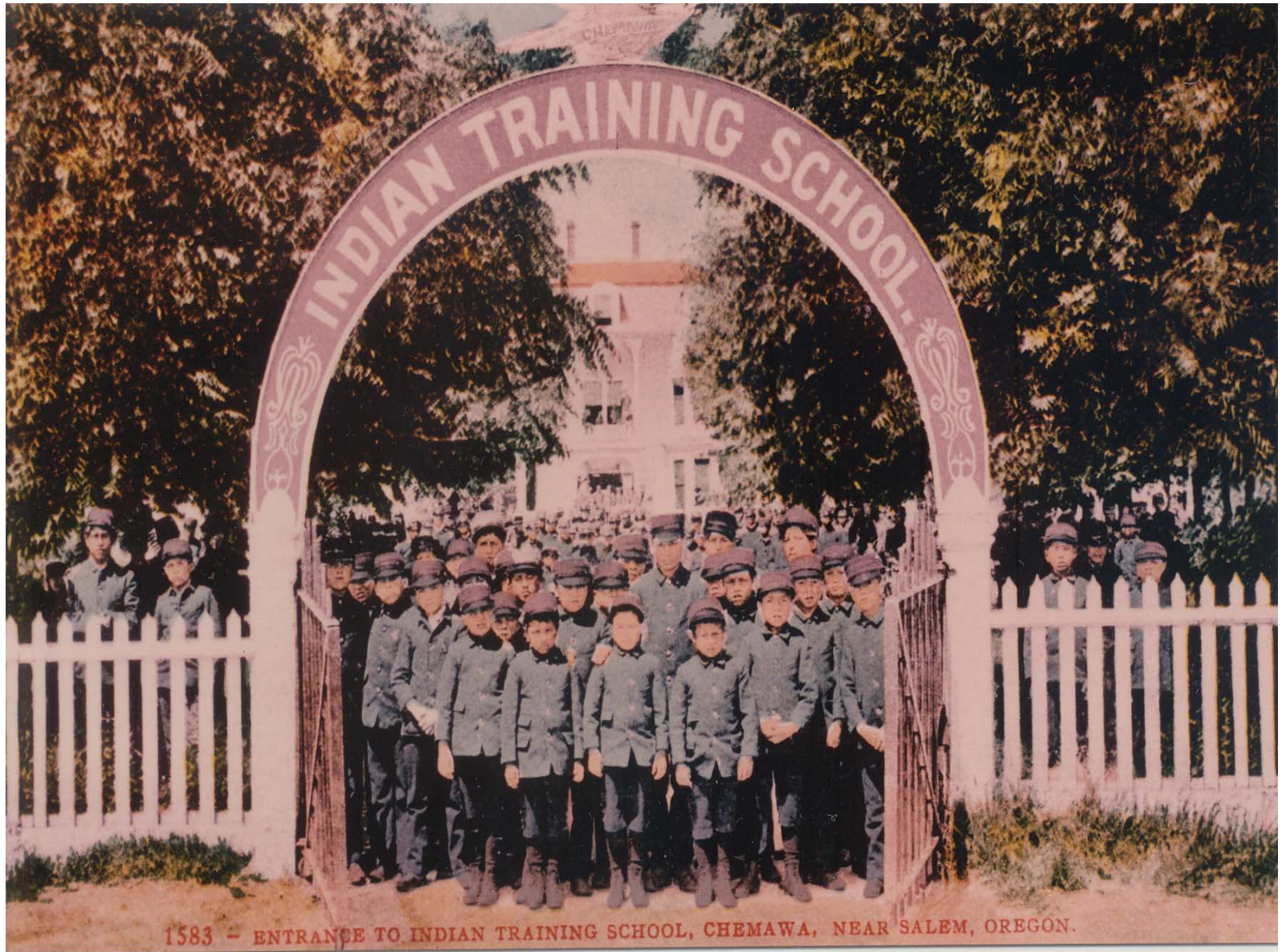




# Arrival







1583 - ENTRANCE TO INDIAN TRAINING SCHOOL, CHEMAWA, NEAR SALEM, OREGON.

