

# AIH-7: American Indian Reservations

## Summary

This lesson is designed to help students understand what life on a reservation is like.

## Group Size

Small Groups

## Materials

### Books

- *The Ledger Book of Thomas Blue Eagle*  
ISBN 156566-063-3
- *Indian School: Teaching the White Man's Way*  
by Michael Cooper  
ISBN 0395920841

### Online Videos

Boarding School

[56k Modem](#) | [Broadband](#)

Student Success

[56k Modem](#) | [Broadband](#)

## Background for Teachers

This is the third of four lessons in the Fifth Grade American Indian History Lesson Plan Unit:

- [AIH-5: Westward Expansion](#)
- [AIH-6: American Indians' Loss of Land](#)
- AIH-7: American Indian Reservations
- [AIH-8: American Indian Lifestyles](#)

Part of United States history is the story of how Indians were placed on reservations instead of being allowed to live upon their own lands. Essential Question #2 was to help students develop background knowledge of the impact of the loss of land on these people. This lesson is designed to help students understand what life on a reservation is like. A reservation is more than a location, more than just a place to call home. It is the life and soul of a people. It is where they can grow and develop in their respective cultures. However, it was and is not the panacea that many American people of the past thought it was. The placement of Indians on reservations had a far-reaching impact that is still felt today. A thorough view of the impact of reservations is the focus of this lesson. It is hoped that reservations will be presented in a positive light, yet with treatment of the negatives of reservation life. Students should be guided to understand the impact of the reservation on the Indian people. Many boarding schools were created to teach the Indian children how to live in the "white man's world." As young children, students would be removed from their home and taken to live in boarding schools. These schools were not very effective. Children were forced to leave their culture behind and work, learn, and live as white children. Cruel punishment for speaking their native languages was often used by the teachers of these boarding schools. Often students were trained technically and higher education was not encouraged.

The established churches, such as the Catholic church, the Episcopalian church, the Seventh Day Adventist church, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), and others, as part of their method of teaching Christianity, tried to force children to become "non-Indian." The American Indian children were forced to wear different clothing and cut their hair, boys and girls alike. They were also beaten and punished severely, locked in closets, and made to discount their heritage. The

Indian Placement Program of the LDS church played a role in the education of American Indian children. It is important to discover when this program began, what its consequences were, and whether it still exists today.

It was also during this time that the Bureau of Indian Affairs boarding schools were created on the reservations to help teach Indian children English. This was effective to a point, but then started a trend where many of the tribes began to lose their native language. Today many tribes have their own culture-retention programs, revitalizing of traditions, ceremonies -- and languages. In many cases, only the elders are able to speak the native tongue. Today, boarding schools are a thing of the past, with only a few in existence, and the schooling practices are much different and more humane. Indian children are being taught in neighborhood schools where they live, but emphasis is needed on teaching them their native culture and language. Where boarding schools removed children from the home to educate them, today parents, the school, and communities are working together to help young people in their education.

### Instructional Procedures

*Essential Question 3: How did confinement to the reservations affect American Indians?*

#### *Lesson Development*

Have students view a topical map of the United States. Ask: "Where do you think some of the Indian reservations are located?" Help students to realize the characteristics of the land that many of the reservations are located on. Have students use a map of the reservations in the United States. For information on Utah Indian Reservations and Tribes refer to [Lesson 2 Five Utah Indian Tribes](#) for information. The following websites have information on United States Reservations maps:

- <http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0778676.html>
- <http://www.cr.nps.gov/nagpra/DOCUMENTS/ResMAP.HTM>
- <http://nationalatlas.gov/printable/fedlands.html>

Create a question and answer session about laws that affect American Indians (specifically why or how were reservations created) using the following resources:

- [Laws Affecting American Indians information page](#)
- [Bureau of Indian Affairs Web Site](#)

on reservations

Students will develop a positive and negative impact chart about reservations. (This can be done in teams or as individuals.) Several strategies can be used for this. Teams could research both positives and negatives, or they could work one side or the other. They could do this on paper, with wall charts, in PowerPoint or in debate format (teacher's choice).

Main Points:

- Loss of Land --useless land
- Promised everything to survive, promises broken.
- Housing and living are difficult in some areas.
- Traditions are carried forward or lost?
- Languages lost or preserved?
- Education

If possible, arrange for pen pals from a reservation. Most tribes have websites with contact information on them. If not, most states have information bureau that could assist in locating a reservation. Website link to numerous tribes -- [Native American Nations](#)

### Bibliography

Utah State Office of Education  
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## American Indian History

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