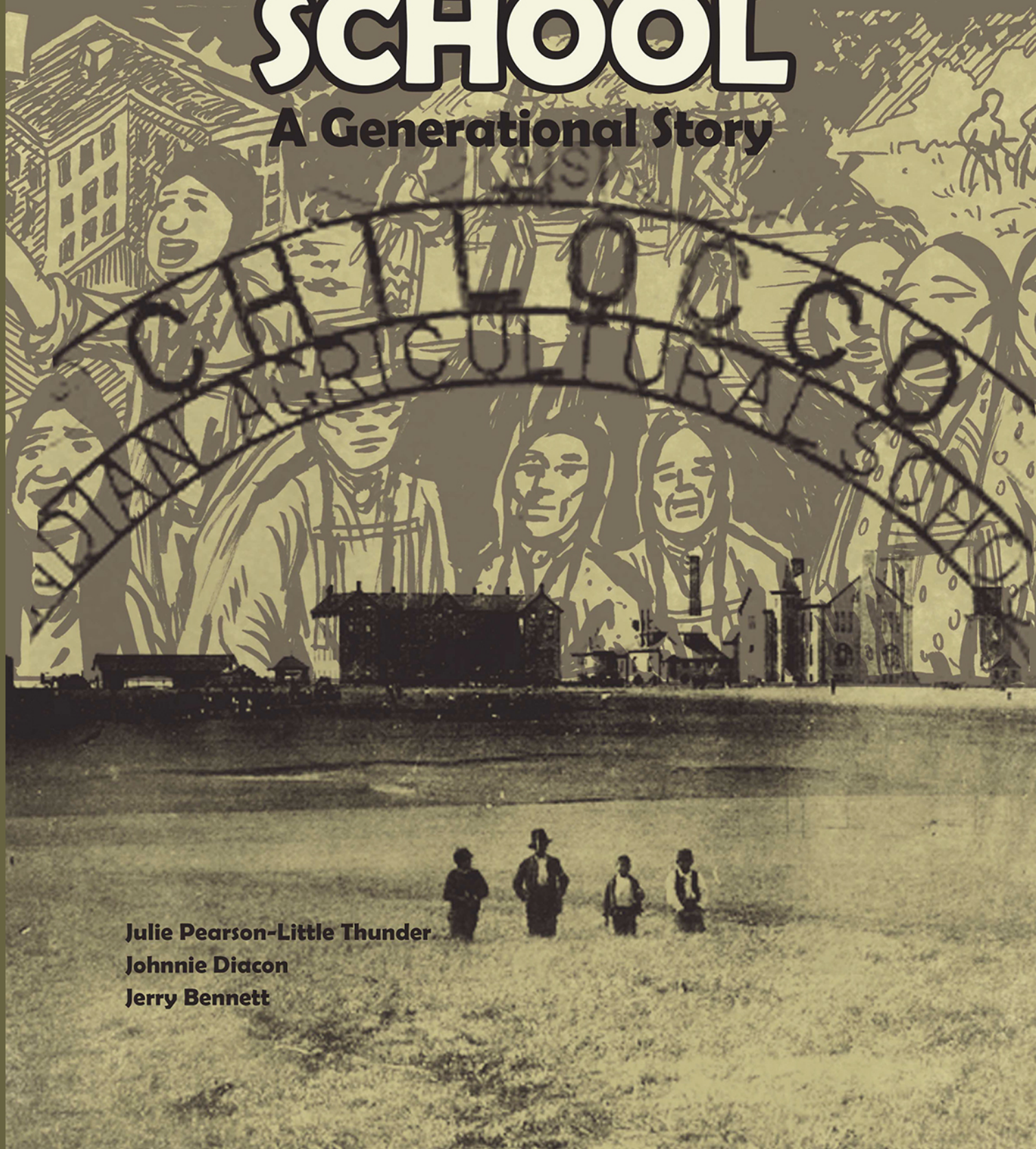


CHILOCCO INDIAN SCHOOL

A Generational Story



Julie Pearson-Little Thunder
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Chilocco Indian School: A Generational Story

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Dear Reader,

For decades, most Americans have been unaware of the destructive impacts of Native American boarding schools. This is changing as books, films, and cultural institutions draw attention to the trauma of forced assimilation and the many harmful practices that historically took place in these schools. With this increased awareness comes the opportunity to talk more deeply about the long history of federally controlled education for Native Americans in the United States.

Like cultural, tribal, or individual identities, student experiences varied throughout time and location at these schools. Our goal in *Chilocco Indian School: A Generational Story* is to tell the story of one particular institution, Chilocco Indian Agricultural School (1884 -1980), over the multiple generations of students who attended. During its nearly 100-year history, Chilocco underwent many changes, impacting each generation of students differently.

