



# Klamath Tribes and the Boarding School Experience: Part I

A decorative graphic consisting of several orange and red geometric shapes, including diamonds and triangles, arranged in a symmetrical, starburst-like pattern around the text.

**TRIBAL HISTORY**  
**SHARED HISTORY**

# Land Acknowledgment



We want to acknowledge the original stewards of the land. The Klamath basin is the traditional territory of the Klamath, Modoc, and Yahooskin Band of Paiute Indians. We honor these tribal members' past, present, and future, as they are the stewards of this land. Oral traditions of the tribes maintain that they were created here and have existed here since time immemorial. In the face of forced removal and cultural genocide, the tribes secured their sovereignty and cultural practices through treaty rights and continual perseverance. We would like to thank and acknowledge the original occupants as well as their descendants for honoring and caring for this pristine environment.

## Warm up:

**Set all your belongings on your desk and make a list of them: this includes your backpack and its contents, phone, jacket, any other things such as watch or jewelry on your person excluding your clothes.**



**Imagine you have been forcefully removed from your current surroundings and taken to an unknown country. You do not know how long you will be gone or if you will return.**



**You enter a room. Everyone is speaking a language you don't understand. All the belongings you listed above are forcefully taken away. You are given a stiff, smelly, and scratchy military-type uniform.**

You are cleaned in a manner that could be described as criminal. Your hair is cut off. For men, this is a buzz cut and for women, it is a short bowl cut.



**When you are dressed and trimmed, you are then taken to a big blackboard and forced to choose a name from it that you cannot read or understand. Henceforth, you are never to use your given name again.**





Administrators then burn the personal belongings you had (everything on your desk) when you were taken from your home. You watch them burn your iPhone with all the pictures of your family, the necklace your mother gave you for your 16th birthday, the wallet with your driver's license that means freedom, and the cash you worked so hard for.

**You will have no outside contact with your friends or family. If you try to leave, you will be beaten and brought back. If you speak English, you will be chained and go without meals for 48 hours, as well as have your mouth washed out with soap.**



**If you fail to keep up with the learning  
or physical labor imposed, you will be  
beaten and jailed.**

*This is an exercise in empathy and understanding that which we will never truly understand.*

- 1. Out of the list of things you had on your person, what would you be the saddest to lose? Why?**
- 2. What is the history of your name and what meaning does it have for you?**
  - How would it feel to be called by a new name in a new language?**
- 3. What thing will you miss most from home? Why?**
- 4. What person will you miss most from home? Why?**
- 5. What person is the least likely to be there when you come back?**
- 6. In this hypothetical (pretend situation) what is the greatest thing you have lost or will lose?**

**(Answers these questions on the assigned worksheet)**

# Essential Question

How do we know the difference between helping those who are unlike us and pushing our assumptions (what we think is best) onto others?

# Vocabulary

**Assimilation**

**Empathy**

# Assimilation



- The process of becoming similar to something.
- Forced Assimilation means you do not have a choice to participate in the change it is forced upon you.

# Empathy is...

seeing with the eyes of another,

listening with the ears of another,

and feeling with the heart of another.



# The Dawes Act of 1887

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- The purpose of the act was to assimilate Native peoples into mainstream society.
- The act's goal was to turn Indians into Americans through private land ownership, religion, and education.
- The boarding schools played a large role in transforming the next generation from "savage" to "civilized".

*Image- 3 Klamath men join the driver of this early automobile the original title given by the photographer was "Savage" taken in 1908*



# How to achieve this goal :

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1. Remove Indian children from their families and tribes.

2. Teach them English and a skill set.

3. Return them forever changed and no longer able to fit into traditional Native societies.

# Carlisle Indian Industrial School

Opened in 1879, by Major Richard Pratt in Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

Pratt reasoned that if wild turkeys could be domesticated, then surely Indians could be civilized.

Children would be removed from their culture and taught English and a trade skill.



# When students arrived at the school

The children's clothing and belongings were taken and often replaced with military type outfits for boys and dresses for girls.

- Sometimes the children clothing, and belongings were burned while they watched.

The kids were told to point to a name on a board. This is how they were renamed with an English name.

Next, they were bathed, and their hair was cut.

- For many Natives to cut one's hair is a sign of mourning.

Students found strength in their siblings and tribal members.

