

# Reconceiving Schooling: Centering Indigenous Experimentation in Indian Education History

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*Federal agents, church officials, and education reformers have long used schooling as a weapon to eliminate Indigenous people; at the same time, Indigenous individuals and communities have long repurposed schooling to protect tribal sovereignty, reconstitute their communities, and shape Indigenous futures. Joining scholarship that speaks to Indigenous perspectives on schooling, this paper offers seven touchpoints from Native nations since the 1830s in which Indigenous educators repurposed “schooling” as a technology to advance Indigenous interests. Together, these stories illustrate the broad diversity of Native educators’ multifaceted engagements with schooling and challenge settler colonialism’s exclusive claim on schools. Though the outcomes of their efforts varied, these experiments with schooling represent Indigenous educators’ underappreciated innovations in the history of education in the United States.*

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Scholarly tellings of Indigenous experiences with schooling in the United States typically chart a story of before and after.<sup>1</sup> The first part of the story focuses on the mutual efforts of religious orders

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<sup>1</sup>In this article we use “Indigenous” and “Native” interchangeably to refer to groups of people. Tribally-specific names are used when referencing particular people and nations. The term “Indian education” references federal offices and policies designed to implement schooling “for” Indigenous people rather than “by” Indigenous people. See K. Tsianina Lomawaima, “American Indian Education: *by* Indians versus *for* Indians,” in *A Companion to American Indian History*, ed. Philip J. Deloria and Neal Salisbury (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004), 422–40; and Adrea

and the federal government to design, operate, and maintain an elaborate system of “civilization” schools in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>2</sup> The story, as it is often told, pivots in the mid-twentieth century with the codification of tribal self-determination. In this telling, Native educators fight a long battle for greater influence over schools, one that they increasingly win beginning in the 1960s and 1970s. Indeed, historians and scholars of American Indian education have shown how Indigenous educators in the years since have used their classrooms to engage in pedagogical innovations that speak to the interests of their communities.<sup>3</sup>

This recounting sometimes obscures the substantial history of Indigenous experimentation with schooling, a history that both precedes and extends beyond the critical developments of the mid-twentieth century. In this essay, we propose a recentering of Indigenous educators’ strategic use of schooling as the driving action in the history of Indian education, a retelling that challenges settler colonialism’s exclusive claim on schools. We believe this alternative narrative aligns with Susan A. Miller’s vision of an Indigenous historiography that “[places] Indigenous peoples and communities at the center of historical narratives” and that “[reflects] their behavior and motives in terms of their own realities rather than the non-Indigenous realities that frame nearly all non-Indigenous writings about Indigenous peoples.”<sup>4</sup>

Scholars have called for alternative investigations of Indigenous education that expand beyond schooling and are grounded in tribally specific innovations, epistemologies, and priorities.<sup>5</sup> In focusing on

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Lawrence, KuuNux TeeRIt Kroupa, and Donald Warren, “Introduction,” *History of Education Quarterly* 54, no. 3 (Aug. 2014), 253–54.

<sup>2</sup>Lomawaima, “American Indian Education: By Indians versus for Indians,” 422–40.

<sup>3</sup>Thomas Thompson, ed., *The Schooling of Native America* (Washington, DC: Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 1978); Thomas G. Andrews, “Turning the Tables on Assimilation: Oglala Lakotas and the Pine Ridge Day Schools, 1889–1920s,” *Western Historical Quarterly* 33, no. 4 (Winter 2002), 407–30; Teresa L. McCarty, *A Place to Be Navajo: Rough Rock and the Struggle for Self-Determination in Indigenous Schooling* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2002); K. Tsianina Lomawaima and Teresa L. McCarty, *“To Remain an Indian”: Lessons in Democracy from a Century of Native American Education* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2006); Julie L. Davis, *Survival Schools: The American Indian Movement and Community Education in the Twin Cities* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013); and Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Eve Tuck, and K. Wayne Yang, *Indigenous and Decolonizing Studies in Education* (New York: Routledge, 2018).

<sup>4</sup>Susan A. Miller, “Native America Writes Back: The Origin of the Indigenous Paradigm in Historiography,” *Wicaso Sa Review* 23, no. 2 (Fall 2008), 18.

<sup>5</sup>Donald Warren, “American Indian Histories as Education History,” *History of Education Quarterly* 54, no. 3 (Aug. 2014), 255–85; Adrea Lawrence, “Epic Learning in an Indian Pueblo: A Framework for Studying Multigenerational Learning in the

Indigenous schooling, we do not seek to “[privilege] both Euro-American educational institutions and conceptualizations” or “[reproduce] colonizer ideologies.”<sup>6</sup> Rather, we seek to give primacy to Indigenous agency over time through Native educators’ creative repurposing of the technology of schooling. The schools they created functioned as sites of reclaiming and exercising Indigenous autonomy over Indigenous futures.

This narrative recognizes education broadly as the means by which communities transmit knowledge intergenerationally and maintain social cohesion while viewing schooling as “a thin slice out of the panoply of educational theories, strategies, and experiences developed over human history.”<sup>7</sup> Indeed, schooling is just one of many social technologies that organize socialization. We therefore adopt the language of education scholar Raphael Wilkins, noting that “a process such as socialization requires some form of ‘technology’ (in the broad sense of a system or approach) for its accomplishment.”<sup>8</sup> Schooling as it is understood in the United States today—constituted by a schoolhouse, schoolteacher, and textbooks—is a particular institution that both shapes and is shaped by cultural encounters, one that could be understood as a social technology.<sup>9</sup> This vocabulary helps to remind us that schooling, like any social technology, ought to be regarded in a more contingent way, recognizing that Indigenous educators have experimented with the technology of schooling based on place- and time-specific goals. This not only helps us to regard schooling as just one of many kinds of educative technologies, but it also reminds us that such technologies can be used for all sorts of ends and purposes that their original designers may not have imagined.

From the moment schooling appeared on the North American continent, Indigenous people have reimagined it as a tool to resist the dispossession of their land, protect Indigenous languages, and

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History of Education,” *History of Education Quarterly* 54, no. 3 (Aug. 2014), 286–302; K. Tsianina Lomawaima, “History without Silos, Ignorance versus Knowledge, Education beyond Schools,” *History of Education Quarterly* 54, no. 3 (Aug. 2014), 349–55; Yesenia Lucia Cervera, “Negotiating the History of Education: How the Histories of Indigenous Education Expand the Field,” *History of Education Quarterly* 54, no. 3 (Aug. 2014), 362–83; and David Wallace Adams, “Beyond Horace Mann: Telling Stories about Indian Education,” *History of Education Quarterly* 54, no. 3 (Aug. 2014), 384–94.

