

QUOTATIONS RELATING TO AMERICAN INDIAN BOARDING SCHOOLS

Highlight something surprising, interesting, and/or troubling about each quote.

1. "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." **-Excerpt from 1883 speech at a Baptist convention in Philadelphia, made by Col. Richard Henry Pratt, who founded the first federally funded boarding school, Carlisle Indian School (Carlisle, PA)**
2. "When they first took us in school, they gave us government lace-up shoes, and they gave us maybe a couple pair of black stockings, and long underwear, about a couple of them, and... slips and dress. Then they gave us a number. My number was always twenty-three." **-Lilly Quoetone Nahwooksy (Comanche) recalls arriving at the Fort Sill Indian School (Lawton, OK)**
3. "I went to Fort Sill Indian School when I was little. And while I was going to school there, way back in '26, '27, on up to 1930, we were forbidden to talk our tribal language. Not only at Fort Sill, but Riverside, Concho, and all the other Indian schools. But it never really worked because when we got home that's all we talked, was Indian, and when we got caught talking Indian at Fort Sill Indian School, we got punished for it. And me and my cousin Larry Saupitty... when we was talking Indian and we see a teacher or somebody, a faculty or some kind coming down, we always hush up. We laugh and everytime we say, 'I think they're trying to make little white boys out of us.'" **-Charles Chibitty, Comanche code talker who served in WWII, reflecting on his days at the Fort Sill Indian School**
4. "The drill sergeant got us out there and was going to have some fun with a bunch of raw recruits. He was going to put us through the paces. He started giving commands. There were sixteen of us that knew exactly what commands he was going to give and we knew how to march because we'd all been in boarding schools. There was only one of the guys that didn't go to boarding schools and instead of going right, he'd go left every time. I'm not going to mention any names, though! But anyway, we surprised the drill sergeant." **-Roderick Red Elk, Comanche code talker discussing how boarding schools prepared the code talkers for WWII military training**
5. "They really discouraged you from speaking Kiowa, and often would paddle you if you were caught speaking it. My mother went to Rainy Mountain [Indian School] and she said that back then they would make children hold quinine tablets in their mouths. At Riverside they would make you put lye soap on your toothbrush. Do you know that harsh soap that is almost 99% lye? Well, they would make you put some on your toothbrush, and then would stand right there until you put it in your mouth and brushed your teeth with it. The kids would end up with the whole inside of their mouth raw." **-Unnamed Kiowa woman who attended Riverside Indian School (Anadarko, OK) in the late 1920s**

6. "I am getting along fine since I left Carlisle. I can never regret going to Carlisle. The period of time I spented [sic] at Carlisle has enabled me to start out in the world and I making the best of it I can. I am interested in the school, because it is not only civilizing the redmen, but is developing him physically as well as moral and ennabled [sic] him to become a true citizen of America." **-Peter Gaddy (Delaware), Shawnee resident reflecting on the blacksmithing skills he acquired at Carlisle, which he attended from 1903-1908**

7. "...They [Chilocco] had a demerit system, and if you got so many demerits during the week why then you had to walk those demerits off just like you do at West Point [U.S. Military Academy]... And if you had done something *extremely* out of line, you worked on the rock pile on Saturday, Saturday morning was rock pile morning. They had a big rock crusher down there, and you went down there and took a sledge hammer and made little ones out of big ones so they could get 'em down to the size to get 'em in the rock crusher, and that was brutal work, it was like being in prison." **-Curtis Thorpe Carr (Creek), WWII veteran and photographer who attended Chilocco Indian School (Newkirk, OK) from 1927-1929**

8. "We also had, some of the Indians had their little stomp dances, Creeks particularly, we Creeks would have their little fires and at night sometimes, you'd see their fire burning and their stomp dances. 'Course this was frowned on by the school authorities. As well as it was frowned on for any of the students to speak their native tongue." **-Edgar (Creek), who attended Chilocco in the late 1920s**

Sources:

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