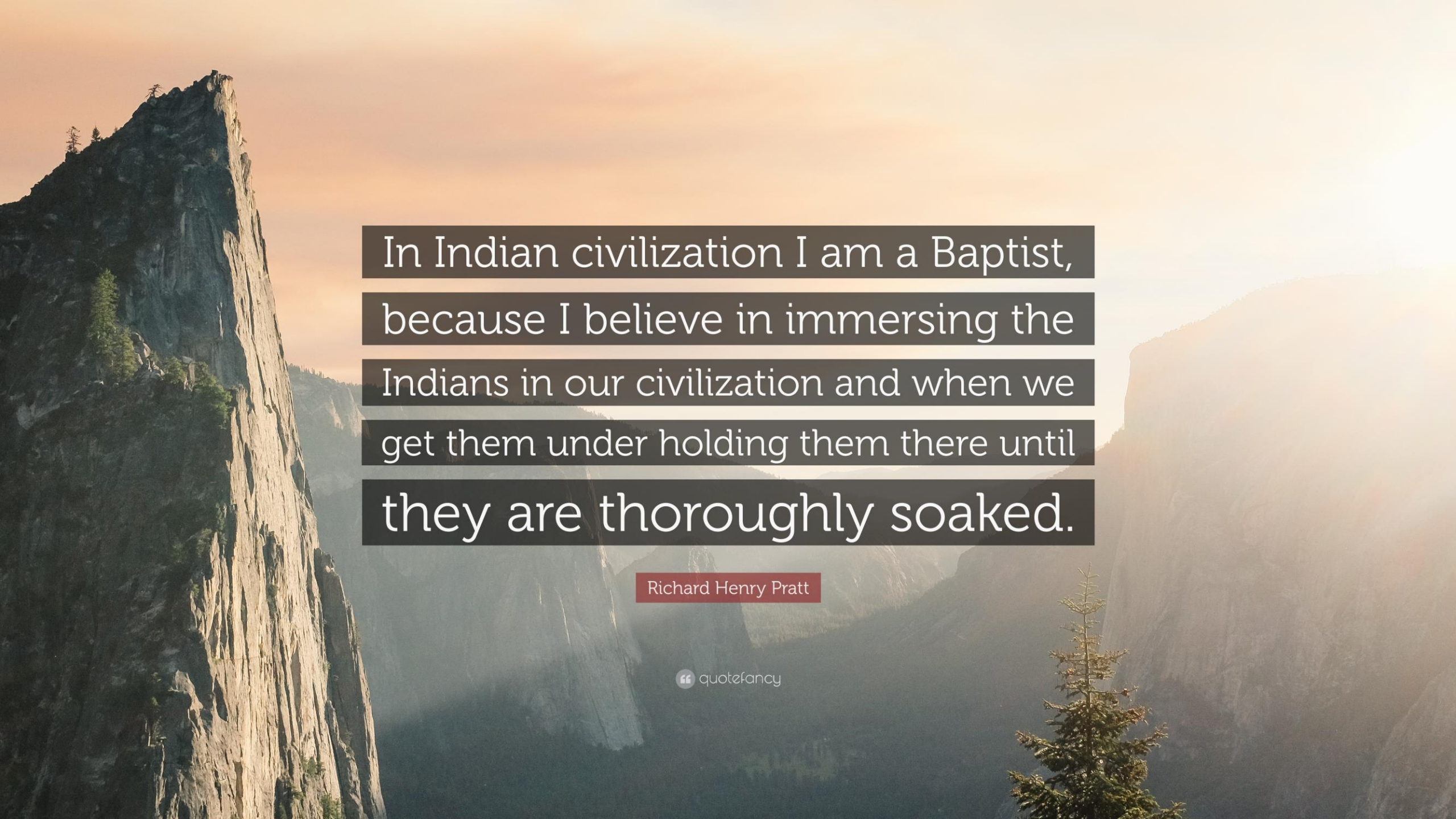
- Therefore, they were intentionally separated into cadet battalions that broke up sibling and tribal associations.

Students would try to escape and return to their reservations.

- If they were caught, they were jailed and handcuffed.
- If students spoke their tribal language their mouth was washed out with soap, and they were beaten.



**Special built child size handcuffs used on Native children.**



In Indian civilization I am a Baptist,  
because I believe in immersing the  
Indians in our civilization and when we  
get them under holding them there until  
they are thoroughly soaked.

Richard Henry Pratt

At the school children were taught domestic or trade skills.



## Tom Torlino, 1885

"To be a person was to be a certain kind of person: an American who owned property and was culturally white. Indian kids went to school to be not-Indian."