<sup>6</sup>Cervera, “Negotiating the History of Education,” 382.

<sup>7</sup>Lomawaima and McCarty, “*To Remain an Indian*,” 20.

<sup>8</sup>Raphael Wilkins, “Is Schooling a Technology, a Process of Socialisation, or a Consumer Product?,” *Management in Education* 19, no. 1, (Feb. 2005), 25–31.

<sup>9</sup>Jaskiran Dhillon frames mission and residential schools as “technologies of colonial rule.” Jaskiran K. Dhillon, *Prairie Rising: Indigenous Youth, Decolonization, and the Politics of Intervention* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017), 93.

maintain—and expand—a sense of community, all in the face of significant settler colonial violence.<sup>10</sup> If, as Lakota educator Patricia Locke asserts, schools are social instruments “shaped by community structures and community people,” then schools can become Indigenous social instruments shaped by Indigenous community structures and Indigenous values.<sup>11</sup> While such efforts have not always met their original goals, this sustained historical engagement with schooling merits closer consideration of how Indigenous people have historically experimented with this social technology as a vehicle to accomplish their own ends.

Consequently, if we treated the history of schooling as a history of a social technology, how might that story be told? Who would be its actors? How would it be periodized? Following Lisa Brooks, “What happens to our view of American history when Native narratives are not just *included* but *privileged*? [emphasis in original]”<sup>12</sup> Our argument is simple: if we think more about schooling as a social technology engaged *by* Indigenous communities, we can better center Indigenous educators as drivers of education history. Recognizing the strategic decisions that Indigenous people have made about engaging with schooling to preserve, protect, and sustain their welfare can broaden our understanding not only of Indigenous education history but also the history of schooling in the United States writ large.

Ours is a story of people and institutions that offers a new account of change over time. All schooling is contextually specific, and we do not mean these examples to homogenize the breadth of schooling experiences across Indian Country. Among the many possible touchpoints that exist for shaping the contours of a new story, we find these a compelling place to start: the Cherokee Nation, which used schools to fight further dispossession after Removal; Sarah Winnemucca, Henry Cloud, and a cohort of Indigenous instructors within the federal school system who pushed back against non-Indigenous federal administrators at the turn of the twentieth century; and the demonstration schools, tribal colleges, language survival schools, and charter schools that compose the wide variety of twentieth-century examples of self-determination in education, a series of experiments in schooling as diverse as Indian Country itself.

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<sup>10</sup>Indeed, Osage scholar Jean Dennison argues that “American Indian nations have long understood the colonial process as at once devastating and full of potential. Jean Dennison, *Colonial Entanglement: Constituting a Twenty-First-Century Osage Nation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 7.

<sup>11</sup>Patricia Locke, “An Ideal School System for American Indians - A Theoretical Construct,” in *The Schooling of Native America*, ed. Thomas Thompson (Washington, D.C.: Office of Education, 1978), 119.

<sup>12</sup>Lisa Tanya Brooks, *The Common Pot: The Recovery of Native Space in the Northeast* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 15.

Native people have long responded to settler colonialism's ever-evolving attempts at control with "local ambition and indigenous creativity . . . deployed to confront outside pressures."<sup>13</sup> We argue that these schools work toward ideal spaces where "it is safe to be Indigenous on Indigenous terms while participating fully and actively in the larger field of US society."<sup>14</sup> Here we build upon the concept of "zones of sovereignty," that K. Tsianina Lomawaima (Mvskoke/Creek) and Teresa L. McCarty define as spaces for "staking out, protecting, and nurturing expressions of Indigeneity." In each of the cases described here, Indigenous educators created "educational opportunities "rooted in and emergent from Indigenous sovereignty," as they sought to self-determine educational futures for Native youth. Such schools have functioned separately and distinctly from colonial schools, which are part of the system of "settler colonial domestication" that "enfolds practices of control, marginalization, and disenfranchisement for the enrichment of a self-entitled few." Instead, they form a practice of sovereignty that engages in "creative self-determination toward goals of equity, justice, tolerance, and mutual well-being."<sup>15</sup>

### Cherokee Nation Schools, 1839–1898

Over a decade before Massachusetts passed the first compulsory education law in the United States, the Cherokee Nation's 1839 Constitution included a provision for schooling: "Religion, morality, and knowledge, being necessary to good government, the preservation of liberty, and the happiness of mankind, schools, and the means of education, shall forever be encouraged in this Nation."<sup>16</sup> After forced removal, schooling became one way to reconstitute the Nation and uphold Cherokee kinship responsibilities.<sup>17</sup> The Cherokee schools

<sup>13</sup>Frederick E. Hoxie, "Retrieving the Red Continent: Settler Colonialism and the History of American Indians in the US," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 31, no. 6 (Sept. 2008), 1164.

<sup>14</sup>K. Tsianina Lomawaima and Teresa L. McCarty, "Revisiting and Clarifying the Safety Zone," *Journal of American Indian Education* 53, no. 3 (Jan. 2014), 64.

<sup>15</sup>Lomawaima and McCarty, "Revisiting and Clarifying the Safety Zone," 64,66.

<sup>16</sup>"Constitution of the Cherokee Nation [Sept. 6, 1839]," in *The Constitution and Laws of the Cherokee Nation: Passed at Tablequah, Cherokee Nation, 1839–51* (Tablequah, Cherokee Nation, 1852), 5–15, <https://www.loc.gov/law/help/american-indian-const/PDF/28014182.pdf>.