# Chemawa Little Boys Dorm







# Names

For convenience, an English “Christian name” was given and sometimes the Indian name retained as a surname.

Harry Sam

Silas Bob

Lissie Pete

Wayquah geshig (Dawn of Day) = John Rogers

Beatrice Beads on Ankle = Beatrice B. Hail




# Uniforms

“Wearing school clothing and marching uniforms was mandatory...to impose conformity and military discipline on the students. Upon their arrival traditional clothing, seen as a shell of savagery, was literally cast off.”


(Owen Lindauer, 2008)





“They gave me the number 76. I was number 76. All my clothes, underwear, socks, dresses had the number 76. When my laundry came back folded, it had a slip of paper on top with the number 76 on it.”

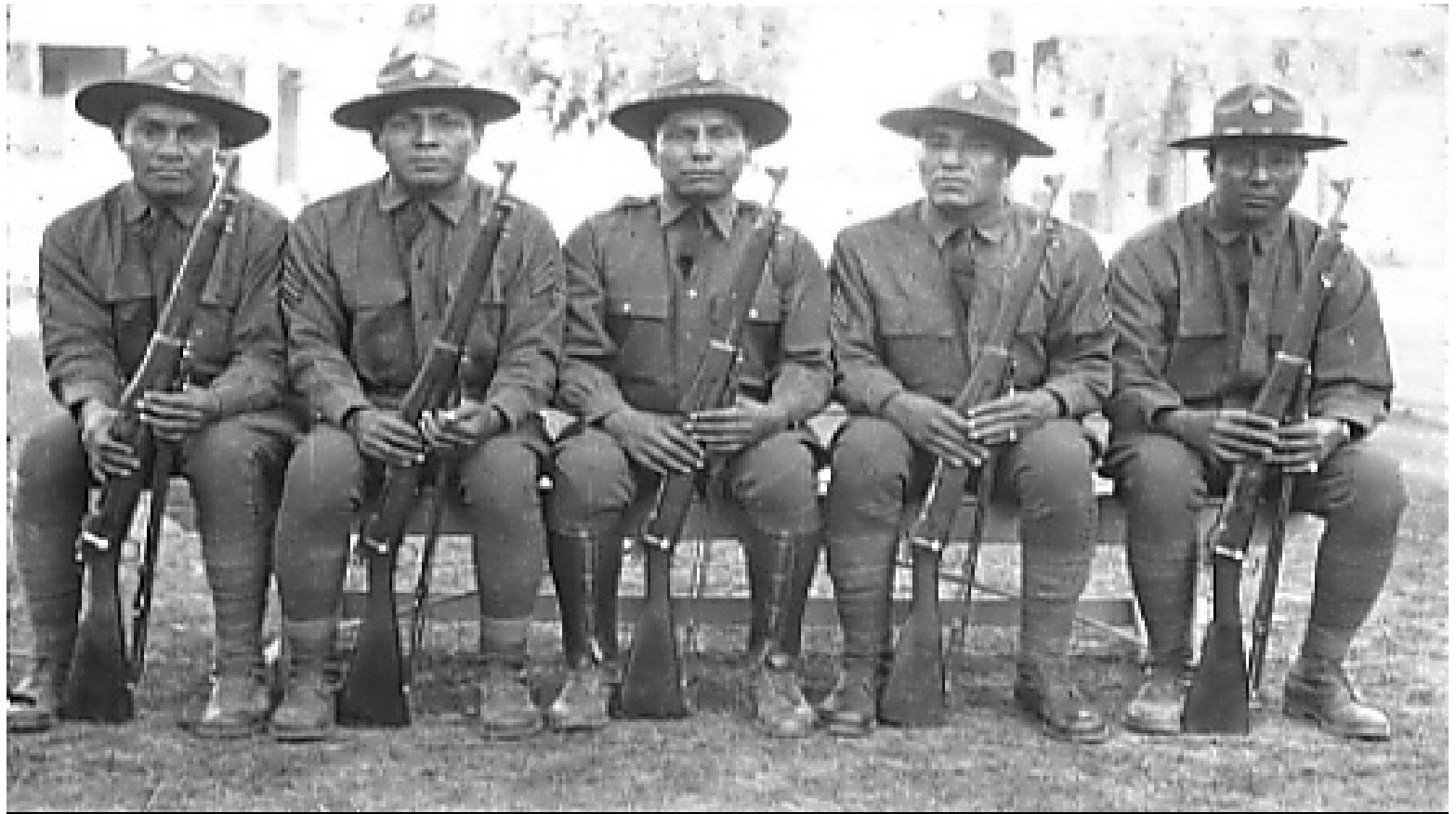
Ann Grandbois Plante, 86. Marty Boarding School, SD.



