



CALIFORNIA INDIANS: THE FIRST PEOPLE

ORAL HISTORY ACTIVITY: BOARDING SCHOOLS

A free [Online Learning](#) activity aligned with
Common Core & State Content standards for 6th-12th grades

OVERVIEW:

In this activity, learners will view videos of Rose Anne Abrahamson and Ernest Siva discussing their family members' experiences in boarding schools.

APPROPRIATE FOR:

6th-12th grade

OBJECTIVES:

In this activity, learners will:

- Learn about systems of boarding schools imposed on California Indians
- Hear family stories about boarding schools in different parts of California
- Reflect on the impacts of forced cultural assimilation
- Compare and contrast historical accounts to contemporary news stories

DIRECTIONS:

Watch the video and answer the related questions.

TIME:

30 minutes

MATERIALS:

- [Video](#) from the Museum's California Indians oral history series

STANDARDS:***Common Core******Reading - Key Ideas and Details***

6-8 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary documents

Writing - Research to Build and Present Knowledge

6-12 Write arguments based on discipline-specific content

California History Social Science Content Standards***Historical Interpretation***

6-8 Students explain the central issues and problems from the past, placing people and events in a matrix of time and place.

Historical Research, Evidence, and Point of View

6-8 Students detect the different historical points of view on historical events and determine the context in which the historical statements were made (the questions asked, sources used, author's perspectives).

- 9-12 Students evaluate major debates among historians concerning alternative interpretations of the past, including an analysis of authors' use of evidence and the distinctions between sound generalizations and misleading oversimplifications.

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PART 1: VIDEO ANALYSIS

DIRECTIONS:

View the [video](#) on boarding schools and answer the questions below.



QUESTIONS:

1. What were the goals of the boarding schools Rose Anne Abrahamson is talking about?
2. What were the Native students in California being asked to give up when they went to boarding school?
3. When students were forced to cut their hair at boarding school, what did it mean to them?

4. What were some of the conditions students faced at boarding schools?

5. Thinking about your own cultural heritage (this could be ethnic, religious, national, or other cultural identity), what is one practice that helps you represent who you are? What struggles would come with having that piece of your culture taken away?

PART 2: FURTHER EXPLORATION

Directions:

If you would like to know more about this topic, explore the resources listed below.

- Learn more about the system of Indian Boarding Schools in California from [ACLU Northern California](#).
- Hear a 2008 [NPR news story](#) about boarding schools, including Sherman Indian High School, the school Ernest Siva talked about. Consider the following questions:
 - How are schools like Sherman different today than they were when they were founded?
 - What do you think has led to these changes?
- Read books about boarding schools:
 - *Fatty Legs: A True Story*, by Christy Jordan-Fenton and Margaret Pokiak-Fenton
 - *No Parole Today*, by Laura Tohe
 - *Pipestone: My Life in an Indian Boarding School*, by Adam Fortunate Eagle