(Heartbeat of Wounded Knee, Treuer p. 139)







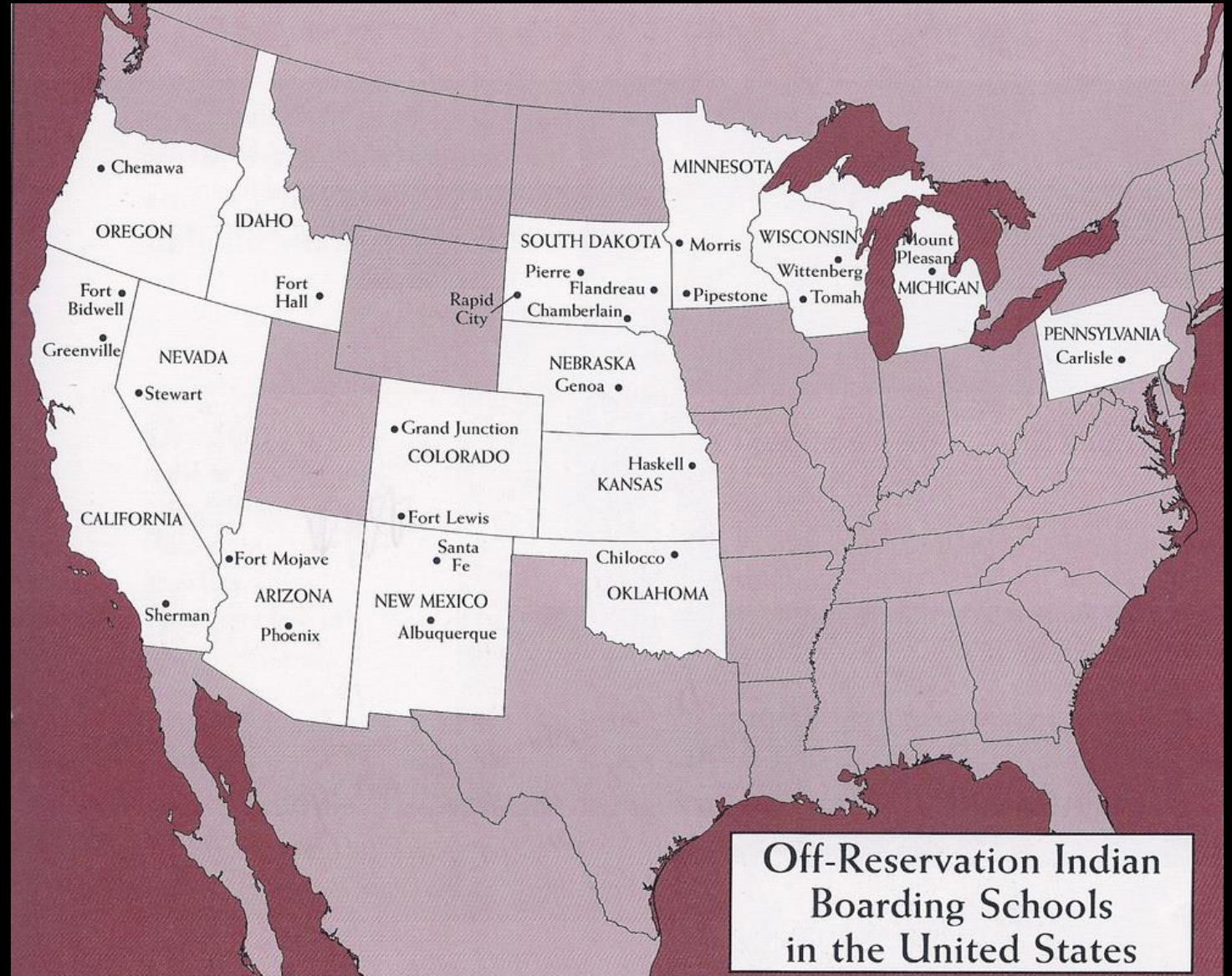
**“Kill the Indian...  
Save the Man.”**

**-Col. Richard Pratt, 1892**

## Why were children sent to schools so far away?

"When the school is on the reserve the child lives with its parents, who are savages, he is surrounded by savages, and though he may learn to read and write, his habits and training mode of thought are Indian. He is simply a savage who can read and write."

-Canadian Prime Minister





## Why and how was this allowed?

- Some Natives recognize that assimilation was the only hope for their children.
- Conditions “back home” were often worse, due to a lack of resources and food.
- Many parents couldn’t read or write so communicate with the schools was difficult.
- Some parents refused to leave their children and camped outside the boarding schools.
- Attendance at the schools was mandatory, Indian Agents would withhold food and benefits, therefore causing injury to the whole family if the children were not turned over and even jail parents who would not relinquish their children.

# What could the Indian parents or children do?



Both children and parents had no power to stop the removal of children to the schools by the government.

Then when the children were returned home, they no longer fit in because they were not familiar with the culture and no longer spoke the language.

**By 1926, the Indian Office estimated that nearly 83% of school-aged Indian children were attending boarding schools.**

**Native people endured this direct attack on their way of life and family connections from 1879 through the 1960's.**



# **Narrowing the focus in Boarding Schools Part II: The Klamath Experience**

In the next section we will look at the history of boarding schools in Oregon. We will also learn more about the Klamath Tribes experiences.

sepk'eec'a (thank you)

