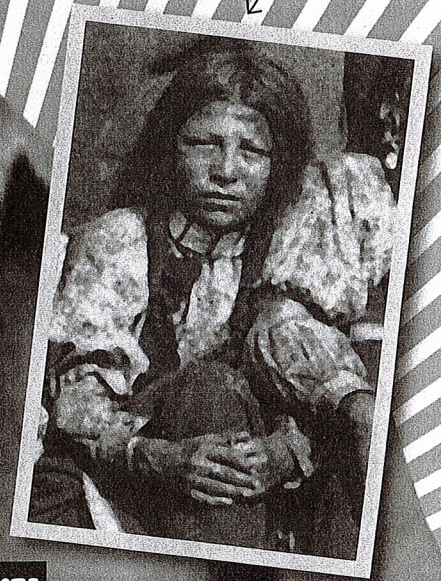


FLASHBACK

PRIMARY SOURCE

Read about Luther's life at boarding school—in his own words. Visit junior.scholastic.com for an excerpt from his autobiography.

Luther Standing Bear as a young boy, when he was known as Ota Kte



True Teens of History

**HE FOUGHT FOR
NATIVE
RIGHTS**

In the late 1800s, thousands of Native American children were taken from their families and sent to boarding schools to “learn the ways of the white man.” Luther Standing Bear was one of them—and he became a powerful voice for his people. BY JOSEPH BRUCHAC

VCS WILSON/CORBIS VIA GETTY IMAGES (JOHNSON); WHITE HOUSE PHOTOS/GETTY IMAGES (NIXON); JOYCE MALTCHAYAN/AFP/GETTY IMAGES (CLINTON); PANNAKOTTA/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM (BACKGROUND); HISTORY AND ART COLLECTION/ALAMY'S STOCK PHOTO (LUTHER STANDING BEAR); CUMBERLAND COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY, CARLISLE, PA. (LUTHER AS CHILD)

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At Luther's school, students were photographed soon after they arrived, then again later. "Before and after" pictures like these impressed U.S. officials, who hoped the school would help "civilize" Native Americans.

The name he chose was Luther. From that day on, Luther Standing Bear would live partly in the white man's world. But he would always carry his former life in his heart—and never stop fighting for his people.

Pushed Aside

By the time of Luther's renaming, America's indigenous people had been struggling against the control of white invaders for centuries.

When Europeans began arriving in North America in the late 1400s, they claimed vast areas for themselves and their countries. But millions of people were already living there. They belonged to hundreds of unique cultures, like Ota Kte's.

As white settlers moved west, Native Americans tried in vain to hold on to their lands. Many died fighting the U.S. Army, which backed the settlers' expansion. Millions of others were wiped out by foreign diseases brought by the newcomers, such as smallpox and flu.

By 1880, only about 300,000 Native Americans remained in the U.S. Most of them had been forced off their lands and were now living on small government-controlled reservations.

These new lands were often hard to farm. Hunters could no longer roam freely. Many tribes faced hunger and despair.

U.S. leaders struggled with what to do about the country's indigenous

inhabitants. Most believed Native people were too "savage" to have a role in society. Luther Standing Bear would become part of a tragic attempt to address this: boarding schools.

The Carlisle School

The idea came from a U.S. Army officer named Richard Henry Pratt. Like most white Americans at the time, Pratt was a staunch believer in the superiority of white culture.

Yet he thought that if young Native people could be taught his culture's values, they could succeed. (His belief that they deserved a role in American society wasn't common. Many Native people weren't even considered U.S. citizens until →

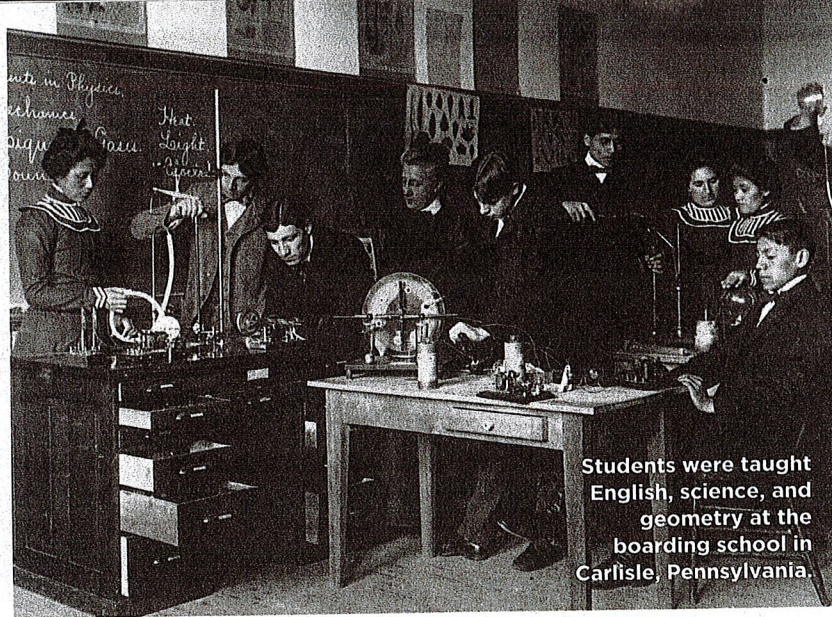
As You Read, Think About: How did going to boarding school affect Luther Standing Bear?