“We marched everywhere we went, church, dining hall, classes. We had itchy uniforms. The little boys carried wooden rifles, the big boys had real ones.”

Leo Lajimodiere, 76. Chemawa Industrial School, Salem,  
Oregon


# 'Soldiers'



**COURTESY BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS**



- **Hair Cutting**



“...the first thing they did was...checked you for nits or bugs, and then they had these DDT cans, that powder, it’s amazing they never killed anybody....you couldn’t hardly breath. A lot of those kids had long hair, they just took the braid up and cut it right across, you know.”

“Mary”, Wahpeton, ND


“They did cut it (hair) right away, they combed in kerosene, really burned.”

Annie Plante, 87. Marty Indian School






- **Discipline**




“I was in a sledding accident during recess. I couldn’t move the next morning, couldn’t get up. The priest came and threw off my blankets and beat and beat me with his belt. Furious, yelling how lazy I was. I ended up in the hospital in Breckenridge – I had two broken hips. The doctors never asked about how I got the bruises and cuts from the belt.”

Roger White Owl, 55. (Hidatsa) Chamberlain Catholic Boarding School, SD




“I was ten years old. They laid me over my bed and two boys held my hands and two others my feet. Each boy had to hit me with a studded belt. If anyone let up he had to take my place. I passed out and woke up in the infirmary. I was there for two weeks - had to sleep on my stomach. I still have the scars. They called it the ‘gauntlet’.”

Leo Lajimodiere, 77, Chippewa. Chemawa Boarding School, Salem, Oregon




“They killed a Blackfeet boy using a gauntlet beating – ruptured his kidneys – they shipped his body home with a note saying he died bravely.”

Leo Lajimodiere, 76. Chippewa. Chemawa Industrial School survivor.




The nuns locked me in a closet for not speaking English – I didn't care, it was quiet.”

Lola Plante, 47. St. Stephan, SD, survivor (interviewed 1977)




“My father said he was thrown in the ‘dungeon’ under the little boys dorm at Ft. Totten for refusing to speak English. He said it was pitch black, no windows. He didn’t care – he sang Chippewa songs at the top of his lungs.”

Judy Azure on her father Kakenawash (Flying Eagle)  
Turtle Mountain Chippewa




“I was locked in a closet by a nun for discipline. It was pitch black, they used a skeleton key to lock the door. I had to pee and banged on the door for hours, crying. When they opened the door and saw I had peed my pants I was whipped with a short belt, doubled.”

“Cleo” when a first grader at St. Ann’s Catholic school,  
Belcourt, ND




“Three girls ran away, but got caught. The matrons and school teachers lined up, even the superintendent of the school, and the girls had to walk between them. They all took a whack at them with a belt as they went through. We called it the ‘gauntlet.’ They made all us girls watch...






...then each of them got a toothbrush and for the rest of the night, on their hands and knees had to scrub the floor, the cement floor.”

“Mary” Wahpeton Boarding School, ND




**“We were made to kneel on a broomstick for 15 minute increments. We had to stick our noses against the wall at the same time. If we moved our nose another 15 minutes were added”**

**“Sam” 50, Wahpeton Boarding School, ND**




“I was working in the mail room with a priest. A kid came in and wanted his mail. I handed a letter to him. The priest took a board and whacked me in the head. I got knocked out and woke up on the floor by myself”

“Fred” Marty Indian Boarding School, SD. He explained all mail had to be opened by the priest first, and he blackened out certain things before giving to students.