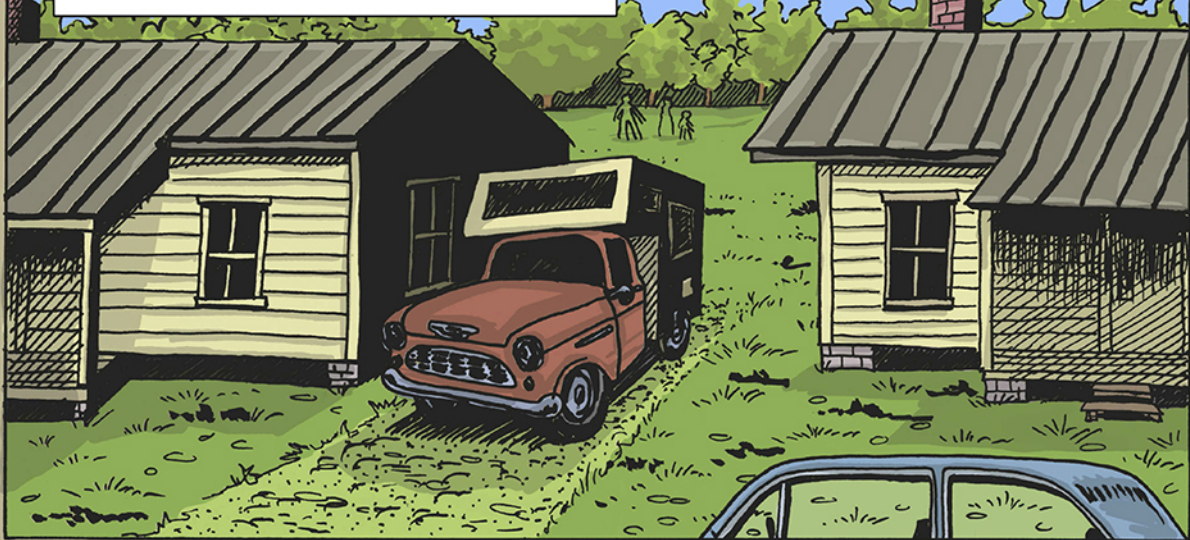
The goal of U.S. Indian boarding schools in the late 19th century was to eradicate Native cultures, but as people from different Native nations were brought together, the foundations were laid for an intertribal, pan-Indian movement. Together with other social movements in the 1950s and 60s, this helped bring about a redefining of Native education by Native peoples.

Although Chilocco has closed, Native boarding schools still exist in Oklahoma, as they do elsewhere around the country. Some are managed by Native nations themselves under agreements with the federal Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) while others are administered by the BIA directly. We urge educators and students to use this graphic novel as a companion to the Chilocco History Project curriculum offered through the Oklahoma State University Libraries at <https://chilocco.library.okstate.edu/>



...of these vocational pursuits with advances in technology has eliminated
...Indian youth for a modern way of life. Heavy equipment operations, along
...with welding, agricultural pursuits, dry cleaning, automobile mechanics,
...automotive body repair, electrical courses, woodworking, printing, and other
...vocational subjects vie for a place alongside such academic subjects

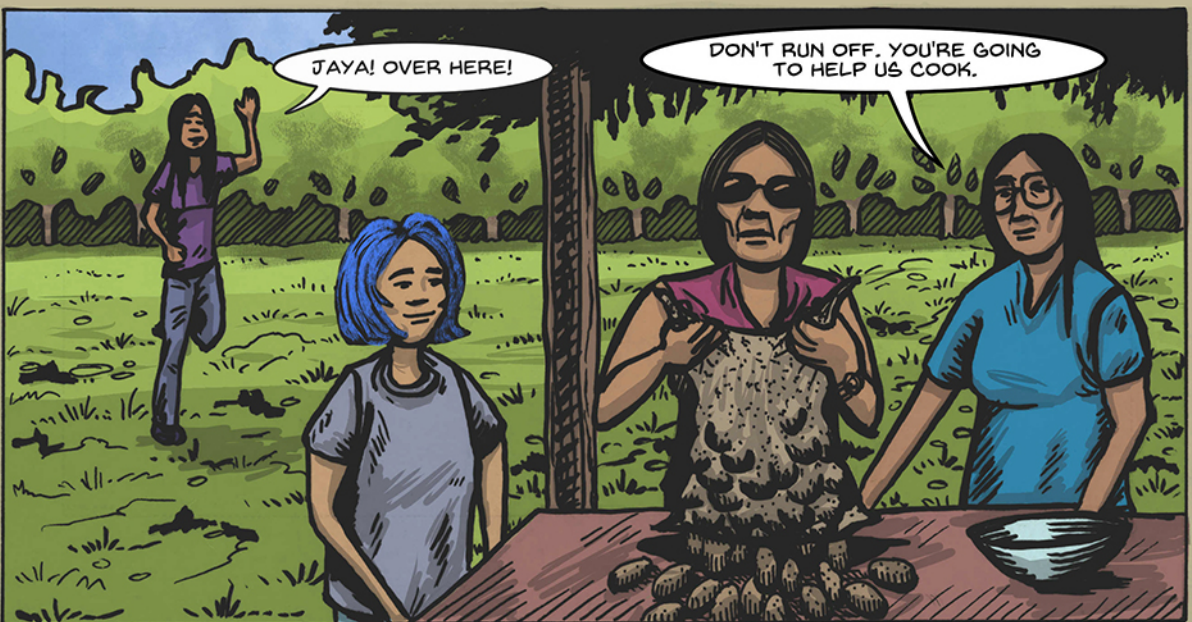
THOMAS FAMILY REUNION, 2015.