“Choose your new name,” said the teacher.

The 11-year-old boy looked at the marks on the blackboard. Having grown up speaking the language of his Lakota Sioux (*soo*) people, he couldn't understand them. He'd been told that each line of markings was a different white man's name. Now he had to pick one.

But the boy already had a name: Ota Kte (*OH-tuh kuh-TAY*). His father, the Lakota chief Standing Bear, had given it to him when he was born in 1868. Standing Bear had taught him how to ride a horse and hunt buffalo using a bow and arrow.

His father had also raised him to follow a code of conduct in which honor, bravery, and service to one's people were more important than life itself. It was a code followed by the Native American nations of the Great Plains, where Ota Kte's ancestors had lived for generations.



Students were taught English, science, and geometry at the boarding school in Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

For instance, his people believed there was no greater honor than to show bravery in battle by approaching an enemy and simply touching him rather than shooting him.

But Ota Kte was no longer with his people on the Pine Ridge reservation in what would later become South Dakota. Instead, he was 1,500 miles away in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. There, he was a member of the first class of students at the United States Indian Industrial School. The school was designed to teach him the ways

of the white man—and erase his Native American identity.

“Indicate the name that will be yours,” the white teacher said. She placed a long stick in Ota Kte's hand.

The boy recognized the challenge he now faced: adapting to the world of the white people whose weapons and diseases had devastated his people. Thanks to his father's lessons, he knew how to respond.

“I took the pointer and acted as if I was about to touch an enemy,” he would write years later.



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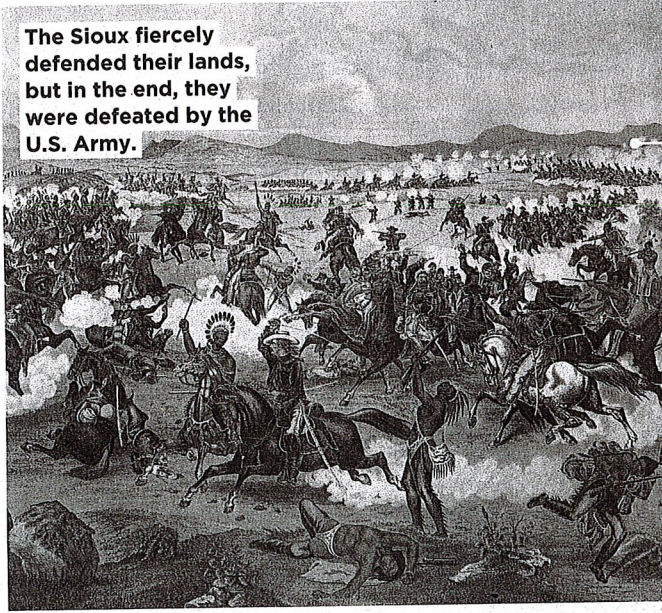
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CORBIS VIA GETTY IMAGES (CLASS); DEAGOSTINI/GETTY IMAGES (BATTLE); NATIONAL ANTHROPOLOGICAL ARCHIVES/SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION (BEFORE AND AFTER)



The Sioux fiercely defended their lands, but in the end, they were defeated by the U.S. Army.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

SIOUX RESISTANCE When white settlers seized their lands, the Sioux resisted—and had to fight the U.S. Army. The Sioux were eventually defeated, especially after the U.S. government aided hunters in killing off millions of the buffalo the Sioux relied on.

RESERVATIONS In the 1800s, U.S. officials forced most Native people onto small areas of land, usually far from their traditional homelands. Today, 22 percent of the nation's 5.2 million Native people live on reservations.

Congress passed a law declaring them to be so in 1924.) Pratt argued that the U.S. government should invest in boarding schools for Native children. There, the young people's heritage—their language and culture—would be stripped away. The schools would transform them into Pratt's idea of true Americans.

He convinced the government to let him test his idea. In 1879, Pratt founded a school at a former military barracks in Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

A Test of Courage

Pratt soon sent recruiters to gather students from reservations. When Ota Kte heard that young people were being asked to travel to this new school in Pennsylvania, he didn't trust the recruiters. He thought if he went, he might be killed by hostile white people in that strange place.

But Ota Kte's father had taught him that showing courage was deeply important. So the boy volunteered to go. "It occurred to me that this chance to go East would prove that I was brave," he later wrote.

In September 1879, Ota Kte arrived at the school in Pennsylvania with 83 other Lakota children. In addition to his new name, Luther, he was given new clothing. His deerskin leggings and moccasins were taken away, and he received a military-style uniform and tight boots to wear instead.

Like the other boys, Luther was forced to cut off his hair. Among Lakota men, long hair was a great source of pride. As the barber got to work, "tears came into my eyes," Luther wrote. Along with his lost name, it was another reminder of how his people's world was disappearing forever.

