



MEMORANDUM

To: Jesuits and Directors of Jesuit Works
From: The Jesuit Conference President and Provincials of the United States
Date: March 21, 2022

Re: Native Boarding Schools

In April, the Interior Department will publish [its report](#) on the legacy of Native boarding schools in the United States. The report and attendant media coverage may note the role of the Society of Jesus, which administered many of these schools.

From 1819 until the 1960s, federal policies aimed to assimilate Indigenous peoples into white American culture. Laws and policies regarding boarding schools were one of the central means toward this goal of assimilation. The federal government compelled attendance, and students were prohibited from speaking their Native language or practicing their Indigenous culture. This history fuels ongoing cycles of trauma in many Tribal communities.

Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland commissioned the forthcoming report, which was prompted in part by last year's discoveries of hundreds of unmarked graves at the sites of several former boarding schools in Canada. The report is likely to identify former boarding schools as well as the locations of possible student burial sites near those schools.

Many of the boarding schools were run by Catholic religious orders, including the Jesuits. The experiences of individual alumni are diverse; some have expressed gratitude for their education, but many have asserted that the schools were a place where they were robbed of their Native identity. In general, prior to the 1960s, it is clear that the boarding schools and their curricula were part of a larger goal to eradicate Indigenous cultures in favor of white American culture.

[We have](#) sorrowfully acknowledged the Society's participation in these assimilation policies which separated families and suppressed Native cultures, [contrary to core tenets of our Catholic faith](#). We are examining this part of our history and making available the records we hold so others may do so as well. Openness, transparency and knowledge of our history are essential elements for reckoning with the sins of our past and moving forward together toward healing.

To begin this work, the Jesuit Conference has hired a researcher to prepare a comprehensive list of the boarding schools administered by the Society in the U.S. and determine what relevant materials we hold in our archives. A preliminary list is below.

Today the Jesuits sponsor one school for Native students in the U.S. that historically served as a boarding school: Red Cloud Indian School in Pine Ridge, South Dakota. In the 1960s, Red Cloud began shifting away from the assimilationist approach and toward "[a lasting bond between groups of two separate cultures who wanted to enhance the best parts of both worlds](#)." The school has not had boarders since 1980. For many years now the school has strongly promoted the Lakota language and culture. Red Cloud has begun a local [Truth & Healing process](#) to address the injustices in its history.

While it is challenging to face dark passages in our own past, we are grateful that this important issue is gaining more attention in the U.S. In Canada, where [the Jesuits operated one residential school](#), we have seen the fruits of a serious engagement with this history. The Jesuits participated fully with Canada's federal Truth and Reconciliation Commission, have responded to many of the Commission's Calls to Action, and continue to be in relationship with Indigenous people across the country.

With the Canadian experience in mind, the Jesuit Conference Office of Justice and Ecology [has endorsed a bill](#) to establish a similar commission in the U.S. Such a commission would enable a more thorough examination of this history than the review currently in process by the Department of the Interior. Only by facing this history can we, both as a country and as the Society of Jesus, begin the process that leads toward healing.

Further information is available [here](#). Please contact jccucommunications@jesuits.org with any questions.

Preliminary list of U.S. locations of boarding schools for Native students administered by the Jesuits

Systematic research into these schools began only in January 2022, and as a result, this list is preliminary and incomplete. It relies heavily on published and online secondary sources and includes only those locations where we can currently say with a high degree of confidence there was a boarding school administered by the Jesuits.

Many of these missions included both boys' and girls' schools. Many of the schools were administered in partnership with, or entirely by, women's religious congregations. In many cases the schools ran intermittently, depending on such factors as government funding, level of support from local Indigenous peoples and direction from the Jesuit leadership. The dates below represent the time during which there was at least one boarding school in operation at the mission in question.

- St. Regis Indian Seminary
 - Location: Florissant, Missouri
 - School dates: 1824 – 1831
 - Tribes: Iowa, Sac & Fox, Osage
- Kickapoo Mission
 - Location: Fort Leavenworth, Kansas
 - School dates: 1837 – 1841
 - Tribes: Kickapoo
- Catholic Osage Mission
 - Location: Osage Agency, Neosho County, Kansas
 - School dates: 1847 – 1870
 - Tribes: Osage primarily, but also a substantial number of Quapaw students. In lower numbers, Miami, Wea, Piankasha and Peoria.
- St. Mary's Mission
 - Location: St Mary's, Kansas
 - School dates: 1848 – 1869
 - Tribes: Potawatomi
- St. Ignatius Mission
 - Location: Flathead Reservation, St. Ignatius, Montana
 - School dates: 1864 – 1972, boarding ceased in 1962
 - Tribes: Salish, Upper Pend d'Oreilles, Kootenais
- St. Francis Regis Mission
 - Location: Colville Reservation, Ward, Washington
 - School dates: 1873 – 1921
 - Tribes: Colville, Lakes, Chehalis, Okanogan, Kalispel, Upper and Lower Spokane, Sanpoil