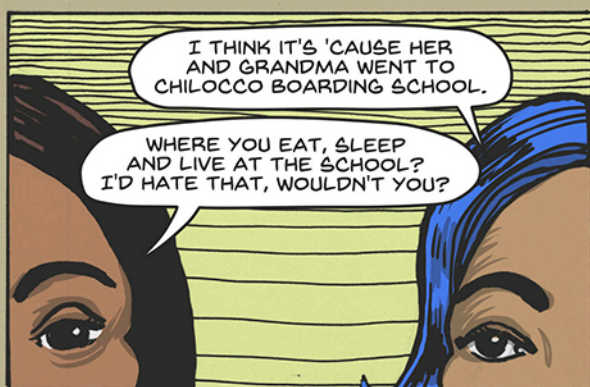
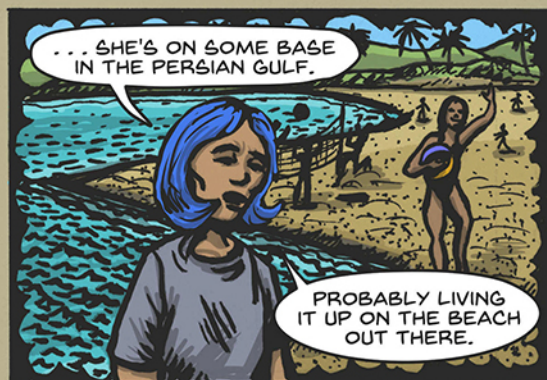
CARMEN, GET THE ICE CHEST.
JAYA, GRAB THOSE SACKS.

WISH MOM WAS HERE.

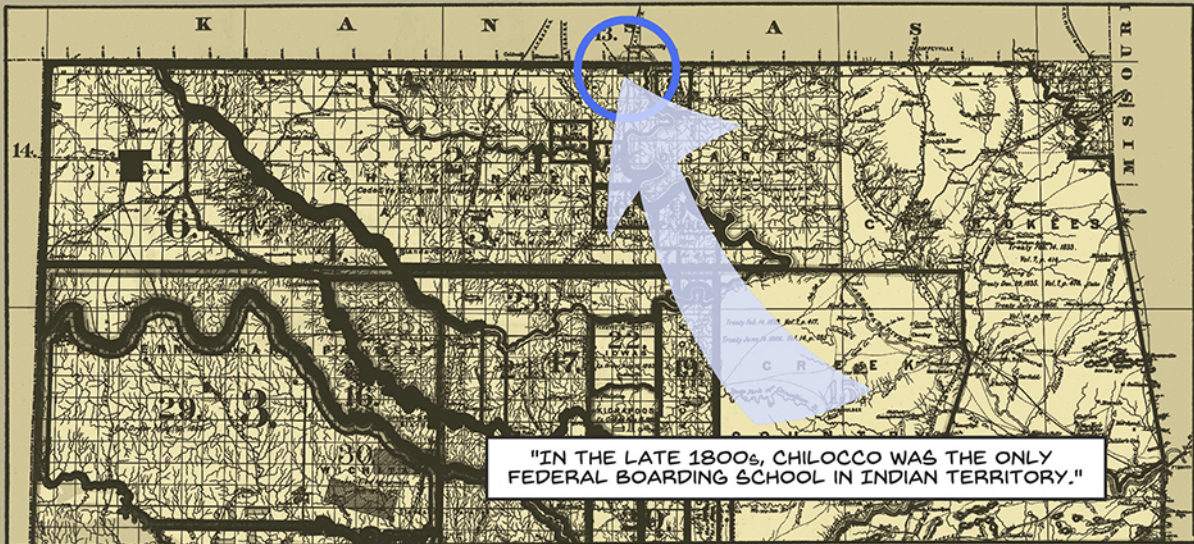














IT'S FOR THEIR OWN GOOD.



ASE-STAXESTSE! ASE-STAXESTSE!*

YOUR KIDS HAVE TO BE IN SCHOOL!

*"RUN! RUN!" IN TŠITSİSTAS (CHEYENNE)



"WHEN THOSE KIDS GOT TO CHILOCCO, THEY DIDN'T KNOW WHAT WAS HAPPENING OR WHY."





