

Essential Question:

What is the history behind Rapid City Indian School?

In the nineteenth century, the United States government forced Native American children to leave their families and live far away in boarding schools. There were dozens of Indian boarding schools all over the United States, including in Pierre, Flandreau, Chamberlain, and here in Rapid City.

The Rapid City Indian Boarding School was open from 1898 to 1933, and it was in west Rapid City on the campus that is now Sioux San Hospital. The United States used boarding schools as part of its plan to assimilate Indian people. "Assimilation" meant the government wanted to make Native Americans forget their traditions, language, and religion and to blend in with non-Native Americans. The government, through the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), decided that taking children away from their parents would prevent parents from teaching them their language, religion, and cultural traditions.

Children were enrolled in these boarding schools for many years at a time; they did not live at home with their families during this time, except sometimes for a visit in the summer. At school, all classes were taught in English, even if the students did not understand. The school rules stated that they could not wear their Native American clothes and had to wear military-style uniforms, they were each required to cut off their long hair, and they were punished severely—even physically abused—for speaking their own languages or practicing their own religion. The children were responsible for the labor of running the large school—like cleaning classrooms, cooking meals, and repairing machinery. The lessons about math, writing, and reading English happened in the morning. In the

afternoon, students were taught about jobs like farm work, carpentry, auto repair, and sewing.

Researchers have worked hard to learn more about the children who attended the Rapid City Indian School. The story of the school is important for all South Dakotans to know. The story of one student, Mabel Holy, can help people understand the history behind this school.

Mabel Holy was likely enrolled in the school in 1898 when she was about 16 years old. Mabel was from the Cheyenne River Reservation, and she was the stepdaughter of the famous Lakota leader Touch-the-Clouds. She had survived the Wounded Knee Massacre in 1890, when she was a little girl. Mabel was in one of the first classes of students at Rapid City Indian School. She died in 1901 at the school, but her family never received notice. Nobody knew exactly why she died; some people believe she had kidney disease, which can be caused by infections and poor nutrition. She was buried in Mountain View Cemetery in Rapid City, but the school spelled her last name incorrectly on her cement grave marker. They spelled her name "Holey," so her family could not find her grave. Researchers think Mabel was the first child to die at the boarding school.

28 years after Mabel died, her brother, Leon Holy, wrote to the school asking for more information about his sister's death. Leon had been at the boarding school with Mabel, but he was only about eight years old when she died. The school told him that they lost the records, and that they could not help him. "We regret to advise you that ... we cannot give you the desired information," wrote school Superintendent Sharon Mote.

In 2017, researchers found Mabel's grave, discovered the misspelled last name, and told Mabel's family about the discovery. Mabel's nephew, Martin Holy, drove to Rapid City to see his missing aunt's grave. He had heard about her his whole life from his father, Leon, and the rest of the Holy family. Now the family has replaced the misspelled cement marker with a beautiful gravestone that shows respect for Mabel. The family can visit her grave now and express their love and respect for her.

This story of Mabel Holy makes people want to help the researchers find out more about the history of Rapid City Indian School and the lands that belonged to it. In 2018, a peaceful walk honoring all the children who died at the school will happen on October 8, which is Native American Day in South Dakota. Each year, the children who died and their families will be remembered. You can join the walk and show your support, too! Mabel Holy's family still lives on Cheyenne River, and they will join the walk to remember their relative, Mabel, who they love.



**Here are the names of the children who died at the school.
Researchers have added their ages and tribal affiliations. More
information is being discovered each day about these students
from Rapid City Indian School.**

Bessie Bare Arm Necklace, 15 (Cheyenne River Sioux)
Luke Shell Necklace, 17 (Cheyenne River Sioux)
Mabel Holy, 18 (Cheyenne River Sioux)
Rose Little Shield, 16 (Cheyenne River Sioux)
Tommy Afraid of Thunder, 9 (Cheyenne River Sioux)
Alonzo Little Chief, 16 (Cheyenne)
Martin Hart, 17 (Cheyenne)
Charles Crow Dog, 18 (Crow Creek)
Evelyn Day, 15 (Crow Creek)
Sophia Fleury, 17 (Crow Creek)
John Telcostair, 13 (Flathead)
Male child 1926 (Flathead)
Alfred Old Dog, 16 (Gros Ventres)
Charles Long Turkey, 15 (Lower Brule)
Melissa Rencountre, 16 (Lower Brule)
Adolph Bissonnette, 12 (Pine Ridge)
Adolph Russell, 10 (Pine Ridge)
Dorothy Crier, 12 (Pine Ridge)
Ida Logan, 18 (Pine Ridge)
James Means, 15 (Pine Ridge)
Joseph Brown, 14 (Pine Ridge)