<sup>17</sup>Julie L. Reed, "Family and Nation: Cherokee Orphan Care, 1835–1903," *American Indian Quarterly* 34, no. 3 (July 2010), 312–43. The Cherokee Nation was not alone in this effort, nor were they the first, as other displaced nations also set up schools to prepare their students for a changing social landscape. Amanda J. Cobb, *Listening to Our Grandmothers' Stories: The Bloomfield Academy for Chickasaw Females, 1852–1949* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007), 40; Christina

strongly illustrate how schools could be a social instrument for maintaining Native nations in the face of American expansion.<sup>18</sup>

Influenced by the Choctaw Nation's public school system and national academy, the Cherokee Nation set out to "mature and prepare a system of general education by schools." Cherokee law authorized the National Council to elect a Superintendent of Schools, who would in turn appoint a three-person Board of Directors to evaluate each school's condition and course of study, oversee school maintenance, handle school finances, hire and fire teachers, select textbooks, and set the school calendar.<sup>19</sup> Cherokee law further established that the National Council would have to approve any future mission schools, sending a clear message that the Nation would set the terms for education—in educating Cherokee youth, the Cherokee Nation "wanted teachers, not theologians."<sup>20</sup>

In December 1841, the Cherokee government ordered the construction of eleven schools across the Nation's eight districts, each serving between twenty-five and sixty students.<sup>21</sup> These schools were community-based and community-supported, as each neighborhood had to raise the school building itself and commit to an average student population of more than twenty-five students before the government would authorize its operation.<sup>22</sup> As the number of schools expanded over the following decade, the hiring and firing of teachers eventually required the creation of a national Examining Board, a committee appointed by the Principal Chief who vetted the qualifications of all prospective teachers before the superintendent could hire them.<sup>23</sup> The new regulations set teacher pay at not more than \$400 per year (a salary above that of the superintendent, circuit and district

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Snyder, *Great Crossings: Indians, Settlers, and Slaves in the Age of Jackson* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017); Dawn Peterson, *Indians in the Family: Adoption and the Politics of Antebellum Expansion* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017), 234–71; and Rowan Faye Steineker, "Fully Equal to That of Any Children": Experimental Creek Education in the Antebellum Era," *History of Education Quarterly* 56, no. 2 (May 2016), 273–300.

<sup>18</sup>Snyder, *Great Crossings*.

<sup>19</sup>"An Act Relative to Schools [Sept. 26, 1839]," in *The Constitution and Laws of the Cherokee Nation*, 30–31.

<sup>20</sup>John Benjamin Davis, "Public Education Among the Cherokee Indians," *Peabody Journal of Education* 7, no. 3 (1929), 168.

<sup>21</sup>"An Act Relative to Public Schools [Dec. 16, 1841]," in *The Constitution and Laws of the Cherokee Nation*, 59.

<sup>22</sup>William P. Ross, "Public Education among the Cherokee Indians," *American Journal of Education* 1 (Aug. 1855), 121.

<sup>23</sup>"An Act Authorizing the Appointment of an Examining Board [Nov. 2, 1849]," in *The Constitution and Laws of the Cherokee Nation*, 195.

judges, and sheriffs), reflecting the importance of their role within the Nation.<sup>24</sup>

Within the classroom, all students learned English as the language of instruction. Though this may initially appear to capitulate to colonial expectations, instruction in English may have reflected the relative ease with which students acquired fluency in the Cherokee written syllabary. As William P. Ross of the Cherokee Nation noted in 1856, “It is hardly necessary to [teach Cherokee in schools], for a sprightly lad can learn to read his native tongue in a day or even less than that.”<sup>25</sup> The United States took note of the elevated literacy rates of Cherokee students in both English and Cherokee, with former Superintendent of the Indian Office Thomas L. McKenney writing that, “it is my firm belief that, in proportion to population, there are more Cherokees who read, either the English or their own tongue . . . than can be found among the whites in any of the states of the Union.”<sup>26</sup>

The Cherokee Nation established two high schools in 1846 in which “all those branches of learning shall be taught, which may be required to carry the mental culture of the youth of our country to the highest practicable point.”<sup>27</sup> To run their classrooms, Cherokee leadership sought out graduates from institutions like Mount Holyoke and Yale University.<sup>28</sup> Reflecting Cherokee values, male and female teachers at the seminaries were paid the same salary, and though some of the male teachers protested such pay equity, the

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<sup>24</sup>“An Act Further to Amend an Act Relative to Public Schools”; and Devon Abbott Mihesuah, *Cultivating the Rosebuds: The Education of Women at the Cherokee Female Seminary, 1851–1909* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 28. For comparison, the salary of the principal chief of the Nation was set at \$500.

<sup>25</sup>Ross, “Public Education among the Cherokee Indians,” 121. Recognizing the needs of their students, teachers in local schools taught in both Cherokee and English at times, although this bilingualism was not codified as formal policy. For a discussion of the social dynamics around teaching in Cherokee and English, see Reed, “Family and Nation,” 323–24; and Julie L. Reed, *Serving the Nation: Cherokee Sovereignty and Social Welfare, 1800–1907* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2016), 83.

<sup>26</sup>Thomas L. McKenney, *Sketches of Travels Among the Northern & Southern Indians*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York: Daniel Burgess & Co., 1854), 34.

<sup>27</sup>“An Act for the Establishment of Two Seminaries or High Schools: One for the Education of Males, and the Other of Females, and for the Erection of Buildings for Their Accommodation [Nov. 26, 1846],” in *The Constitution and Laws of the Cherokee Nation*, 146–147.

<sup>28</sup>Mihesuah, *Cultivating the Rosebuds*, 27; Ross, “Public Education among the Cherokee Indians,” 121; Devon Abbott, “Commendable Progress: Acculturation at the Cherokee Female Seminary,” *American Indian Quarterly* 11, no. 3 (July 1987), 187–201; and Reed, “Family and Nation,” 323. For a discussion of teacher recruitment from within and outside the nation, see Reed, *Serving the Nation*, 82, 131.

Cherokee Nation found that the teaching duties of the female staff were “at least as important to us as the services of the other sex.”<sup>29</sup>

Both schools were college preparatory environments modeled after East Coast institutions.<sup>30</sup> Students took substantial coursework in literature, natural science, Latin, and music, among others. All students had to pass an entrance exam with evaluations in geography, math, and English reading, spelling, and grammar, and all students sat for end-of-term exams witnessed by the board.<sup>31</sup> As with the primary schools, the seminaries were English-only environments, guided by the idea that immersion would best help students from Cherokee-speaking homes master the English language.<sup>32</sup> No coursework about Cherokee history or culture appeared in the seminaries, as many Cherokees felt that acquiring fluency in White culture would benefit Cherokee students and the Nation. Still, all graduates were to understand both US and Cherokee national government systems before leaving the school.<sup>33</sup>

The Cherokee seminaries were not the only schools of their type—in the early and mid-nineteenth century, the Chickasaw, Choctaw, Creek, Osage, Quapaw, Seneca, Wyandot, and Shawnee Nations also founded their own academies for instructing their students.<sup>34</sup> As with the other institutions, the Cherokee seminaries and Cherokee Nation public schools were an attempt to both prepare Native youth to protect

<sup>29</sup>Ross, “Public Education among the Cherokee Indians,” 121; and Mihesuah, *Cultivating the Rosebuds*, 33–34.