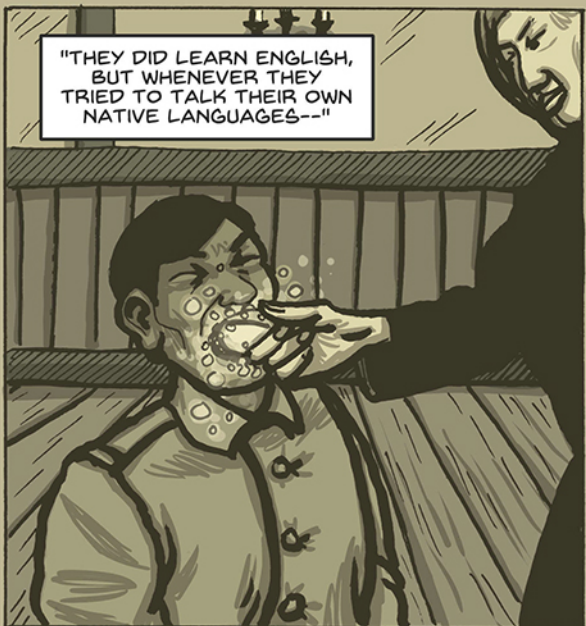
"KIDS WHO GOT SICK AT CHILOCCO WEREN'T ALLOWED TO GO HOME. MANY DIED AT THE SCHOOL WITHOUT EVER SEEING THEIR FAMILIES AGAIN."



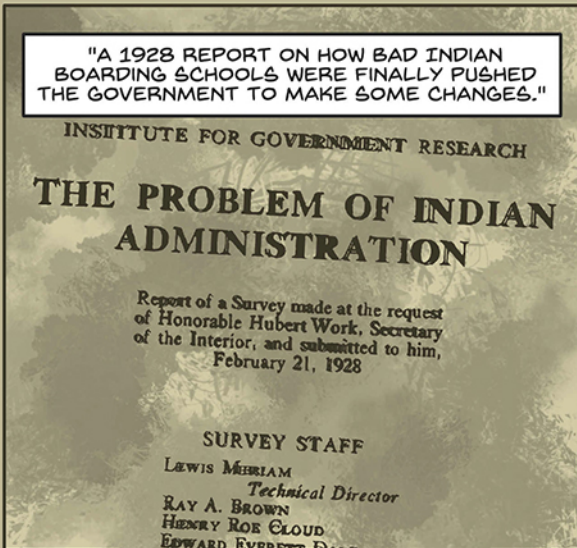
"AROUND A HUNDRED NATIVE CHILDREN ARE BURIED ON SCHOOL GROUNDS."

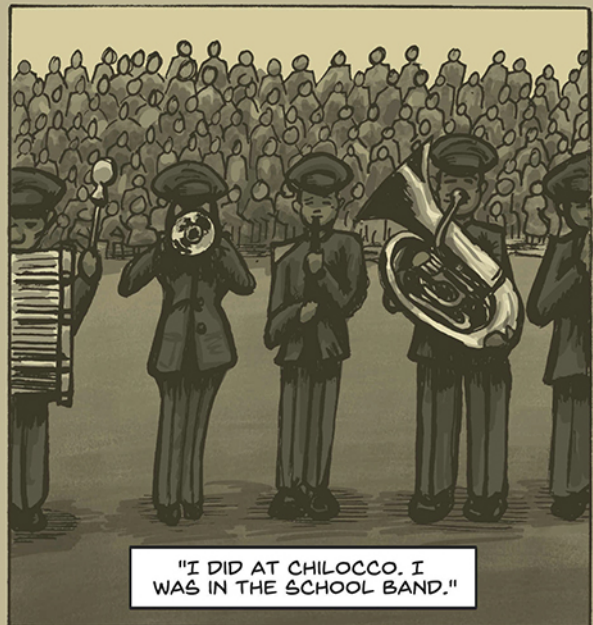


"BACK THEN, THEY THOUGHT NATIVE KIDS DIDN'T NEED A QUALITY EDUCATION. THEY SPENT MOST OF THEIR TIME DOING CHORES TO KEEP THE SCHOOL RUNNING."



"THEY DID LEARN ENGLISH, BUT WHENEVER THEY TRIED TO TALK THEIR OWN NATIVE LANGUAGES--"











"SUMMERS BACK HOME, I ALWAYS FOUND A JOB. IF THEY KNEW YOU WERE FROM CHILOCCO, THEY'D HIRE YOU RIGHT AWAY."