“I was four years old when stolen and taken to Chemawa, Oregon. The matron grabbed me and my sister, stripped off our clothes laid us in a trough and scrubbed our genitals with lye soap, yelling at us that we were ‘filthy savages, dirty.’ I had to walk on my tip toes screaming in pain.”

Elsie



“They took me to the magazine [gun powder] room. There was a barrel strung up there. I had to lay over it. They whipped me with a rubber hose...I couldn't breath”

(Norman Plante, 84, Ft. Totten. He had stolen a can of tomatoes)



“The nuns cut out a strip of rubber from a tire and used it to beat us.”

“Uncle, why were the nuns so mean?”

*“Because they never did nothin’ without asking the Devil first!”*

Uncle Henry, 86. Marty Boarding School survivor.



# Sickness/Disease

Scarlet Fever

Measles

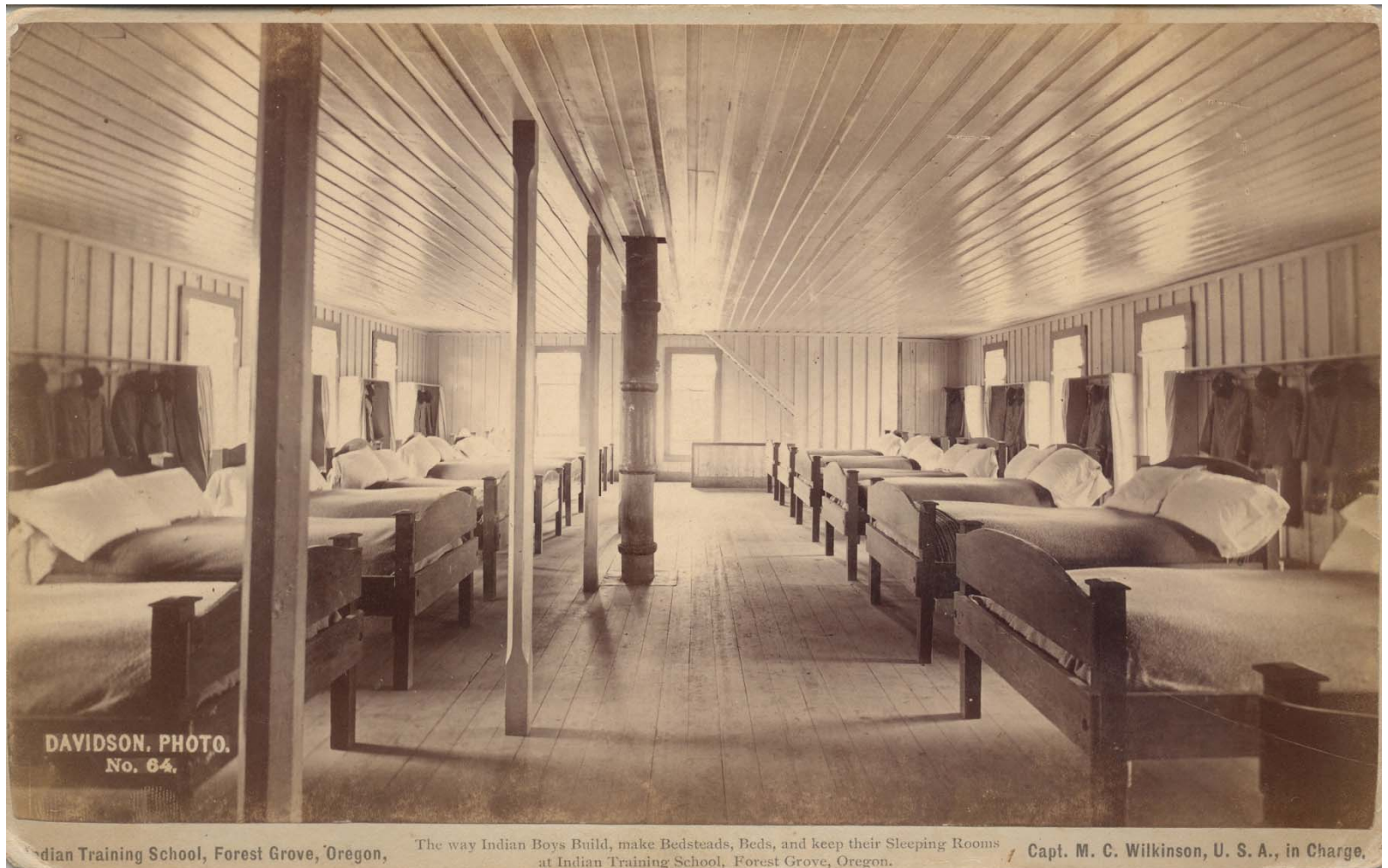
Whooping cough

Flu

Tuberculosis

Trachoma: over one-half of all children in boarding schools suffered from this eye disease in the early 1900s