<sup>30</sup>Even as the schools were tools to reconstitute the Cherokee Nation after Removal, they were also elitist institutions that reified social boundaries of access and privilege. Students bullied and excluded one another on the basis of perceived race and class. As Natalie Panther notes: “The tribe wanted well-educated Cherokees who could defend tribal sovereignty and not blend into the American mainstream. On the other hand, the Male Seminary pushed an agenda of assimilation and glorified the privilege and power held by those Cherokees who adapted to the White world. These dual goals of the Male Seminary, combined with the diverse student body, resulted in paradoxical and complex assessments of the school.” See Natalie Panther, “‘To Make Us Independent’: The Education of Young Men at the Cherokee Male Seminary, 1851–1910,” (PhD diss., Oklahoma State University, 2013), 4.

<sup>31</sup>“An Act Making Further Provisions for Carrying into Effect the Act of the Last Annual Session of the National Council, for the Establishment of One Male and One Female Seminary or High School [Nov. 12, 1847],” in *The Constitution and Laws of the Cherokee Nation*, 157–162. The complicated history of the Cherokee Female Seminary has been best documented by Mihesuah in *Cultivating the Rosebuds*.

<sup>32</sup>Panther, “‘To Make Us Independent,’” 71.

<sup>33</sup>Abbott, “Commendable Progress’: Acculturation at the Cherokee Female Seminary,” 194.

<sup>34</sup>Mihesuah, *Cultivating the Rosebuds*, 22; Muriel H. Wright, “Wapanucka Academy, Chickasaw Nation,” *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 12, no. 4 (Dec. 1934), 402–31; Cobb, *Listening to Our Grandmothers’ Stories*; and Snyder, *Great Crossings*.



their nations against ever-encroaching White violence and a way to promote upward socioeconomic mobility.

The Cherokee Nation's public primary school system continued to operate until it was interrupted by the Curtis Act of 1898, which transferred control of Cherokee schools to the US Department of the Interior.<sup>35</sup> The Cherokee schools had not been perfect; like many schools in the United States today, they dealt with concerns about teacher quality, graduation rates, and tensions among the students.<sup>36</sup> The Cherokee Nation's schools—and others like it—have been critiqued for emphasizing American schooling norms.<sup>37</sup> But these schools had been Cherokee schools, schools that were “completely under tribal control” and operating in a way that some Americans perceived as “more efficient than the ordinary schools of the surrounding states.”<sup>38</sup> We can see in them a creative, strategic response to encroaching colonial socioeconomic pressures, a vision for schooling that navigated contemporary challenges on their own terms. As such, they demonstrate that schooling could be a tool in the Indigenous arsenal against dispossession and oppression, building an Indigenous future on their own terms.<sup>39</sup> As we understand the history of schooling in what is currently the United States, the Cherokee Nation's school system also provides insights into histories of teacher preparation and pay, the establishment of an education bureaucracy, and local school control.

### Sarah Winnemucca and the Paiute School, 1885–1888

Sarah Winnemucca was a Paiute activist, lecturer, educator, and vocal critic of American westward expansion who lived from 1844 to 1891. The arrival of American soldiers, pioneers, and miners into the Great Basin brought significant violence into her community, including the deaths of several family members, all of which Winnemucca chronicled in great detail.

To prepare for a life navigating an ever-encroaching White society, in 1857, Winnemucca's father sent her to work as a household

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<sup>35</sup>The Cherokee Nation sold the Female Seminary building to the new state of Oklahoma in 1909, when the school became the Northeastern State Normal School. The Cherokee Male Seminary became a co-ed high school. See Mihesuah, *Cultivating the Rosebuds*, 1. For a deeper discussion of the impact of the Curtis Act on the Cherokee Nation, see Reed, “Family and Nation,” 336.

<sup>36</sup>Mihesuah, *Cultivating the Rosebuds*, 63–64.

<sup>37</sup>Lomawaima and McCarty, *To Remain an Indian*, 173n.

<sup>38</sup>Davis, “Public Education among the Cherokee Indians,” 173.

<sup>39</sup>William G. McLoughlin, *Cherokee Renaissance in the New Republic* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 237–38, 253–54.

servant in a White American household, where she learned English. She later attended the mission school at San Jose, an experience Winnemucca described as time spent mostly crocheting under her desk while “keeping a sharp eye on the teacher.”<sup>40</sup> She ultimately found employment as an interpreter, serving as an intermediary between Paiutes and the federal government. However, she grew frustrated with the government’s capriciousness and resigned in 1879. She resolved to go east and lobby for her people on her own.<sup>41</sup>

Winnemucca immediately began a career on the lecture circuit, vigorously decrying American imperialism. She cemented her reputation as a witness to settler colonial violence with the publication of *Life Among the Piutes* in 1883, the first book to be published by an Indigenous woman in the United States.<sup>42</sup> Printed with the assistance of sisters Elizabeth and Mary Peabody, Winnemucca’s book excoriated the triumphalism of American expansion. This fierce critique came with a cost. Her audiences dwindled as White critics sought to discredit her. Undaunted, she shifted from the lecture circuit to the classroom.

Winnemucca’s transition to education was an extension, rather than a departure, of her activism. In the face of settler colonialism, Winnemucca had survived and chronicled American violence against and dispossession of Paiute people. By the middle of the 1880s, Winnemucca believed that the best way that she could help to reconstruct a Paiute “homeland” would be to create a school as a hub for the Paiute community. Winnemucca’s campaign aimed to provide Paiute youth with a safe, stable, and supportive space. A school beyond the jurisdiction of the federal government was the best way to protect her nation from forced dissolution and prepare Native children, as she wrote, to be “fit for the battles of life, so that they can attend to their own affairs instead of having to call in a white man.”<sup>43</sup>

Winnemucca already had experience as a schoolteacher. In 1881, while working on the Yakama Reservation, she taught English to a number of Paiute children in an ad hoc school. “I have twelve girls and six boys in school,” Winnemucca wrote to the Secretary of the Interior. “When I commenced to teach them they knew nothing, — never had been to school. They are learning fast. They can all read

<sup>40</sup>“Nevada’s Princess,” *Atlanta Constitution*, Feb. 10, 1875, 2.