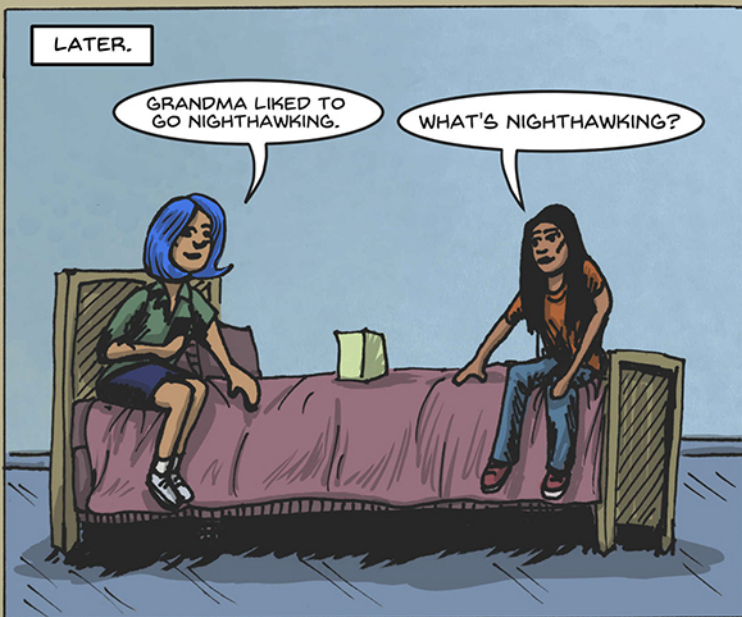
CHILOCCO ENCOURAGED YOU TO SET GOALS AND GO AFTER THEM. SOON AS I GRADUATED, I APPLIED TO NURSING SCHOOL IN TULSA.



I WAS SERIOUS ABOUT MY STUDIES BUT I ALSO KNEW HOW TO HAVE FUN.



TAKE THE REST OF THESE DONUTS AND GIVE 'EM OUT TO WHOEVER WANTS ONE.



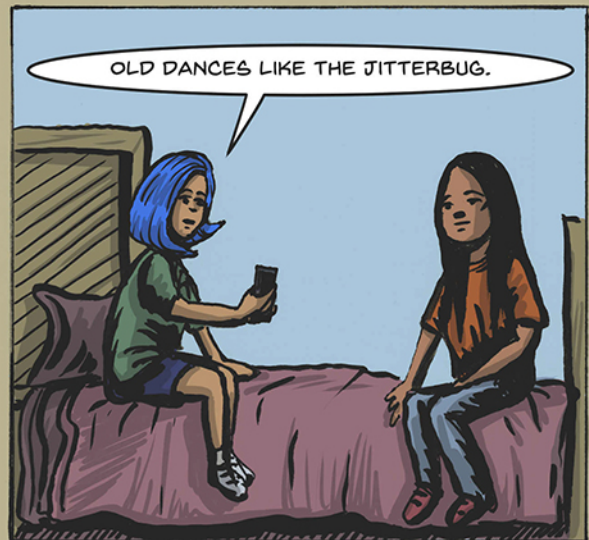
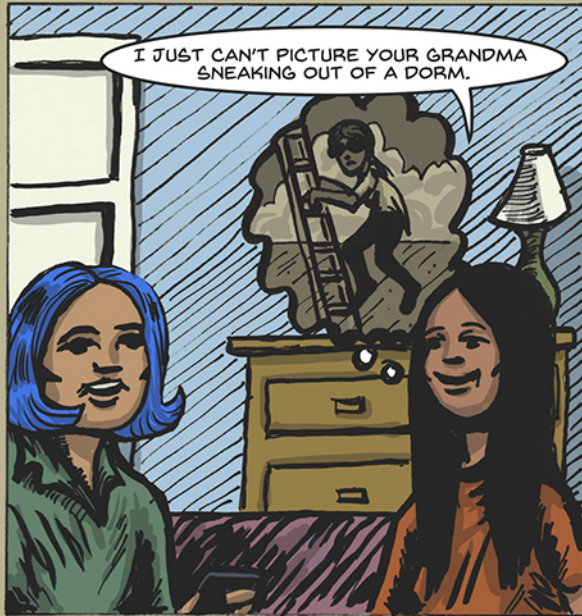
LATER.

GRANDMA LIKED TO GO NIGHTHAWKING.

WHAT'S NIGHTHAWKING?



IT'S WHEN YOU SNEAK OUT THE DORM AT NIGHT.







"TWO OF THEM WON MEDALS OF HONOR IN WORLD WAR II."



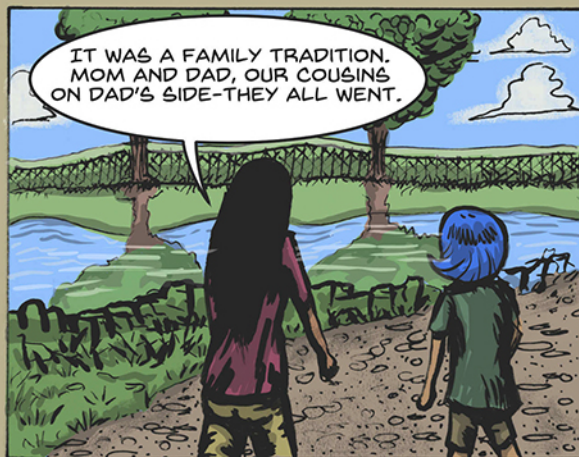
YOU GIRLS WANNA COME ON A WALK WHEN YOU'RE FINISHED?



