

Lesson #4 - Navajo & Indian schools

Delaware History Standard Four: Students will develop historical knowledge of major events and phenomena

9-12 - Students will develop an understanding of modern United States history, its connections to both Delaware and world history, including: Civil War and Reconstruction (1850-1877) Development of an industrialized nation (1870-1900) Emergence of modern America (1890-1930) Great Depression and World War II (1929-1945) Postwar United States (1945-early 1970s) Contemporary United States (1968-present)

***This lesson has been in part adopted from PBS NewsHour.**

***This can be a sensitive topic, especially for students experiencing a similar trauma (i.e. foster care). Prepare students for this lesson in advance.**

Performance Objective

SWBAT read articles about Navajo children IOT discuss the reasons for and impact of Indian boarding schools on Navajo children.

Work Period

Opening

How would you feel if someone came into your household and took you away from your parents forever? How would feel if they required that you spoke a different language, change your hairstyle, change the way you dressed, and demanded that you thought a certain way?

Activities

1. Examine (10 min) primary source photos:

Source: <https://www.loc.gov/resource/cph.3a51829/>

Source: <https://www.loc.gov/resource/cph.3c01242/>

Ask students:

- What do you see in these photos?
- What do you think is happening?
- What questions do you have?

All students should record their responses to each of the questions. Students who wish to can share their responses aloud to the class.

2. Provide (5 min) brief historical context. Let students know that this is a difficult and upsetting subject to examine.

For more than 150 years, Indigenous children in the United States were taken from their families and forced into far away boarding schools. From the 1870s to as late as the 1960s, nearly 300 boarding schools, many government-run, operated around the country. Native languages, religion and customs were forbidden. The goal, to separate Indian children from their homes and strip away their indigenous cultures (PBS NewsHour).

3. Watch [this PBS NewsHour segment](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3HIJ7_V9U-0) (10 mins):
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3HIJ7_V9U-0

4. Re-examine (10 min) primary photos, and ask the same three questions:
 - What do you see in these photos?
 - What do you think is happening?
 - What questions do you have?
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5. Read this article. Then, answer the following questions.

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/decades-us-government-forcibly-placed-native-students-western-schools-effects-felt-today-180959502/>

- a. Prior to 1868, how did the Navajo ensure Navajo connections to the land?
- b. What happened in 1868 and how did it impact the Navajo?
- c. What short-term impact did Indian schools have on Navajo children and their families?
- d. What long-term impact did Indian schools have on Navajo children and their families?
- e. What happened in 1975? 1990?
- f. Currently, how are the Navajo reclaiming their communities and heritage?

Closing

Option #1 - Pretend you are a US government agent who has returned from the past, write a letter to a Navajo family.

Option #2 - Pretend you are a Navajo child who attended an Indian school, write a letter to the US government.

Assessment

As a way of honoring Navajo culture and traditions create one of the following.

- Navajo recipe book
- Navajo book of games
- Navajo popular words
- Navajo artwork collection
- Navajo poetry collection
- Navajo heroes book