- Sacred Heart Mission
 - Location: Coeur d'Alene Reservation, De Smet, Idaho
 - School dates: 1878 – 1974
 - Tribes: Coeur d'Alene
- St. Peter's Mission
 - Location: Blackfeet Reservation, Fort Shaw, Montana
 - School dates: 1884 – 1896
 - Tribes: Blackfeet
- St. Francis Mission
 - Location: Rosebud Reservation, South Dakota
 - School dates: 1886 – 1972
 - Tribes: Sicangu Lakota
- St. Francis Xavier Mission
 - Location: Crow Reservation, St. Xavier, Montana
 - School dates: 1887 – 1921; restored in late 1930s or early 1940s, possibly as a day school – 1965
 - Tribes: Crow
- St. Paul's Mission
 - Location: Hays, Montana
 - School dates: 1887 – 1970
 - Tribes: Assiniboine, Gros Ventre
- Holy Cross Mission
 - Location: Holy Cross, Alaska
 - School dates: 1888 – 1956
- Red Cloud Indian School [Formerly Holy Rosary Mission]
 - Location: Pine Ridge Reservation, South Dakota
 - School dates: 1888 – present; ceased boarding by 1980
 - Tribes: Oglala Lakota
- St. Stephen's Mission
 - Location: Wind River Reservation, Wyoming
 - School dates: 1888 – 1975; boarding ceased in 1939
 - Tribes: Eastern Shoshone, Northern Arapaho
- Holy Family Mission
 - Location: Blackfeet Reservation, Browning/Two Medicine Creek, Montana
 - School dates: 1890 – 1940
 - Tribes: Blackfeet
- St. Andrew's Mission
 - Location: Umatilla Reservation, Oregon
 - School dates: 1890 – 1943
 - Tribes: Cayuse, Umatilla, Walla Walla
- St. Charles Borromeo Mission
 - Location: Crow Reservation, Pryor, Montana
 - School dates: 1892 – 1898
 - Tribes: Crow

- St. Mary's Mission
 - Location: Colville Reservation, Omak, Washington
 - School dates: 1892 – 1973
 - Tribes: Chelan, Entiat, Methow, Nespelim, Nez Perce, Okanogan, Paloos, Sanpoil, Senijextee, Wenatchi, Yakama, Spokane, Coeur d'Alene, Warm Springs, Flathead, Cree, Nooksak
- St. Joseph's Mission
 - Location: Slickpoo, Idaho
 - School dates: 1905 – closure likely between 1958 and 1969
 - Tribes: Nez Perce
- St. Mary's
 - Location: Akulurak and St. Mary's, Alaska
 - School dates: 1905 – 1987; in 1951 the school moved from Akulurak to St. Mary's
- Dillingham Mission
 - Location: Dillingham, Alaska
 - School dates: 1948 – 1964
- Copper Valley School
 - Location: Glenallen, Alaska
 - School dates: 1956 – 1971

Principal print sources:

- William N. Bischoff. *The Jesuits in Old Oregon, 1840-1940*. The Caxton Printers, 1945.
- Gilbert J. Garraghan. *The Jesuits of the Middle United States*. America Press, 1938.
- Francis Paul Prucha. *The Churches and the Indian Schools, 1888-1912*. University of Nebraska Press, 1979.
- Louis L. Renner. *Alaskana Catholica: A History of the Catholic Church in Alaska: A Reference Work in the Format of an Encyclopedia*. Oregon Province of the Society of Jesus, 2005.
- Wilfred P. Schoenberg. *Paths to the Northwest: A Jesuit History of the Oregon Province, Campion Book*. Loyola University Press, 1982.

Principal online sources:

- Guide to Catholic Records about Native Americans in the United States: <https://www.marquette.edu/library/archives/NativeGuide/NativeGuide-main.php>.
- The Annual Reports to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs: <https://digioll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/History/History-idx?type=browse&scope=HISTORY.COMMREP>.