# Chemawa Boys Dorm



DAVIDSON. PHOTO.  
No. 64.

Indian Training School, Forest Grove, Oregon,

The way Indian Boys Build, make Bedsteads, Beds, and keep their Sleeping Rooms  
at Indian Training School, Forest Grove, Oregon.


Capt. M. C. Wilkinson, U. S. A., in Charge.




# Carlisle Boarding School





- 
- Inadequate sanitary conditions and marginal diet, students' health was often poor. Conditions made were by the conscious decision to enroll sick children and allow them to freely mingle with healthy children



“I went through ear surgery. Parent never knew. ‘Ting was, I never had ear aches! Never in pain! Took me to a room to change, took me to Sisseton, then to Winnebago, then to Omaha. I can’t hear out of that ear now.”

“George”, 58, Chippewa. Wahpeton, SD



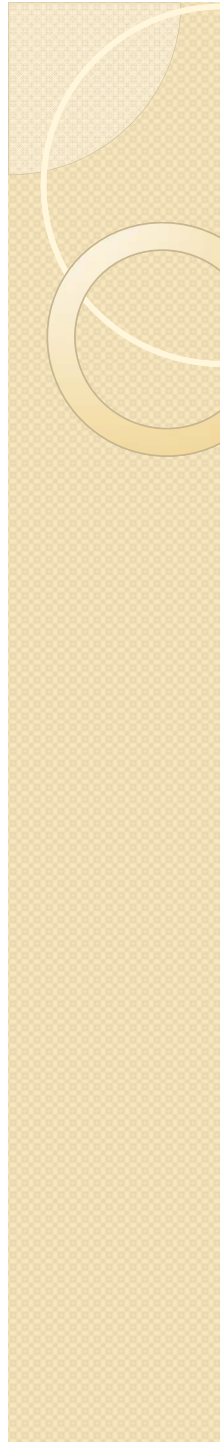
# Cemeteries

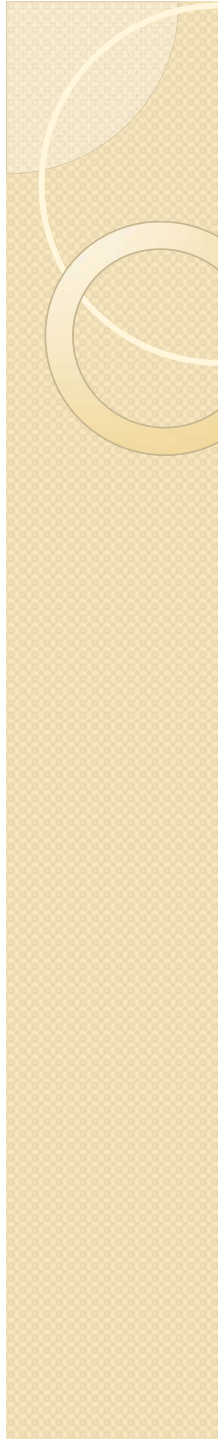
At Chemawa, a cemetery contains headstones of over 220 students who died at the school, and these represent only the ones whose bodies were not returned home for burial.













# Sexual Abuse





**“I saw the administrator leave at night and go into the boys dorm. He would come out in the morning. I reported him, and I was fired”**


**Estella, 94. Chippewa. Federal worker at Ft. Totten Indian Boarding School**



“The little boys in my dorm would be taken by the dorm workers at night. They would come back crying.”


“...and the older boys were molesting the younger boys.”

