

# Native American Boarding Schools



**WHAT ARE THEY?**

**WHERE ARE THEY?**

**WHO ATTENDS THEM?**

**WHY DO THEY EXIST?**

**HOW DO THEY OPERATE?**

# Native American History



- Prior to 1492, North America was home to over 100 Million Native inhabitants.
- The number has steadily declined for centuries since.
  - Disease
  - War
  - Slavery
  - Loss of Land, Ways of Life, and Culture

# TRIBES OF THE INDIAN NATION



# The United States



- By 1790, the United States was growing rapidly.
  - Government began to look to the West for more land and wealth.
  
- The Question for the U.S....
  - What is the future for the Native American?
    - Should they be left alone?
    - Should they become citizens of the U.S.?
    - Do they have rights to own their Native land?

# The Solution



- **United States government decides that Native Americans will be assimilated into white American culture.**
  - That is, Native Americans will adopt the ways of the white men in the States.
  - How can this be done? Through Education.

Meanwhile, as land is taken from the Native Americans, they are gradually moved onto Reservations. Reservations are small areas of land designated by the U.S. government for Native use and habitation.

# Assimilation by Education



## ● The Schools

- Adult Native Americans may not have wanted to adopt new ways of living. They already had their *own* culture!
- The U.S. government decided that they would start assimilation with the Native American children instead.
- If the children were sent to schools that the U.S. operated, they could be taught a new culture: the ways of the white man.
  
- By attending school, children left behind the lifestyle of their family and learned a new way of living.
  - English
  - Writing
  - Math
  - Farming
  - Sewing, Laundry, Housework

# The Boarding Schools



- **Boarding School:** A school where students are provided meals and a room to stay in.
- **Three types of schools were constructed:**
  - Day School
  - On-Reservation Boarding School
  - Off-Reservation Boarding School
- **Problems with staying on the Reservation**
  - Attendance. Parents kept their children home.
  - Location. Children went home at night or on weekends and returned to their traditional ways.

# Boarding Schools



- **Off-Reservation Boarding Schools are best**
  - The government decided that keeping students at school for extended periods away from their parents allowed the best assimilation.
  - Students learned new ways of life:
    - English
    - Clothing
    - Eating
    - Trades, Skills
    - School Subjects

Native American students and white students were taught the same subjects! History, Science, Math, Band, etc.



# Boarding Schools



- **Military Boot Camp?**

- The schools employed rigid routines and dress requirements
- Corporal Punishment

- **English**

- Students were taught to leave their Native language behind
- They were forbidden to speak in any language except English

- **Appearance**

- Students had to leave their clothes behind and adopt white clothing
- Traditional hairstyles were cut, blankets taken away, animal hide shoes and clothes were replaced with cotton, wool, and leather.

# Dramatic Change



- After a short time at a boarding school...
  - Students were hardly recognizable to their parents
  - Students learned new skills and trades
    - Farming
    - Carpentry
    - Sewing
  - Students put their new skills to work
    - They were proud of their accomplishments

