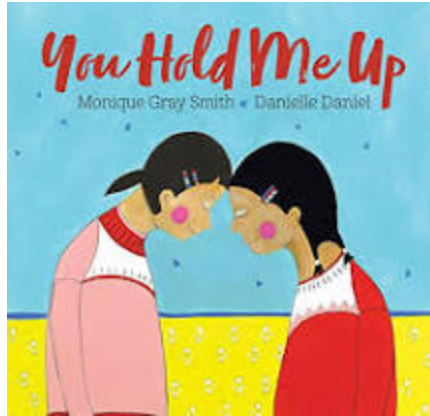


Advanced Activity

You Hold Me Up



By: Monique Gray Smith

Essential Questions for Consideration:

- **How did the U.S. and Canadian Governments try to erase indigenous people's cultures? What role did education play in forced assimilation?**

Overview:

In this lesson, participants will examine ways the U.S. Government tried to erase native culture after suppressing indigenous nations in the 1800s. Participants will be able to explain the Indian Boarding School system's goals and its methods for assimilating American indigenous children at the Carlisle Indian Industrial Boarding School in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. The Canadian Government similarly used "Residential Schools" to erase native culture and 'assimilate' children. With her book, *You Hold Me Up*, Monique Gray Smith hoped that indigenous communities and the Canadian government could embark on a journey of healing and reconciliation. This lesson was created with resources from the National Park Service and the Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center found [here](#).

Materials:

- Pen or Pencil
- Paper
- *You Hold Me Up*, Author's Note (See below lesson plan)
- [This Land is My Land? The Legacy of Early Interactions Between Native Americans and Colonists](#)
- *Teaching Historic Places- Setting the Stage Reading** (See below lesson plan)
- *Teaching with Historic Places-Reading 2: Building the Carlisle Indian Industrial School** (See below lesson plan)
- *Questions for Understanding and Discussion** (See below lesson plan)

** If no printer access, simply read the article off a computer or phone and answer questions on a separate piece of paper.*

Advanced Activity

Activity:

- 1.) Read/Listen to *You Hold Me Up* by Monique Gray Smith.
- 2.) Ask the participant to read the “Author’s Note” at the end of the book or worksheet below. Consider the following questions:

*Have you ever heard of residential/boarding schools for indigenous peoples? If so, what do you know? If no, what questions do you have about them based on your reading of the author’s note?
What stands out or surprises you about the author’s note?*

- 3.) Encourage the participant to share their reactions and questions to the author’s note.
- 4.) **Background knowledge about the history of indigenous people/tribes/eastern encroachment/European colonization may be limited.** Consider asking the participant about their background knowledge on the listed topics, watching the Youtube video [This Land is My Land? The Legacy of Early Interactions Between Native Americans and Colonists](#), or the **Teaching Historic Places: Setting the Stage Reading**.
- 5.) Tell the participant that they will be completing a reading on the Carlisle Indian Industrial Boarding School. Explain that Indian Boarding Schools in the US and Residential Schools in Canada were established to erase the culture of indigenous people and to assimilate indigenous children into Euro-American culture.
- 6.) Give the participant the **Teaching with Historic Places-Reading 2: Building the Carlisle Indian Industrial School and the Questions for Understanding and Discussion** worksheets to read and complete.
- 7.) Once the participant has finished their reading and questions for understanding, discuss the participant’s thoughts, reactions, and answers to questions.
- 8.) Finally have the participant reflect on the following essential questions, either orally or written, to synthesize all that they have learned over the course of the lesson.

How did the U.S. and Canadian Governments try to erase indigenous people’s cultures in the late 19th century? What role did education play in forced assimilation?

What steps should the US and Canadian government’s take to achieve Monique Gray Smith’s goal of healing and reconciliation?

- 9.) Encourage participants to share their responses.

You Hold Me Up, Author's Note

Monique Gray Smith

Author's Note

In Canada, we have a long history of legislation and policies that have affected the wellness of Indigenous children, families and communities. One of the most impactful was Indian Residential (boarding) schools. For over 150 years, Indigenous children (First Nations, Métis and Inuit) as young as five were taken from their families, communities and cultures and placed in Residential schools. At these schools, abuse was rampant. The children were separated from their siblings, forbidden to speak their own languages or practice their culture, often fed little or rotten food and were denied basic necessities.