“Joe” Chamberlain Boarding School, SD



“I was raped by older boys. How do you tell your wife or children that I would be screaming into my pillow. Happened over 300 times. I still have physical problems...”

“Mike” Montana boarding school survivor.



“We could hear the cries of the girls being molested at night. When my little sister got sick and was sent to the infirmary, I hid for three days and nights under her bed to make sure no one got to her.”

“Adele” Chippewa. Ft. Totten Boarding School



# Forced Labor

The boarding school had what came to be called the “half and Half” system where students spent half of the day in the classroom and half at a work assignment or “detail” on the school grounds

(Marr, C, 2008)

# Hoeing



# Sewing





# Picking Strawberries

Reproduced at the National Archives and Records Administration – Pacific Alaska Region (Seattle)



NO 14 PICKING STRAWBERRIES CHEMAWA DRE



- 
- Wagon making
  - Shoemaking
  - Harness making
  - Blacksmithing
  - Carpentry
  - Tin working
  - Cabinetmaking
  - Bakery
  - Farm
  - Dairy
  - Sewing
  - Cooking
  - Laundry



# Calls to work and school

- Steam Whistle
- Bells
- Bugle calls
- Horns


“You marched everywhere, you were  
governed by the bell and bugle”

(Arnold McKay, Lummi)




Yeah, we'd go to school half a day and we worked half a day."

Annie Plante, Chippewa. Marty Indian School



“I worked in the laundry...sheets would come out of the washing machine...put them on that mangler...come out the other end and it was dry, it [dry sheets] was just nice.”

“Mary” Wahpeton Boarding School, ND



“Monday the whole day you're in the laundry room. I don't remember where we got the classroom time in there those days. We rotated every month...got assigned to the rectory or kitchen....had to can, we had a garden that was 40 acres large....a big barn, cows, dairy, chickens, sheep, the boys worked there”

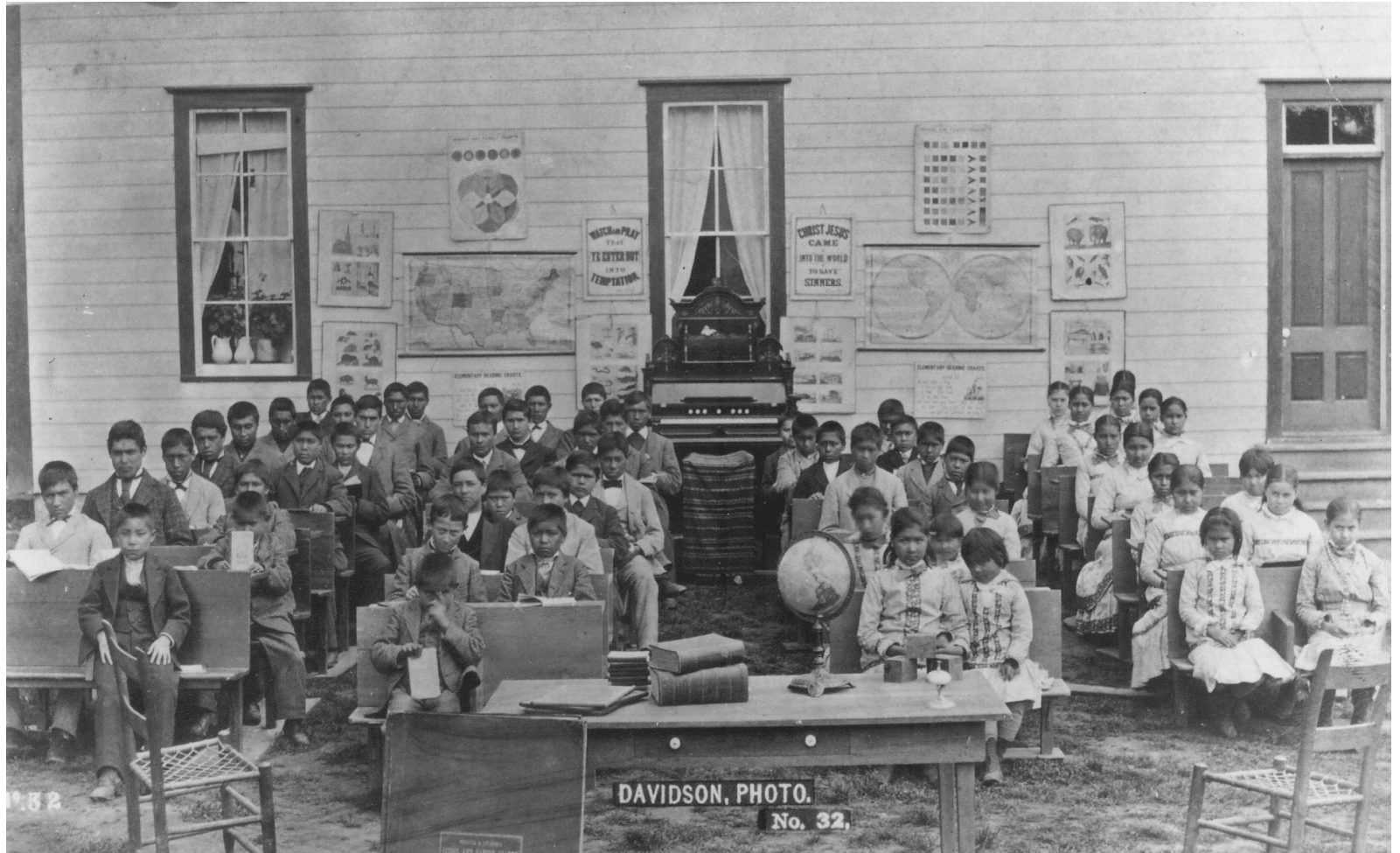
Mary Ann, 65. Little Flower of the Centuries, St. Michaels,  
ND