Living Up to a Code

At the Carlisle school, students were forced to learn English and recite Christian prayers. The Native children found it hard to adapt to the military-style discipline, and they were often lonely without their families. Homesick and depressed, many of them ran away.

But Luther stayed on. He knew the old ways were gone. His people were now confined to a reservation. He couldn't become a warrior or travel freely to hunt buffalo. But he could live up to his people's code in another way: by accepting his education.

Over time, Luther began to absorb the white people's ways. He mastered the English language, went to Sunday school, and learned to play an

Luther never forgot his father's lessons about bravery, honor, and service.

instrument called the cornet. As a representative of his school, he worked at a department store in Philadelphia, where he excelled.

Still, Luther never lost his connection to his fellow Lakota. In 1884, after four years at the school, he realized something: "This was not the life I desired." Eventually, he later wrote, "I told Captain Pratt I wanted to go home to my people." Pratt reluctantly agreed to let his prized pupil leave.



Luther Standing Bear went on to become a Lakota chief.

HISTORY AND ART COLLECTION/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO (LUTHER STANDING BEAR); JIM McMAHON/MAPMAN (MAP)

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An American Tragedy

The school in Carlisle was only the first of its kind. By 1910, about 60,000 Native American students were attending more than 150 such schools, most of them in the West.

Many Native parents sent their children away because they thought the schools would give them the tools to survive in a changing world. But many more kids were forced to go. In 1894, after a Hopi community in Arizona tried to keep its children at home, the government sent in troops to take them. Community leaders were sent to prison for resisting.

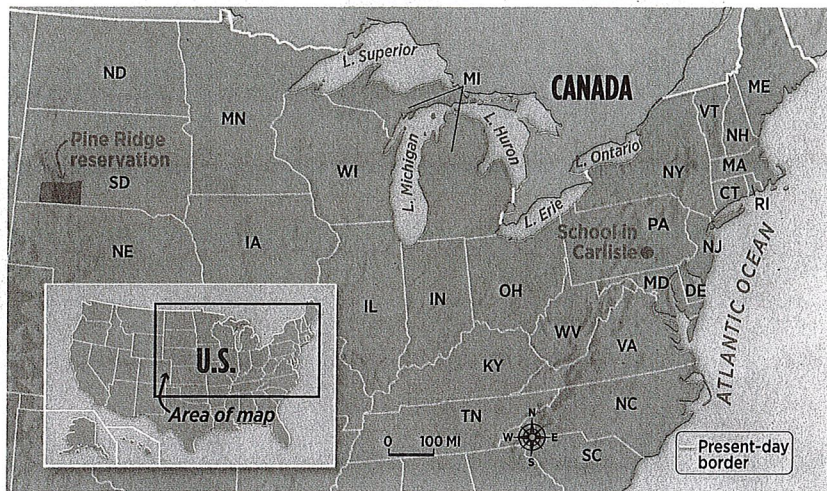
In the end, the Indian boarding schools were an experiment in “civilization” that dramatically, and often tragically, impacted every Native American community in the country. Harsh physical punishment and poor nutrition were common. Diseases like tuberculosis raged through crowded dorms. Many school cemeteries were filled with children who had died there.

Students who managed to graduate often struggled afterward. It was difficult for them to find jobs in the white world. Those who returned to their reservations often felt like strangers among their own people. Some had been away so long that they had forgotten their native languages. Others were so changed by their experiences that their people no longer accepted them. Many were emotionally and mentally scarred by what they had endured.

In 1928, a U.S. government study exposed the terrible conditions in the schools. Influenced by the testimony of former students and the work of other Native American activists, U.S. leaders gradually accepted that it was

A Long Way From Home

Luther's school was 1,500 miles from his reservation.



The schools dramatically, and often tragically, impacted every Native American community.

better for Native children to be educated in their own communities, and for Native people to have a say in what their children were taught. The last U.S. Indian boarding school finally closed in 1973.

Fighting for His People

As for Luther, he returned to his people in 1884, when he was 16. However, he often didn't feel exactly at home. “I was caught between two worlds,” he wrote. He went on to marry and have children, become the principal of his reservation's school, and even be named a Lakota chief like his father. Yet in 1905, he moved away with his family, never to return.

In 1928, he published a book, *My People the Sioux*. In it, he told the

story of the Lakota and criticized U.S. policies toward them. At last he was able to strike back at the government that had taken so much from him and from his people.

Luther kept writing, and as his reputation grew, he became a leading voice for Native American rights. He fought for bilingual education on reservations, Native history classes in U.S. schools, and preservation of the endangered Lakota culture. His advocacy helped build popular support for changing the U.S. government's policy toward the continent's first people.

Until his death in 1939, Luther Standing Bear put his education from the Carlisle school to good use. But he never forgot the early lessons from his father about bravery, honor, and service to his people. He was always a Lakota at heart. ♦

Write About It! Explain what Luther Standing Bear meant when he wrote “I was caught between two worlds.” Describe the challenges he faced and how he responded to them.