With this book, we are embarking on a journey of healing and reconciliation. I wrote it to remind us of our common humanity and the importance of holding each other up with respect and dignity. I hope it is a foundational book for our littlest citizens. A book that encourages dialogue among children, their families, their care providers and their educators. At its heart, it is a book about love, building relationships and fostering empathy.

With respect and love,
Monique Gray Smith

Teaching with Historic Places

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



The Carlisle Indian Industrial School: Assimilation with Education after the Indian Wars

Setting the Stage

Indigenous people across North America have had and continue to have their own education systems. For over 15,000 years, American Indian and Alaskan Native nations passed down their cultural traditions and languages from generation to generation without European interference. Parents, grandparents, and tribal elders teach their children how to care for and survive off of their ancestral lands, plants, and animals. They educate and celebrate their young ones through storytelling, ceremonies, prayer, and everyday activities and responsibilities. Children's' educational upbringing reflect the social, political, and economic needs of each tribe.

During the late 1700s and early 1800s, the government of the United States began planning how indigenous groups might coexist with the young nation. Even before the Declaration of Independence was signed, the U.S. Continental Congress invested in 'educating' and 'civilizing' Indians. They wanted indigenous groups to assimilate; that is, forego their tribal existence and accept European American cultural, economic, political, and spiritual values.

By the early 1800s, several American Indian nations incorporated both native languages and the English language into their education systems as a response to assimilation policies. They wanted to communicate with incoming settlers and U.S. government officials in order to maintain tribal sovereignty and protect themselves from exploitation. At the same time, Christian missionary groups and the federal government opened day schools to impart Euro-American values.

In the late 19th century, surviving American Indian nations struggled to maintain their rights to self-govern, keep their ancestral lands, and sustain their cultures. They waged wars with the United States and ultimately lost. The United States government forced survivors of the so-called Indian Wars to move to reservations. Many died during these relocations through exhaustion, starvation, and exposure to European diseases.

Even without land or political power, native peoples were able to pass on culture to their children. But by the late 1870s, the War Department and the Department of the Interior developed off-reservation boarding school system. The school administrators' mission was to remove indigenous children from the families and communities to assimilate them and stop the passing-on of indigenous culture. The boarding schools forced indigenous children to adopt Euro-American culture.

During the 1930s, federal education policy became more accepting of indigenous cultures and languages. In 1934, the passage of the Indian Reorganization Act gave tribes more autonomy on how and where their children were taught.

By the 1960s, American Indian nations became more involved in providing a formal, European-style education for indigenous youth. Tribal representatives served as commissioners of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. In the 2010s, three off-reservation boarding schools continue to be operated with the mission of reviving indigenous traditions and instilling pride in its students.

In September 2000, Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs Kevin Grover issued an apology to Indian people for the emotional, psychological, physical, and spiritual violence committed against children at off-reservation boarding schools. In December 2009, President Obama signed a written apology on behalf of the United States to all Native Peoples for the violence, maltreatment, and neglect caused by U.S. citizens.

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Determining the Facts

Reading 2: Building the Carlisle Indian Industrial School

The students arrived at the school at midnight on October 6, 1879. They traveled by horse, steamboat, and train from the Rosebud and Pine Ridge Indian reservations in South Dakota to Carlisle, Pennsylvania. They came at night so white Americans would not come to stare at them, but even in the darkness a crowd waited. They were the first of thousands of young American Indians to attend Carlisle Indian Industrial School and Carlisle was the first of many American Indian boarding schools.

The United States founded the Carlisle school in 1879 at the site of an old military base, used during the colonial era and the Civil War. Soldiers also used it as an army training school from 1838 to 1871. The same buildings were used for the Indian Industrial School. One reason the government chose this site was because it was on a railroad line. Students could travel there by train. The school was also a far distance from the western Indian reservations. The distance kept the students away from their families' cultures and influence for long periods of time. Some students never returned home.

Richard Henry Pratt was a U.S. military officer who founded the school. He went into education after leading troops to fight American Indian nations during the Indian Wars and is famous for his boarding school philosophy: "Kill the Indian, Save the Man." Pratt believed American Indian children could become successful American citizens if they abandoned their heritage. He wanted to change what made them different from Americans descended from Europeans, including their clothing, language, and beliefs. After opening the school at Carlisle, Pratt and his supporters forced young people to attend the school for three to five years. Some chose to stay as long as 10 years.