I worked at carpentry and tinsmithing”

Leo Lajimodiere, 76, Chippewa/Metis, Chemawa, OR

# Chemawa Classroom





# Carpentry



Indian Training School, Forest Grove, Oregon.

*Carpenters at Work.*

Capt. M. C. Wilkinson, U. S. A., in Charge.

# Shoemaking



Davidson, Photo,

**SHOEMAKING.**

Portland, Oregon.



# Loneliness

“Sometimes a little boy would die from loneliness”


How?

“They would just stop eating and die in their sleep, we would find them in the mornings.”

Leo Lajimodiere, Chemawa

- 
- Runaways from Chemawa are listed as “deserters.”






“In these fine new buildings Indian children still commit suicide...I know a ten year old who hanged herself. These schools are just boxes filled with homesick children.”

(John Fire, 1972, Lakota)




- **Bed Wetters**



“Then, you know what they used to do when they’d wet the bed? The sisters [nuns] used to make ‘em kneel down, they’d put that wet sheet over their head, over their face.”


Annie Plante, 87. Marty Indian School






“Every morning the boys who wet the bed had to wrap the sheets around themselves and march down to the laundry room with them on”

Roger White Owl, 55, Chamberlain, SD



“Dresses pulled up and underwear pulled down, they were beaten. We all had to line up and watch.”

Genevieve Williams, 85. Tulalip, WA.



Someone had stuffed their pee stained sheet in a closet and the nun found it. No one would own up to it.


So the nun made us pee in a bucket, then she pushed all of our faces into it, one at a time.

“Cleo.” Attended Marty




# Hunger

- The quality of food given the students was a point of considerable contention. Widespread malnutrition among students and in some cases actual food shortages.

- 
- “If you went to communion you got to eat, if not you did not eat. The fed us pure slop. If you didn’t eat it you got whipped – a wide leather belt with handles on it. I was eight years old. Sometimes I would eat a younger girls food so she didn’t get beaten.”

“Sue”, 55, Chippewa

- 
- “If we vomited from the seeing the worms in our food we were forced to eat our vomit.”

“Josephine”



# Outing Program

- Boys did farm work
- Girls did housework for whites in towns

“I was worked to *death* for .25 cents an hour!”