<sup>41</sup>Frederick E. Hoxie, *This Indian Country: American Indian Activists and the Place They Made* (New York: Penguin Books, 2012).

<sup>42</sup>Hoxie, *This Indian Country*, 150, 161–166; and Sarah Winnemucca Hopkins, *Life Among the Piutes: Their Wrongs and Claims*, ed. Mrs. Horace Mann (1882, repr., Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1994).

<sup>43</sup>Carolyn Sorisio, “Sarah Winnemucca, Translation, and US Colonialism and Imperialism,” *MELUS* 37, no. 1 (Spring 2012), 54; and Hoxie, *This Indian Country*, 169.

pretty well, and are desirous to learn.” Winnemucca implored the secretary to allocate funds for their continued schooling in part because she understood that this would allow the Paiute children to remain together under her care: “What I want to ask is to have them stay here.”<sup>44</sup>

Winnemucca’s non-Indigenous allies supported her vision. The Peabody sisters marshaled funds to construct the school building and acquire wagons, horses, tools, fencing, and seed. Assisted by her brother, Natchez, Winnemucca opened her school in 1885, two miles outside of Lovelock, Nevada, on Natchez’s 160-acre allotment, land she hoped to cultivate in order to support the work. An 1887 newspaper described the school as “begun out of doors, in a brush arbor, with teaching the six children of her brother.”<sup>45</sup>

As she intended the school to serve Paiute children, Winnemucca made a point to teach in the Paiute language. Though Winnemucca built a curriculum where students would learn to speak, read, and write in English, she did not subscribe to the English-only imperative of contemporary federal Indian schools.<sup>46</sup> This was not the only feature of the federal school system that Winnemucca rejected; the school would not coercively remove students from their families, require them to wear military uniforms, or replace their names. Not only were the students to be Paiute, but so too were their teachers. Winnemucca, along with Natchez and “with the help of two very aged uncles, and one nephew” handled the teaching and upkeep responsibilities.<sup>47</sup>

White observers and the press were often positive about Winnemucca’s enterprise. The *Friends’ Intelligencer and Journal* remarked in 1887 that the school had proven a model for Indigenous schooling, “showing what Indians can do when let alone, unmolested by agents.” The newspaper, conceded that her bilingual pedagogy was superior to the government’s English-only program, “as only an Indian grown up with both languages can teach.” The *Friends’ Intelligencer* reported that nearly four hundred Paiute parents were pressing Winnemucca to enroll their children.<sup>48</sup>

Despite their ambitious hopes, Natchez’s land quickly proved to be too meager to offset the school’s expenses. In a last-ditch effort, Winnemucca reluctantly appealed to the government for financial

<sup>44</sup>Winnemucca Hopkins, *Life Among the Piutes*, 245.

<sup>45</sup>“Sarah Winnemucca’s School,” *Friends’ Intelligencer and Journal* 44, no. 42 (Nov. 19, 1887), 752.

<sup>46</sup>Sorisio, “Sarah Winnemucca.”

<sup>47</sup>“Sarah Winnemucca’s School.”

<sup>48</sup>“Sarah Winnemucca’s School.”

support and was informed that she could access government funds only by giving up her role in the school. Yielding the school to the government would mean abandoning her efforts to promote Paiute autonomy in exchange for their vision of assimilation, a tradeoff Winnemucca refused. Handing over the schoolhouse keys to the Indian Office would subvert the entire premise of schooling as a strategy of resistance. The school closed in 1888.<sup>49</sup>

Winnemucca—and her Paiute school—showed the potential use of schooling to advance Indigenous ends. Unlike the government’s use of schooling for assimilation, Winnemucca regarded schooling as a means to maintain a Paiute community. Despite the school’s short tenure, it offers an important supplement to the boarding schools as the main historical event of Indigenous education in the late nineteenth century and provides opportunities to retrace the trajectories of bilingual curriculum and community-based schools in American history.

### Henry and Elizabeth Cloud and the American Indian Institute, 1915–1931

Born one year before Winnemucca opened her school in 1885, Henry Cloud was a Ho-Chunk activist, educator, and reformer. His schooling began at the Genoa Indian Industrial School in Nebraska; he transferred to the Winnebago Industrial School around 1898 and then the Santee Normal Training School, where he converted to Christianity.<sup>50</sup> In the church, Cloud found a new educational network, and he soon enrolled at the Mount Hermon mission school in Massachusetts in 1902. He later attended Yale University, where he studied psychology and philosophy, earning his master’s in anthropology in 1914. He also earned a divinity degree from Auburn Theological Seminary in New York and was ordained as a Presbyterian minister in 1913.<sup>51</sup> Cloud became an early leader of the Society of American Indians (SAI), a prominent Native activist organization of the early twentieth century. It was there, after meeting his future wife Elizabeth Bender

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<sup>49</sup>V. Celia Lascarides, “Sarah Winnemucca and Her School,” paper presented at the Annual Conference of the National Association for the Education of Young Children, Atlanta, GA, Nov. 2000, 17, <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED474140.pdf>; and Anne Ruggles Gere, “Indian Heart/White Man’s Head: Native American Teachers in Indian Schools, 1880–1930,” *History of Education Quarterly* 45, no. 1 (Spring 2005), 44–47.

<sup>50</sup>Lisa Tetzloff, “Elizabeth Bender Cloud: ‘Working for and with Our Indian People,’” *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 30, no. 3 (Sept. 2009), 89.

<sup>51</sup>Jon Allan Reyhner and Jeanne M. Oyawin Eder, *American Indian Education: A History*, 2nd ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2017), 221.

(White Earth Ojibwe), that Henry Cloud made education the focus of his reform activities.