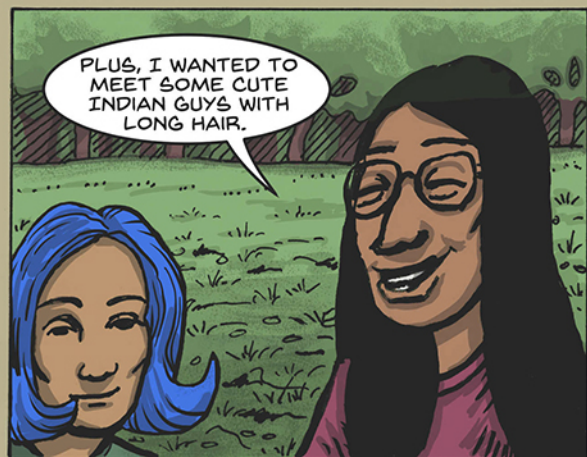
NOT ME. GO AHEAD, JAYA.



WHY DID YOU GO TO CHILOCCO, AUNTIE?



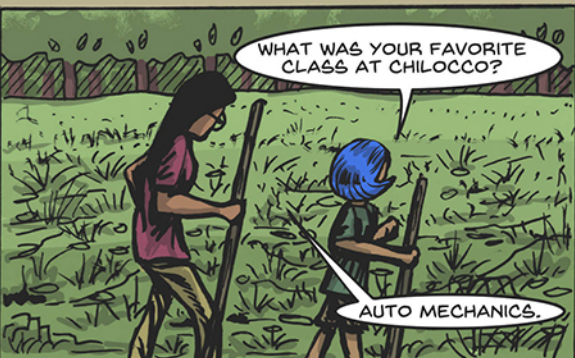
IT WAS A FAMILY TRADITION. MOM AND DAD, OUR COUSINS ON DAD'S SIDE-THEY ALL WENT.



PLUS, I WANTED TO MEET SOME CUTE INDIAN GUYS WITH LONG HAIR.



IN THE 70s, MOST PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN OKLAHOMA DIDN'T ALLOW INDIAN GUYS TO WEAR LONG HAIR.





YOU KNOW HOW TO FIX CARS?

NOT THESE NEW ONES. JUST THE VINTAGE ONES LIKE ME.

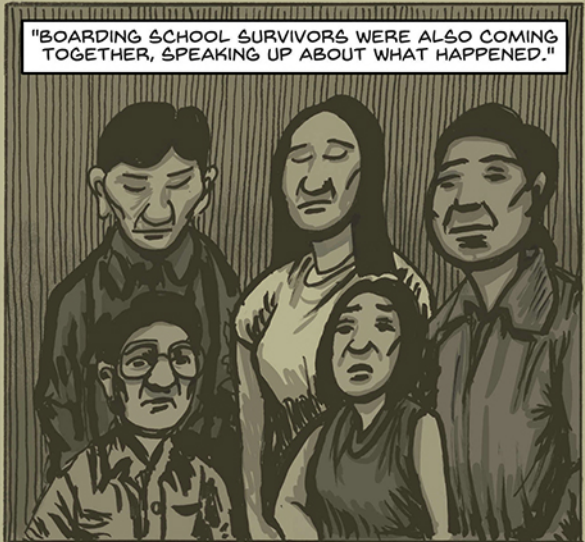


EVERY TIME INDIAN COUNTRY CHANGED, CHILOCCO DID ITS BEST TO CHANGE WITH IT. SOMETIMES, THEY WERE EVEN AHEAD OF THE CHANGE.

SO WHY DID CHILOCCO CLOSE?



THE ATTITUDE TOWARDS INDIAN BOARDING SCHOOLS WAS CHANGING AS THE PUBLIC LEARNED MORE ABOUT THEM.



"BOARDING SCHOOL SURVIVORS WERE ALSO COMING TOGETHER, SPEAKING UP ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED."



SO EVEN THOUGH CHILOCCO'S HISTORY WAS COMPLEX...



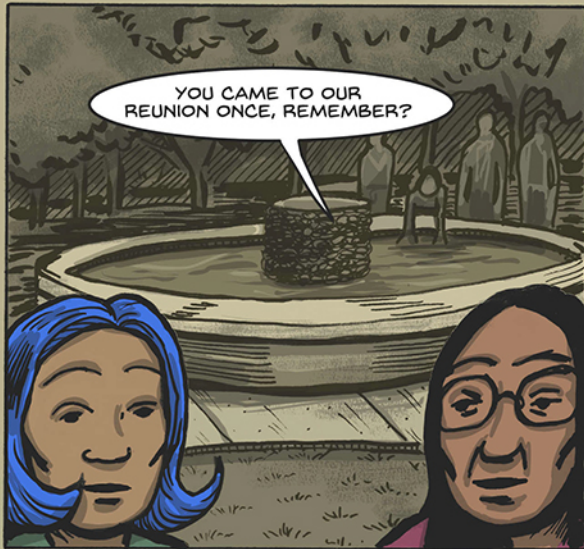
...IT WAS EASY FOR SOME PEOPLE TO JUSTIFY CLOSING IT.



