



DECEMBER 15, 2022

NATIVE AMERICAN BOARDING  
SCHOOL RESEARCH PROJECT  
QUARTERLY REPORT TO COLORADO COMMISSION OF INDIAN  
AFFAIRS

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## **I. Introduction**

This is the second report to the Colorado Commission of Indian Affairs (CCIA) as directed by the Native American Boarding School Research Program Act, HB22-1327. It should be read as a continuation of the previous and first report under the Act, which was provided to the CCIA on September 8, 2022.

This report outlines to progress to date in implementing the requirements of HB22-1327, specifically the completion of the current phase of the remote sensing efforts at the site of the Fort Lewis Indian Boarding School; ongoing efforts to secure funding for completion of remote

## **II. Individual School Updates**

### *A. The Teller Institute, Grand Junction*

On November 30, 2022, the State Historical Fund (SHF) awarded CSM an additional grant to finalize the remote sensing on the remainder of the property. CSM will continue their dedicated efforts to carefully screen the grounds and identify any potential burial places.

Alpine Archaeological Consultants has been diligently collecting and analyzing documentation related to the Teller Institute, including at NARA Denver and NARA DC as described above.

*B. Fort Lewis Indian Boarding School, Hesperus*

Fort Lewis College generously hosted the first multi-nation Tribal consultation meeting convened by the Colorado Commission of Indian Affairs on October 26th, 2022. As per tribal request, the consultation was virtual and attended by members of the Tohono O'odham, Southern Ute Indian Tribe and Ute Mountain Ute Indian Tribe. The consultation presented an overview of the legislation guiding this work, HB22-1327, as well as work to date and sought discussion on how the work should proceed. The afternoon of October 27th a site visit to the Old Fort Lewis site was conducted.

History Colorado contracted with Statistical Research, Inc (SRI) to conduct the remote sensing at Fort Lewis Indian Boarding School. In October SRI conducted drone reconnaissance, conducting both LiDAR and near-infrared RGB (red-green-blue) data collection on 90 acres of the site. In November the team returned and finished ground penetrating radar (GPR) survey over high potential areas identified from the drone reconnaissance and previous archaeological investigations. The data is in post-processing, and will be completed by March 2023.

### **III. Archival Research**

The week of November 28 a team of researchers, consisting of Kim Redman, Sara Millward, and Michelle Slaughter from Alpine Archaeological Consultants; Garret Briggs from AECOM; Nik Kendriozski from the Center for Southwest Studies at Fort Lewis College; and Liz Cook, Amanda Lane, and Holly Norton from History Colorado spent a week at the National Archives in Washington, D.C. identifying and collecting digital copies of documents related to the boarding schools in the state of Colorado. The team brought six over-head, archival quality Czur scanners as well as two SurfacePros equipped with scanning software, to er-1 (of)3 (3l ( t)-2 (e)4g s)-adiouggital

as receiving Federal Government funds or other support; and 4) Was operational before 1969” (Newland 2022:6).

Using this criteria, in May 2022 the DOI identified five schools in Colorado, including the Fort Lewis Indian Boarding School; Good Shepherd Industrial School; Grand Junction Indian School/Teller Institute; Southern Ute Boarding School; and the Ute Mountain Ute Boarding School. The DOI did not include dates of operation for these schools, but did provide what they identified as alternate names.

The current effort lead by History Colorado is using similar criteria as the DOI, with the exception that we are including what are typically referred to as “day schools” in the research identifying schools and students. It appears that day schools were often used as boarding schools for out of state or out of area students, and there was not a delineated distinction for the time period in question. Additionally, the current effort is restricting the research to the time period of 1881-1920. The year 1881 is when the earliest school in Colorado was established, with the two schools of primary interest both having closed in 1911. In addition, the year 1920 marks a change in how federal Indian school policy was implemented, so while the post-1920 period is of importance to understanding the boarding school experience in Colorado and across the country, it enlarges the conversation in a way that fundamentally changes the scope of the current project.

