

DAKOTA ACCESS PIPELINE UNIT: LESSON 3: HANDOUT 3**BOARDING SCHOOL LIFE AT THE KIOWA-COMANCHE AGENCY, 1893-1920**

Page | 1

The text below is an excerpt from an article about life at an Indian Boarding School in Oklahoma. It is a secondary source, written in 1996 by a historian named Clyde Ellis¹. The author includes primary source quotes from people who lived through the experience.

The standard sixth-grade boarding school education rested mainly on the acquisition of vocational skills—farming and industrial arts for the boys, domestic training for the girls. To these were added lessons in the rudiments of history, grammar, arithmetic, civics, the English language, and the Christian religion. A boarding school education was intended to be a stepping stone from the reservation to an independent and self-sufficient life. It promised nothing more than that. Most experts agreed on the need to recognize limits.

"The Indian needs a practical education," opined the Most Reverend John Ireland in 1902. "It is well for him to know that he must live as a white man, and consequently he must learn to work." Teach the boys a trade of some kind, and teach them farming, which is, of course, the most important of all.

Teach the girls cooking, teach them neatness, teach them responsibility.... teach them how to serve a nice appetizing meal for the family; do this and I tell you you have solved the whole question of Indian civilization.

A 1914 report from Superintendent James McGregor described a typical day at Rainy Mountain. Drilling and cleaning began at 6:00 a.m., and morning roll call came at 6:45. Breakfast followed from 7:00 to 7:30, after which students performed routine chores. Morning classes met from 8:00 to 5:00 with a one-hour lunch break at noon.

Supper was served at 6:10. There were numerous evening socials as well as lectures on topics ranging from the humane treatment of animals to patriotism. Evening roll call came at 7:15 for small pupils, 8:00 for the older ones. At 9:00 it was lights out.

Weekends brought a respite of sorts. Saturday mornings were devoted to work from 8:00 to 11:00, but afternoons were free. On alternate weekends chaperoned groups could go to nearby Gotebo or to Boake's Trading Post.

The Sabbath meant Sunday school from 10:00 a.m. to noon, recreation and free time for much of the afternoon, and church service from 5:00 to 6:15. Church attendance was mandatory; one Kiowa girl recalled that "you went to church; there was no not going."

¹ Ellis, C. (1996). Boarding School Life at the Kiowa-Comanche Agency, 1893–1920. *The Historian*, 58(4), 777-793.