# Goals



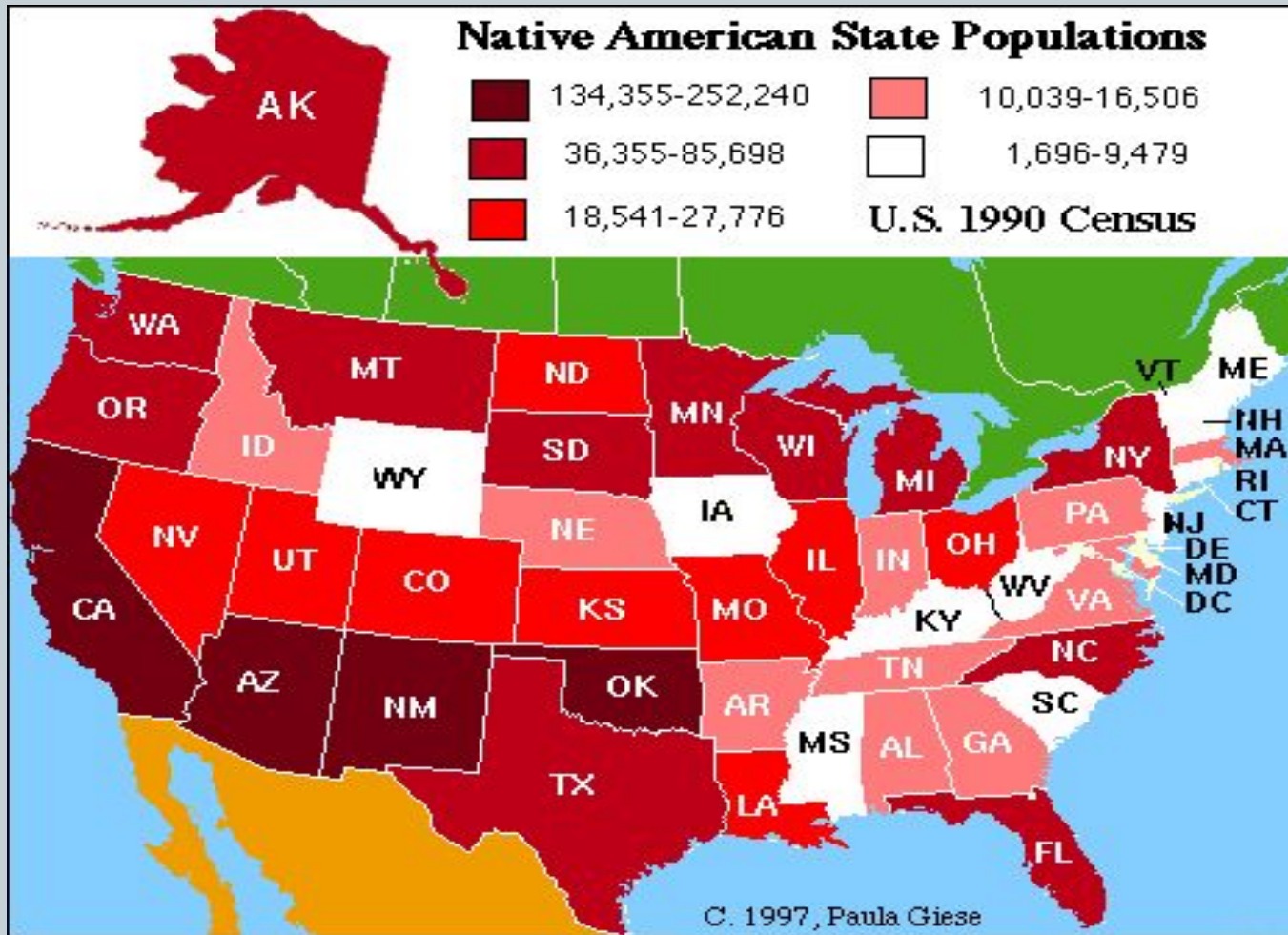
- The government had sought to assimilate Native Americans by teaching them a new culture
  - If Native Americans shed their identity, they could exist peacefully in the United States
- Were schools successful?
  - Children returned home and could not use their new skills, language, or clothing.
  - Many became frustrated; some returned to their old way of life

# Right and Wrong



- Did the Government do the right thing?
  - Who benefitted from the schools?
- Were Boarding Schools the best plan?
  - What were other options?
- Did the Government help or hinder Natives?
  - What did the Government want?
    - Land
  - What did Native Americans want?
    - Maintain their culture

# Consider This



Where are Native Americans today?

How do they live?

Are they better off today than before the United States existed?

# Conclude



- What was the conflict between Native Americans the United States?
  - Land, Culture
- What were the schools supposed to accomplish?
  - Assimilate Native Americans into the United States
- What was the result?
  - Decide the outcome with your groups