Stella LaFountain, Wahpeton, ND





# Meriam Report 1928

- Commissioned by Interior Department
- Condemned schools' deficient diet
- Condemned overcrowded dorms
- Substandard medical service
- Overworking of students
- Reported systematic kidnapping of Indian children by school officials



# Intergenerational Trauma

- Historical Trauma
- Intergenerational Trauma
- Unresolved Grief or “soul wound”
- Internalized Oppression – “shame and disowning of our individual and cultural reality”
- Suffer as second generation survivor – “Generationals.”
- Decolonization



# Intervention Model

- Confronting the historical trauma
- Understanding the trauma
- Releasing the pain of historical trauma
- Transcending the trauma



# Hypotheses for Intervention model

- Education increases awareness of trauma
- Sharing effects of trauma provides relief
- Grief resolution through collective mourning/healing creates positive group identity and commitment to community





**Web Page:**

[www.boardingschoolhealing.org](http://www.boardingschoolhealing.org)

**Facebook page:**

<https://www.facebook.com/NNABSHC>





## Mission of N-NABS-HC

To secure healing and Reconciliation among Native American individuals, families, communities, tribes, Pueblos and Alaskan Villages victimized by a century of documented boarding school human rights violations.



## The N-NABS Healing Coalition

Individuals and organizations seeking healing and reconciliation for victims of the cultural genocide through

- A Congressionally commissioned study and report the historic and continuing impacts on individual victims, families, communities and tribes
- A meaningful acknowledgment by the United States and the Churches of their responsibility
- Redress and healing



## **Present focus**

Raise the awareness of the United States and the major denominations of the Christian Churches, and Indian Country.


## **Focus of Our Work**


- Contact Intertribal and National Indian organization to secure support for our major goals
- Contact the major denominations of the Christian Churches and seek support for our goals.



## What does an appropriate response look like related to the Boarding School Issue?

- Recognize that the Boarding School policy of cultural genocide was wrong;
- Acknowledge the role of churches in the initiating and implementing the Boarding School policy;
- Offer an appropriate and meaningful acceptance of responsibility which may include an apology;
- Take action to provide or support the provision of financial support for community directed healing programs;

- 
- Take action to document the scope and depth of the problem through a Congressionally authorized study of the Boarding School Policy;
  - Support for the rescue and restoration of Native languages, and;
  - Support for education about the policy and its historical and continuing impact on individuals, families, communities, tribes.

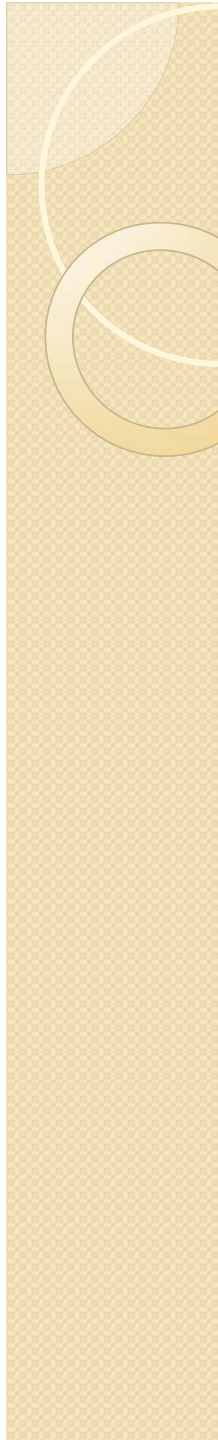
- 
- Secure legislation from Congress creating a national study and report of the Boarding School Policy and its historic and continuing impacts on individual victims, families communities and tribes.





# Resources

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- Child, B.J. (2000). *Boarding School Seasons*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
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# Chemawa Little Boys Dorm



# Chemawa Indian School Hospital





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406 INDIAN BAND CHEMAWA ORE





Davidson, Photo,

**Group of Piute, Wasco and Warm Spring Indians.**

Portland, Oregon.



DAVIDSON, PHOTO.  
No. 43.

Davidson, Photo,

NEW RECRUITS--SPOKANE INDIANS.

Portland, Oregon.







DAVIDSON. PHOTO.  
No. 36.

Indian Training School, Forest Grove, Oregon.

One of the Main Buildings, erected entirely by Indian Boys; Dormer Windows,  
Rustic and Painting on all.—Their work without aid.

Capt. M. C. Wilkinson, U. S. A., in Charge.