Carlisle Barracks was in good condition when the school opened. Students lived on the north end of the campus. Teachers, staff, and the superintendent lived on the southern side near the entrance. A large green space or quadrangle separated the grounds from the north and the south. Students and teachers moved across the center of campus while using crisscrossing through footpaths, a bandstand, and a stone guardhouse.

In the early 1880s, the American Indian students and the white staff expanded the school campus. They built a chapel, three-story dining hall, classroom building, girls' dormitory, warehouse, boiler house, laundry, hospital, printing shop, an art studio, and a cemetery. They also added a six-foot fence around the perimeter of the campus.

Civilian school officials enforced military-style discipline at Carlisle. Students marched across the grounds to and from their classes, the dining hall, extra-curricular activities, and for regular inspections. They marched in groups like soldiers in military drills. When officials rang a bell, they shifted to new movements. If a student disobeyed a rule, they went to the guardhouse for punishment or were sentenced to hard labor.

School officials tried to make the American Indian students look and dress like white Americans. Carlisle staff cut off the long braids of male children, took away the children's personal or tribal clothing, moccasins, and family belongings. Students could not keep medicine bags, jewelry, or ceremonial rattles. These items often had special meanings to tribes. While at Carlisle, boys wore uniforms from morning until night and girls wore long-flowing Victorian dresses. The school administrators also assigned a new English name to each child and did not allow native

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languages to be spoken. Administrators took “before and after” photos of students. These photos showed children in the style of their home cultures “before” and in the style of Anglo Americans “after.” People who supported assimilation used the photos as propaganda to show politicians and the American public that cultural assimilation was working.

Pratt and his teachers taught American school subjects as well as hands-on training. Their goal was to prepare American Indian students to work jobs outside of the reservation. Students studied English, math, geography, and music. Boys learned industrial skills. They were taught to build furniture and work with wood, iron, steel, tin, and other materials. Girls learned home skills. They learned to cook, do laundry, bake, and perform other caretaking skills. Students also participated in an “outing” system where they lived and worked with white American families in eastern Pennsylvania. They had to speak English and hold jobs to earn money while they were away from school.

Students at Carlisle were in sports teams, debate clubs, and marching bands. The school teams competed against prominent non-Indian schools and in regional championships. One of the greatest athletes of the 20th century attended Carlisle: Jim Thorpe of the Sac and Fox Nation. Thorpe won athletic competitions as a Carlisle student, won two gold medals in the 1912 Summer Olympics, and went on to be a professional football player. The Carlisle band was famous, too. It performed at presidential inaugurations while the school was open.

Over ten thousand children attended Carlisle between 1879 and 1918, with roughly 1,000 on campus in a given school year. They came from over 142 Indian nations. These nations had many different languages and cultures. Most students were Sioux, Chippewa, Cherokee, Cheyenne, Menominee, and Alaskan Native. Some students graduated in their late teens or early twenties but others left early due to illness or homesickness.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs founded 24 more American Indian boarding schools after Carlisle. Under the same military-style discipline, students at these schools learned domestic and industrial skills. The staff forced them to speak English and tried to destroy their ties to traditional cultures. In 1928 the U.S. government reported findings that children were abused, overworked, and underfed. Most off-reservation schools closed by the 1930s when Americans learned about how students were treated. Politicians chose to stop or decrease funding to the schools. Three schools are still open as of 2016. These three schools have military-style discipline but also teach American Indian customs, languages, and skills instead of trying to erase them.

The Carlisle campus returned to U.S. Army control in 1918. It was a hospital for soldiers injured in World War I. The historic school buildings in the 21st Century are home to the U.S. Army War College. Descendants of Carlisle students and members of tribes represented at Carlisle visit the school to honor the memory of the students.

Questions for Understanding and Discussion

Directions: Answer the following questions in complete sentences below using *Teaching with Historic Places-Reading 2: Building the Carlisle Indian Industrial School*. Be prepared to discuss your answers.

- 1.) When did Carlisle Indian Industrial School open? What was the site used for before it became a school?
- 2.) Carlisle students came from over 100 different American Indian nations and cultures. What did they have in common? In what ways do you think they were different from each other? Explain your answers.
- 3.) Using evidence from the reading, describe the conditions for students attending the Carlisle Indian Industrial Boarding School and other Indian Boarding Schools across the United States? **(Consider both physical and mental conditions)**
- 4.) Consider the effects of the boarding school system. How do you think the Indian Boarding School system affected the American Indian tribes, cultures, and the children attending the schools?