As children, the Clouds attended government schools at a time when the schools primarily prepared Native people to work as low-wage laborers.<sup>52</sup> Henry Cloud later recalled that at Genoa Indian Industrial School he “worked two years in turning a washing machine. . . to reduce the running expenses of the institution. I nursed a growing hatred for it. Such work is not educative.”<sup>53</sup> Rather than renounce schooling as a technology of proletarianization, the Clouds instead saw an opportunity to use schooling to propel Native students into the highest echelons of US economic life.<sup>54</sup> Similar to W. E. B. Du Bois’s “talented tenth,” Henry Cloud’s vision for schooling sought to primarily serve a small select group of Native people.<sup>55</sup> For the Clouds, schooling provided an opportunity for Native students to pursue upward mobility. As Henry Cloud wrote, “This means all of the education the grammar schools, the secondary schools, and the colleges of the land can give them.”<sup>56</sup> Together, the Clouds believed that such benefits were not intended solely for the individual but as a means for graduates to bring additional social capital back to their communities.<sup>57</sup>

To help to accomplish this vision, the Clouds opened the Roe Indian Institute in Wichita, Kansas, in 1915, later renamed the American Indian Institute (AII). They selected the site carefully, hoping that its proximity to several Native nations would remove a barrier for enrollment. Henry Cloud imagined a Native-only high school whose instruction would provide Native youth a pathway to college. The

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<sup>52</sup>On vocational education in boarding schools as a form of racial management, see Frederick E. Hoxie, *A Final Promise: The Campaign to Assimilate the Indians, 1880–1920* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1988); Alice Littlefield and Martha Knack, eds., *Native Americans and Wage Labor: Ethnohistorical Perspectives* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996); and Renya K. Ramirez, *Standing Up to Colonial Power: The Lives of Henry Roe and Elizabeth Bender Cloud* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2018).

<sup>53</sup>Cited in David Wallace Adams, *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875–1928* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995), 152.

<sup>54</sup>Jeffrey Wollock, “Protagonism Emergent: Indians and Higher Education,” *Native Americas* 14, no. 4 (1997), 14–15.

<sup>55</sup>On the similarities between Cloud and Du Bois, see Joel Pfister, *The Yale Indian: The Education of Henry Roe-Cloud* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009), 161–73.

<sup>56</sup>Henry Roe Cloud, “Education of the American Indian,” *Quarterly Journal of The Society of American Indians* 2, no. 3 (July–Sept. 1914), 203–9. See also Ramirez, *Standing Up to Colonial Power*, 65.

<sup>57</sup>Tetzloff, “Elizabeth Bender Cloud,” 89.

All would be a college preparatory school, where students could escape the vocational curriculum of the government's schooling and instead prepare for college through a robust liberal arts curriculum that included literature, history, and foreign languages. His curriculum addressed both Indigenous and White histories, cultures, philosophies, and languages, "supporting cultural pluralism rather than assimilation."<sup>58</sup>

Campus was small but functional. The first class had seven students, citizens of Alaska Native, Cheyenne, Pawnee, Comanche, and Mechoopda Nations. The school opened with two dormitories complete with kitchens, dining rooms, bathrooms, and library; a cottage that housed teacher's apartments; and a series of outbuildings, including a barn. By 1921, they had added Voorhees Hall, a larger building that included not only meeting and study spaces, but bedrooms for over thirty additional students.<sup>59</sup> In November 1927, the *Christian Science Monitor* reported that the school included "300 acres of land, a dairy herd, modern power machinery, [where] the latest marketing methods are employed."<sup>60</sup>

The Clouds were successful in their mission to make the AII an Indigenous space. Students later recalled that the all-Native student body became a close-knit family.<sup>61</sup> To facilitate the students' learning, they hired Native teachers, including history teacher James Ottipoby (Comanche), science instructor Roy Ussery (Cherokee), and agriculture expert Robert C. Starr (Cheyenne-Arapaho). Elizabeth Cloud combined lessons about Shakespeare with stories from students' home nations.<sup>62</sup> The school also hosted powwows, where Henry Cloud had a penchant for storytelling.<sup>63</sup>

But running such a school was expensive. In an effort to ease the bureaucratic burden, the Clouds made an arrangement with the Presbyterian Church's Board of Home Missions in 1927 to administer the school.<sup>64</sup> The decision would be fateful. After sixteen years at the school he had helped design, Henry Cloud left the AII, intending that Elizabeth Cloud, who had always taken an equal role in running the school, would take over as principal. Church administrators, however, frowned on having a woman in an executive position, despite her many years as a "matron of the school, teacher, and local

<sup>58</sup>Ramirez, *Standing Up to Colonial Power*, 99, 109.

<sup>59</sup>The Clouds imagined that their school would be a co-educational enterprise. Ramirez notes that her mother, Woeshia, remembers that both Henry and Elizabeth lobbied their patrons hard to allow women to attend the school, and made plans to do so, but were ultimately denied. Ramirez, *Standing Up to Colonial Power*, 99–101.

<sup>60</sup>"Indians Trained for Leadership," *Christian Science Monitor*, Nov. 26, 1927, 14.

<sup>61</sup>Ramirez, *Standing Up to Colonial Power*, 100.

<sup>62</sup>Tetzloff, "Elizabeth Bender Cloud," 90.

<sup>63</sup>Ramirez, *Standing Up to Colonial Power*, 107–108.

<sup>64</sup>Tetzloff, "Elizabeth Bender Cloud," 91.

administrator.”<sup>65</sup> Pushed out from a position of leadership at the school, Elizabeth Cloud resigned soon after.

The Clouds provided an alternative vision for Indigenous schooling. As Ho-Chunk scholar Renya K. Ramirez powerfully attests in her biography of her grandfather, her grandparents “defied the federal boarding-school training that taught Natives to be ashamed of their tribal identities, cultures, histories, and philosophies. . . . Motivating Native students to feel a sense of pride and courage was an antidote to the colonial boarding-school regimen of shame and subservience.”<sup>66</sup> Moreover, as one of a select few high schools that served Native students, the AII exerted pressure on the federal government to expand upper grade coursework for Native youth.<sup>67</sup>

The AII forms a critical historical hinge as it demonstrates that the US government had no monopoly on schooling and that schooling and proletarianization did not have to be mutually reinforcing. For the Clouds, the value of formal education for Native people was not only the prestige of the credential it offered, but elevation into positions of leadership in mainstream American society and in Indian Country alike. As the *Christian Science Monitor* documented, Henry Cloud founded his school to “furnish the Indian leaders of tomorrow.”<sup>68</sup> As a touchstone in the history of Indigenous schooling, AII provides a new inflection point for assessing the relationship between school, labor, class, and curriculum, both for Native students and the broader history of schooling in the United States.