Louis Long Horn, 19 (Pine Ridge)
Mark Sherman, 17 (Pine Ridge)
Mary Galligo, 18 (Pine Ridge)
Spencer Ruff, 17 (Pine Ridge)
Infant Naomi Goings (likely Pine Ridge)
Hubert "Phillip" Moore, 12 (Rosebud)
Joseph Face Darkling, 14 (Rosebud)
Nicholas Eagle Horn, 17 (Rosebud)
Susan "Lottie" Blue Horse (likely Rosebud)
Isadore Eagle Feather, 17 (Sioux)
Raymond Barker, 10 (Sioux)
Abner Kirk, 12 (Sisseton)
Jennie Pretends Eagle, 18 (Standing Rock)
Josephine Spotted Bear, 17 (Standing Rock)
Robert Cedar Boy, 14 (Standing Rock)
Mary Charboneau, 11 (Turtle Mountain Chippewa)
Martin Williamson, 13 (Yankton)
[Illegible], 14 (Sioux)
Infant Foreman (unknown)
Female Child 1919-#1(unknown)
Female Child 1919-#2 (unknown)
Child 1925 (unknown)
Female child 1926 (Sioux)

Sources:

Conti, Kibbe; Eagle, Karin; Thompson, Heather Dawn; and Riney, Scott. *An Inconvenient Truth: The Rapid City Indian Boarding School Lands*, Mniluzahan Okolakiciyapi Ambassadors, 2017, www.moarapidcity.org/an-inconvenient-truth. Accessed 10 Sept. 2018.

Thompson, Heather D. "Updated Mabel Holy Documents." Received by the author, 19 Sept. 2018.

"Researchers locate long lost Wounded Knee Survivor Buried in Rapid City." Stewart Huntington, *KOTA TV News*, 15 Aug. 2017., www.kotatv.com/content/news/Researchers-locate-long-lost-Wounded-Knee-survivor-buried-in-Rapid-City-422824644.html. Accessed 5 Sept. 2018.

Thinking About the Project

Please use the text and your own original thinking to answer the questions below.

1. Why do you think our community should learn about the story of Mabel Holy and the Rapid City Indian School?

2. Please find two specific examples from the text that show assimilation, which means trying to make Native American people forget their traditions, language, and religion so they would blend in with non-Native Americans.

Example one: _____

Example two: _____

3. In your opinion, why is the school environment described in this lesson a bad environment for children and for learning?

4. Please describe your dream school—a school you would love to learn and grow in!

Notes for Teachers

The lessons connected with *An Inconvenient Truth: The Rapid City Indian Boarding School Lands* are designed to be used with students in several grade levels. You may need to provide scaffolding to help your students access the text. To help with this, we have included this vocabulary bank. This bank can be easily used with the existing word study procedures you use with students.

- boarding schools
- assimilate
- assimilation
- prevent
- enrolled
- required
- severely
- physically abused
- responsible

- machinery
- carpentry
- auto repair
- researchers
- Wounded Knee Massacre of 1890
- kidney disease
- poor nutrition
- misspelled
- Native American Day

CCSS Language Arts Anchor Standards Addressed:

R1: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

R10: Read and comprehend complex informational and literary texts independently and proficiently.

W9: Draw evidence from informational and literary texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

SL1: Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

L4: Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases by using context clues, analyzing meaningful word parts, and consulting reference materials as appropriate.

L6: Acquire and use accurately a range of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career-readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge.

South Dakota Oceti Sakowin Essential Understandings and Standards Addressed:

EU 4.2: Describe the traditional behavior patterns, codes of respect, and values promoted within the *Oceti Sakowin tiospaye*.

EU 5.1: Identify elements of *Oceti Sakowin* culture within oral tradition, written accounts, and primary source information, and compare them to written accounts by mainstream historians.

EU 7.2: Examine and describe actions taken by *Oceti Sakowin* individuals and communities that bring about social change.

More Notes on the Standards and Student Work

The South Dakota Department of Education adopted the Oceti Sakowin Essential Understandings and Standards in 2011. The document is available on the SD DOE website

with the rest of the Content Standards. All South Dakota teachers should be employing these standards across the curriculum. These standards represent essential learning for all South Dakotans.

We have included here the reference numbers and a basic description of each Oceti Sakowin Essential Understanding and Standard that this lesson addresses. For full articulations of all these cultural standards, please consult the official state document: <https://doe.sd.gov/contentstandards/documents/18-OSEUs.pdf>

This lesson was designed to be used with students in several grade levels. We would rightly expect the thinking of older, more experienced students to be deeper and their examples from the text to be more specific. This lesson has been field-tested with students in grades 6-12 as a springboard for discussing and writing arguments about assimilation and boarding schools. "Mabel Holy's Story" has also served as a catalyst for student action and projects intended to make our community better. Adults are spurred to action when they see the student thinking that results from these projects.

The text of this article and the accompanying critical thinking questions are considered informational texts. The questions are designed to elicit high-level thinking and need no answer key. If students are showing their original thinking, engaging with the topic and the ways in which they perceive the project, then they are doing good work.

Teachers will have success when they encourage students to show and explain their thinking. Great student discussions can follow!

This lesson was created for students by Gabrielle Seeley. It has been used successfully with grades 6-12 students & pre-service teachers in universities. Student learning data is available by e-mailing gabrielle.seeley@k12.sd.us. Please e-mail Mrs. Seeley with any questions or concerns. Thank you!