"US STUDENTS AND STAFF AND FACULTY DIDN'T WANT CHILOCCO TO CLOSE."



BUT THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AND THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA HAD ALREADY MADE UP THEIR MINDS.



YOU CAME TO OUR REUNION ONCE, REMEMBER?



SORT OF.

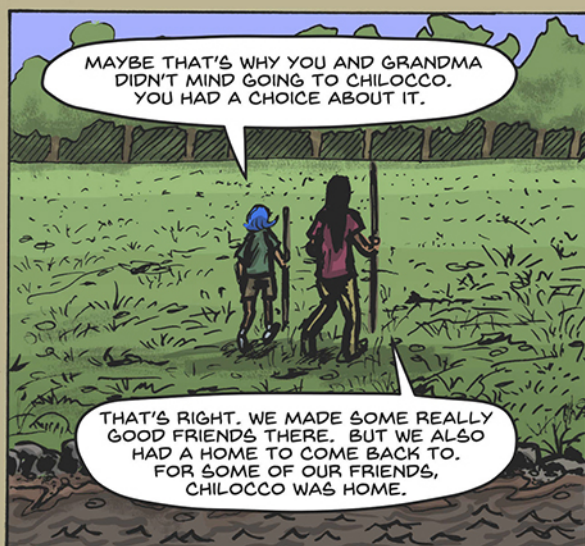
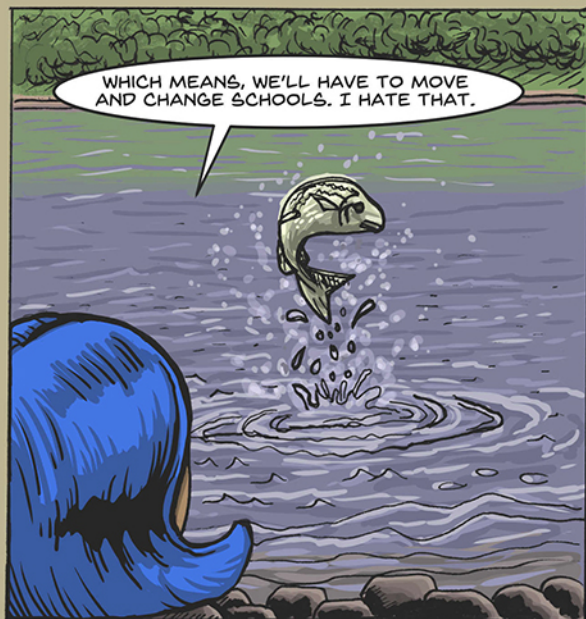


MAYBE THIS SPRING, IF YOUR MOM'S STILL AWAY-

I CAN GO TO THE REUNION WITH YOU AND GRANDMA.



DON'T WORRY, YOUR MOM WILL GET HER NAVY ASSIGNMENT SOON



Curriculum Objectives*

1. To examine the legacy of American Indian education and demonstrate how positive and negative experiences can exist simultaneously and complicate our view of history.
2. To explore the forced assimilation practices of the federal government in Indian boarding schools like Chilocco.
3. To analyze the use of military practices at Chilocco and how they worked hand-in-hand with forced assimilation.
4. To use primary documents such as art, photographs, or oral histories to hypothesize how Chilocco students might have resisted the devaluing of Native culture.
5. To analyze changes in policies and practices in Chilocco before and after the Meriam and Kennedy Reports.

Related Terms:

- Chilocco (Shuh-lah-ko) Indian Agricultural School
- Genocide
- Forced Assimilation
- Dawes Act
- Meriam Report
- Vocational education
- Native sovereignty or tribal sovereignty
- Bureau of Indian Affairs
- Vocational Education



* The objectives listed represent the scope of a larger curriculum found at <https://chilocco.library.okstate.edu/>

Discussion Questions

1. Explain how living at a school like Chilocco, away from your family, would be different from attending school for only a few hours a day.
2. The early education at Chilocco focused on training students for jobs in agriculture or domestic service rather than academics. Based on the book, what kinds of jobs would be open to boys who went to Chilocco? What about the girls who attended Chilocco? How would this type of education affect their career choices?
3. Find the panels showing students repairing a car, doing laundry, or performing manual labor. Why do you think Native American students were only educated to work vocational or agricultural jobs?
4. Today Native Americans hold all kinds of jobs and government offices. At the time Jaya's grandmother graduated from Chilocco, few scholarships were available for Native people to pursue a college education, and many students couldn't afford to go to college. Only in the 1970s, with the help of federal initiatives (including GI benefits from the Vietnam War) did Native students begin enrolling in college in larger numbers. Think about how Chilocco changed over the years. What improvements or social changes during this time have made life better for Jaya and her family?