### Indigenous Instructors in the Federal School System, 1880–1934

For their bold innovation and willingness to experiment with schooling as a tool of cultural survivance, Winnemucca’s and Cloud’s achievements are historically notable. They represent a dramatic assertion of self-determination that undermined an imagined American monopoly on schooling during the turn of the twentieth-century. The context here is critical: between 1879 and 1932, the federal government and religious orders created hundreds of on- and off-reservation boarding schools that they used as a technology of political and cultural disintegration.<sup>69</sup> Of these, federal off-reservation

<sup>65</sup> Ramirez, *Standing Up to Colonial Power*, 116.

<sup>66</sup> Ramirez, *Standing UP to Colonial Power*, 104.

<sup>67</sup> Wollock, “Protagonism Emergent,” 4.

<sup>68</sup> “Indians Trained for Leadership.”

<sup>69</sup> For a map of these schools, see Denise K. Lajimodiere, *Stringing Rosaries: The History, the Unforgivable, and the Healing of Northern Plains American Indian Boarding School Survivors* (Fargo: North Dakota State University Press, 2019).

schools enrolled over 10,000 students annually, largely through inducement and coercion. Over the course of nearly forty years, an estimated 250,000 Indigenous children passed through their dormitories, workshops, cafeterias, and classrooms.<sup>70</sup>

The experiences of students caught in the orbit of the Indian School Service was diverse. Schools exercised nineteenth-century military models of discipline, engaged in corporal punishment, isolated students from their families, and frequently turned a blind eye to rampant physical and sexual abuse by school staff. As thousands of Indigenous students perished from diseases made more deadly through overwork and malnutrition in these government schools, nearly all students knew a family member or friend who did not survive. And yet, students demonstrated profound resilience. They resisted these institutions in myriad ways, including using forbidden Native languages, running away, and, on some occasions, burning down school facilities.<sup>71</sup>

Against this backdrop were the hundreds of Indigenous people who worked within the schools as teachers. Modeled in part on the Hampton Normal School in Virginia, many of the federal off-reservation schools featured teacher training programs.<sup>72</sup> In the 1890s, five of the system's earliest schools—Carlisle Indian Industrial School, Chemawa Indian School, Chilocco Indian School, Haskell Institute, and Genoa Indian Industrial School—began to graduate scores of Indigenous teachers. Many of them found gainful employment as teachers in the Indian School Service.<sup>73</sup> By 1905, there were at least

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<sup>70</sup>We extrapolate this estimation from the Annual Reports to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs from this period.

<sup>71</sup>Michael Coleman, *American Indian Children at School, 1850–1930* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1993); K. Tsianina Lomawaima, *They Called It Prairie Light: The Story of Chilocco Indian School* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994); Brenda J. Child, *Boarding School Seasons: American Indian Families, 1900–1940* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998); Brett Lee Shelton et al., “Trigger Points: Current State of Research on History, Impacts, and Healing Related to the United States’ Indian Industrial/Boarding School Policy” (Boulder, CO: Native American Rights Fund, 2019), <https://www.narf.org/nill/documents/trigger-points.pdf>; John William Troutman, *Indian Blues: American Indians and the Politics of Music, 1879–1934* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2009); Joane Nagel, *American Indian Ethnic Renewal: Red Power and the Resurgence of Identity and Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); and Jacqueline Emery, *Recovering Native American Writings in the Boarding School Press* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2017).

<sup>72</sup>See also Khalil A. Johnson Jr., “Recruited to Teach the Indians’: An African American Genealogy of Navajo Nation Boarding Schools,” *Journal of American Indian Education* 57, no. 1 (April 2018), 154–76.

<sup>73</sup>Between 1884 and 1909, fifty-one Indigenous teachers were listed as former pupils or students, though the actual number is surely greater due to inconsistent



fifty civil service–qualified Indigenous instructors employed as teachers in federal Indian schools in 1905.<sup>74</sup> Between 1884 and 1909, the government hired 134 Indigenous people as industrial teachers, assistant teachers, and teachers in the six industrial board schools that had offered teaching departments, over half of which were women. These Indigenous instructors found themselves in a curious and often ironic position: at a critical juncture between the government’s prescribed curriculum and the Indigenous students in their classrooms.

These Indigenous educators often sought to make schooling more responsive, sensitive, and rigorous for their Indigenous students within a system designed to achieve the opposite. As the government strove to professionalize its Indian school system in the early part of the twentieth century, its cohort of instructors would eventually include such notable Indigenous women as Angel De Cora (Ho-Chunk), Ella Deloria (Lakota), Laura Cornelius Kellogg (Oneida), Marguerite LaFlesche (Omaha), Zitkala-Sa (Lakota), Ruth Muskrat Bronson (Cherokee), Esther Burnett Horne (Shoshone), Polingaysi Qöyawayma (Hopi), and Lucille Winnie (Seneca-Cayuga). These were just a few of the many Indigenous women who worked as instructors in federal boarding schools, the majority of whose careers are less documented, such as Ojibwe teachers Rosa Bourassa, who resigned her government position to become organizing secretary of the SAI; Victoria Holliday, who fought with the Mt. Pleasant Indian Industrial School upon its opening in 1893 to secure a job as a teacher in her home state; and Susie McDougall, who leveraged the Indian Service as a professional network to find teaching work among her own people, in addition to scores of others. While the administrative hierarchy of the Indian School Service was still dominated by non-Indigenous men, Indigenous women were, as historian Cathleen Cahill notes, “nonetheless skilled at navigating its administrative structure[,] often turning rules to their advantage.” These instructors were some of the first Indigenous people—men or women—to work as white-collar workers, which has led Cahill to call the knowledge they applied to use the federal system to their advantage not a “weapon of the weak” but instead “weapons of the white collar.”<sup>75</sup>

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record-keeping. Volumes 1–22; Roster of School Employees, 1884–1909; Office of Indian Affairs Accounts Division; Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Record Group 75; National Archives Building, Washington DC.

<sup>74</sup>Cathleen D. Cahill, *Federal Fathers and Mothers: A Social History of the United States Indian Service, 1869–1933* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 110 (Table 1); and Gere, “Indian Heart/White Man’s Head.”

<sup>75</sup>Cathleen D. Cahill, “An Indian Teacher Among Indians’: Native Women as Federal Employees,” in *Indigenous Women and Work: From Labor to Activism*, ed. Carol Williams (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012), 210–11.