The other limitation on the research is the artificial borders of the State of Colorado. Because of the vast expanse of the Ute bands themselves, as well as the geographic breadth of the students population, limiting the current research to Colorado allows us to focus in a way that we will be able to answer specific questions in the time period designated by HB22-1327. Due to these limitations, there is the warning that we may still be missing all the pieces of the picture. While overall Indian education policy was prescribed from the top down by the federal

government, the enactment of those policies occurred at the local level. What this means is that individual Superintendents and Indian Agents had a lot of latitude to make decisions about who they recruited for attendance to schools and how that recruitment was done. The Commissioner Office of Indian Affairs in Washington, D.C. did not direct students of specific tribes to attend specific schools. Individual staff attached to specific schools went into communities to recruit students, generally through coercion of their parents, to specific schools. So looking at the documentation for, say, the Southern Ute Agency, we do not see comprehensive lists of where individual students were sent, we only see when the Superintendent or the Indian Agents were able to recruit students to come into the school. A focus on Colorado has meant that we see more of where students from the Ute tribes were sent in the records, but it is less complete regarding their experiences if they were sent to out of state schools. What is interesting is that there are letters from Superintendents to their superiors in DC requesting permission to recruit students from tribes outside of their agency, such as the Navajo or Mescalero Apache. The recruitment process, therefore, is ad hoc, at least in the 1881-1920 time period on which we are focusing. It was reliant on the social and professional networks that were established by the Superintendents, teachers, Indian Agents and other staff, both Native and non-Native, working at the schools and associated agencies.

Currently research has been undertaken at the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) in Washington DC (often referred to as Archives 1) and NARA Denver, which is located in Broomfield. Information on Boarding Schools is held with Record Group 75, documents relating to the Bureau of Indian Affairs, which currently consists of over 58,000 containers of information, equally millions of documents. Individual documents have not necessarily been cataloged at an individual level. In some cases documents are grouped by

subject, by year, by individual schools, or by school staff. The team had assistance leading up to the trip by National Archives Staff, including Rose Buchanan, the expert archivist on Record Group 75. Additionally, the National Archives staff gave the entire team tremendous support and technical assistance during our time in the research room. This was considered a preliminary reconnaissance effort, to identify what records may exist and formulate a plan to access and gather them. The staff from Alpine focused on retrieving information related to the Teller Institute; staff from the Center for Southwestern Studies focused on documents related to Fort Lewis; and AECOM focused its efforts on identifying information for the day schools at both Ignacio and Towaoyas. The original information received from Teller Institute (9) (4) (b) (1) (F) (E)



analyzed and added to the database. It will take many months to finalize this process.

Additionally, follow-up trips will be necessary for NARA DC, Denver and additional facilities in the United States.

#### **IV. Schools Identified through Archival Research**

Research to date has identified additional boarding and day schools relevant to the current research questions. Some of the information around these schools is currently nebulous, so dates and other facts are subject to change in future reports. Currently the research team is operating under the idea that there were ten schools that operated between 1881-1920 under federal government contracts that served as facilities for education of Native youth. The schools are grouped by location because of the overlapping relationships of geographically-related schools, as well as how descendants appear to be identifying and communicating schools fa4 ( sR)( t)-6 (o ( t)(o)-4 (o)-4



Archaeology and Historic Preservation (OAHP) did not indicate any known archaeological sites or burials associated with the property.

- b. **The Boys Industrial School** in Golden was a state-run reform school for “incorrigible” young men ages 7-16. We believe that Native youth who were in trouble at the boarding schools may have occasionally been sent here. The facility operated from 1881-1969, when the mission of the school changed.
- c. At least four Ute children were sent to the **Colorado School for the Deaf and Blind** in Colorado Springs in 1893-94. The Colorado School for the Deaf and Blind was started in 1871 and is still in existence today. Throughout its history it has served a diverse population of students who experience visual and auditory disabilities. This school was identified because it had a contract with the Department of the Interior in 1893-94. Additional Native youth may have attended the school at various points in its operation.

## **V. Additional Activities of Note**

In addition to the specific work at both Teller Institute and Fort Lewis schools indicated above, History Colorado staff were invited to participate in a panel discussion on Boarding Schools at the Denver Indian Family Resource Center for Orange Shirt Day October 1, 2022, and held listening sessions with faculty, staff and students at Fort Lewis College on October 28, 2022. Dr. Holly Norton and Mr. Garrett Briggs participated in a Webinar for Crow Canyon Archaeological Center, sponsored by the Colorado Archaeological Society- Hisatsinom Chapter on October 11, 2022, which can be accessed here:

[https://www.crowcanyon.org/resources/federal\\_indian\\_boarding\\_schools\\_in\\_colorado/](https://www.crowcanyon.org/resources/federal_indian_boarding_schools_in_colorado/)

## **V. Next Steps**

Despite our great success at the archives, there are additional materials in DC that require a return trip. In addition, we are finalizing work at NARA Denver, and have identified additional resources at two other NARA facilities. Post-processing of the remote sensing data continues at both the Teller Institute and at the Old Fort Lewis site. We are analyzing the collected archival documents to determine if they indicate any potential areas of concern for additional remote sensing. Finally, additional tribal affiliations have been identified related to all the schools listed above. History Colorado anticipates the need to expand our consultation program to include