Conclusion Questions

1. Life at Chilocco was highly disciplined and based on a military model of education. What examples can you find in the book to support that?
2. The aunt tells Jaya to stay and help cook. She tells Jaya to “pretend you have kitchen detail at Chilocco”. What does the term “detail” mean? Infer how life in Chilocco was similar to life in the military.
3. Jaya explains to her friend Tina that her grandma is strict because she went to Chilocco Boarding School. Explain the ways that life at Chilocco might look strict to Jaya and Tina.
4. Assimilation means students weren’t allowed to speak their tribal languages or practice their culture. Create newspaper headlines that could have been published in the late 1880s that speak out against the harsh treatment of Native students in boarding schools.
5. Many Native American students, families, and officials were upset about how Native children were being treated when Chilocco began in 1884. By the time the school closed in 1980, students were protesting its closure. Examine the differences in each generation’s experience. What can you assume changed for the students of Chilocco over time?
6. Native students survived by remembering who they were even when the school wanted to turn them into something else. They expressed themselves through dance, song, and art. Look at the cartoon a Chilocco student drew of a traditional Native American in physics class. Draw a picture of yourself in class, but add details that make sure everyone knows who you are.



A STUDENT-DRAWN CARTOON FROM THE 1930 YEARBOOK. THE BOOK TITLE IS *PRACTICAL PHYSICS*.

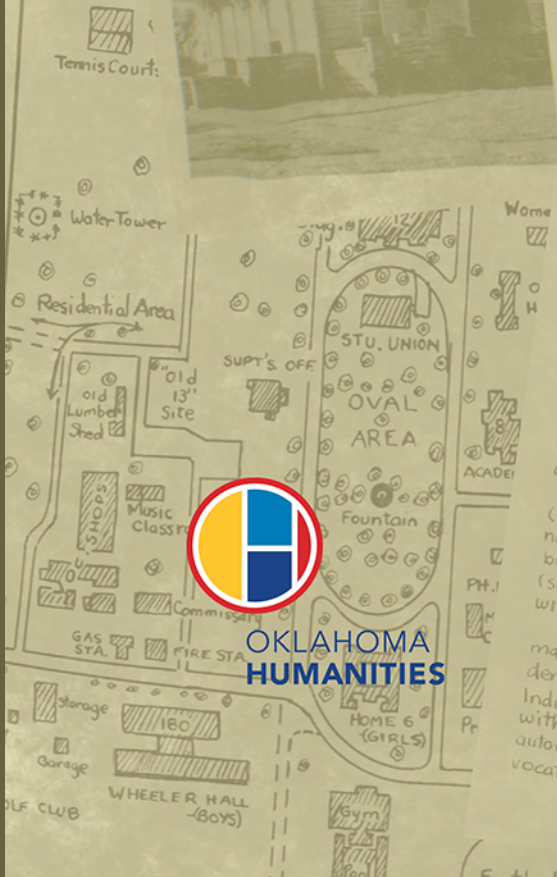


CHILCOCCO



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Chiloco

Jaya, a Native teen temporarily separated from her mom, accompanies her grandmother and aunt to a family reunion. Between chores and activities, the older women lead her through a story about Chilocco Indian Agricultural School, combining history and their own memories of attending the boarding school in northern Oklahoma. Their account arouses a range of emotions in the teen, from tears, to laughter, to anger, to compassion. The result: a new respect for her family and the resilience of Native peoples, along with insights into how Jaya might handle the changes in her own life. This story, set in present-day Oklahoma, was compiled from the experiences of real students who attended Chilocco, and their recollections were shared through oral history interviews, photographs, letters, and other archival sources. It engages students and adults in an often overlooked part of U.S. history and pushes back against stereotypes of Native identity.



CHILCOCCO INDIAN INDUSTRIAL SCHOOL (as it was originally named) was established in 1884 on the beautiful green prairie lands of Central Oklahoma. James M. Haworth was the first superintendent of this institution.

During its early years the school's lands produced the principal crops of wheat, corn, oats, broom corn, sorghum, millet, alfalfa, and prairie hay. Large orchards and vineyards yielded abundant crops of fruit. Nurseries and gardens also yielded fine vegetables and afforded students knowledge and skill in the field of agriculture. At one time the dairy produced over 10,000 gallons of milk each quarter year.

Principal courses of instruction and practical experiences in such subjects as shoemaking, shoe repair, leathercraftsmanship, dairying, stock-raising that included fine poultry, hogs, cattle, horses, and sheep, over 1000 head of cattle roamed the lush green pastures.

Other vocations included quarrying, automobile mechanics (the foremen, nursing, broommaking, plumbing and steamfittings, dressmaking, such as tailoring, painting and...), tailoring, painting and... along with other vocational pursuits from the school curricula. Today, academic subjects are emphasized, with the aim of preparing today's Indian youth for a modern way of life. Heavy equipment operations, along with welding, agricultural pursuits, dry cleaning, automobile mechanics, automotive body repair, electrical courses, woodworking, printing, and other vocational subjects vie for a place alongside such academic subjects



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