Indigenous women became instructors for a variety of reasons. Many, such as Horne, took the job because it offered a steady source of income as well as room and board, but more importantly, it provided a connection to her fellow Haskell Institute graduates. Some believed in the government's mission of assimilation, such as Qöyawayma, who struggled later in life with her decision to "willfully depart from the Hopi frame of action" when she became a boarding school teacher.<sup>76</sup> For still others, working as a federal instructor was ultimately a means to look after the welfare of the next generation. Winnie was inspired to become a teacher because of her parents. Not only was Winnie's father an Indigenous teacher in the Indian School Service, he was a tireless advocate for the welfare of Indigenous people through education, an attitude she inherited. "The trite old saying that my father quoted to us so many years ago is still so true," she reflected in her memoir. "In the Indian youth lies the hope of our people."<sup>77</sup> Some Indigenous teachers internalized and enforced the ideology of assimilation, but others like Horne, Qöyawayma, and Winnie were able to mitigate the trauma of distance from home and fear of the unknown, offering their students an anchor amid the cultural disorientation of the boarding schools.<sup>78</sup>

Many of these instructors found ways to integrate their own cultures into their classroom. For example, Qöyawayma remembered her frustration with the government curriculum: "What do these white-man stories mean to a Hopi child? I will not begin with the outside world of which they have no knowledge. I shall begin with the familiar. The everyday things. The things of home and family." Qöyawayma abandoned the lesson plan that instructed her to teach Hopi students English through reading "Little Red Riding Hood" and instead took up "familiar Hopi legends, songs, and stories."<sup>79</sup> Horne recalled of her classroom spaces prior to the 1930s, "When BIA supervisors came along, I was very adept at sweeping the Indian component under the table, so to speak."<sup>80</sup> Horne had learned such pedagogy from her two Indigenous mentors at Haskell, Deloria and Bronson. Together, these

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<sup>76</sup>Polingaysi Qöyawayma and Vada F. Carlson, *No Turning Back: A True Account of a Hopi Woman's Struggle to Live in Two Worlds* (1964, repr., Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1992), 54–55.

<sup>77</sup>Lucille Winnie, *Sab-Gan-De-Ob: The Chief's Daughter* (New York: Vantage Press, 1969), 183.

<sup>78</sup>For the capacity of Indigenous teachers to mitigate the factors of assimilation, see Sally McBeth, introduction to Esther Burnett Horne and Sally McBeth, *Essie's Story: The Life and Legacy of a Shoshone Teacher* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998).

<sup>79</sup>Qöyawayma and Carlson, *No Turning Back*, 125.

<sup>80</sup>Horne and McBeth, *Essie's Story*, 67.

women formed a cohort of intertribal Indigenous instructors who, like their later counterparts, found ways to subvert schooling for assimilation from “*within* the structural confines of an existing, non-Indigenous social-educational system [emphasis in original].”<sup>81</sup>

However, while working within the federal school system offered many opportunities for Indigenous people to adapt schooling, it also presented a number of serious challenges.<sup>82</sup> Introducing culturally specific components into their teaching was a strategy that risked co-optation by the federal schools and administrators.<sup>83</sup> At the same time, Indigenous families who wished their students to receive a “White man’s education” could bitterly oppose centering Indigenous knowledge in the classroom. When Qöyawayma tried to use Hopi stories in her classroom, she received pushback from Hopi parents in the community. “What are you teaching our children?” they scolded her. “We send them to school to learn the white man’s way, not Hopi. They can learn the Hopi way at home.”<sup>84</sup>

Though they never had unilateral control of their curriculum, Indigenous teachers sowed the seeds for a new era within their boarding school classrooms. Horne remembers a 1969 convention of the Minnesota Indian Education Association, where two of her former students at the Wahpeton federal boarding school “came up and put their arms around me and walked beside me.” The students were Dennis Banks and George Mitchell, founding members of the American Indian Movement (AIM). They greeted one another fondly, and Horne recalled:

They were laughing and teasing me, and Dennis said, “Mrs. Horne, you know, you might as well have been called the mother of AIM.” And I said: “And how is that?” And they said, “Well, you used to tell us, ‘Keep your heads up. Don’t smell your knees. And don’t be a puppet on somebody else’s string.’”<sup>85</sup>

While Horne never outright endorsed the activities of these AIM founders, she wrote that “I am proud of their recognition of the small part I may have played in their activism and self-esteem.”<sup>86</sup>

These instructors demonstrate how the federal boarding school system, while mostly beyond the control of Indigenous people, was

<sup>81</sup> McCarty, *A Place to Be Navajo*, 99.

<sup>82</sup> Cahill, *Federal Fathers and Mothers*, 105.

<sup>83</sup> Farina King, *The Earth Memory Compass: Diné Landscapes and Education in the Twentieth Century* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2018), 92.

<sup>84</sup> Qöyawayma and Carlson, *No Turning Back*, 126.

<sup>85</sup> Horne and McBeth, *Essie’s Story*, 129.

<sup>86</sup> Horne and McBeth, *Essie’s Story*, 129.

not entirely beyond their influence. Despite the challenges of working within a school system configured to contain, domesticate, or erase all things Native, Indigenous instructors within the federal school system reframe how we trace the historical development of culturally sustaining learning environments.

### Tribally Controlled Schools in the Navajo Nation, 1966–Present

The earlier experiments discussed here preceded a period of vocal federal support for Indigenous influence over the technology of schooling. The 1960s and 1970s saw a period of rapid growth in tribally controlled schools, particularly in K–12 schools and tribal colleges. Those schools established in the 1960s and 1970s emerged alongside the 1972 Indian Education Act, which created new federal grants for Native students, and the 1975 Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act, which authorized the federal government to issue grants directly to and enter into contracts with Native nations to administer schools. Regardless of how they chose to engage with this new legislative support, the institutional changes led to a new set of tools and strategies in the use of schooling on Indigenous terms.

The 1960s and 1970s witnessed a bubbling up of energy around tribally controlled and Indigenous-run schools, as evidenced by the founding of the Milwaukee Indian Community School in 1969; the Heart of the Earth Survival School, Red School House, and Rock Point Community School in 1971–1972; and the Akwesasne Freedom School in 1979, among others.<sup>87</sup> Each of these schools was marked by its particular context, as educators in each nation and urban community tried to develop the school model that would most empower the students who attended. For example, AIM’s survival schools in the Twin Cities used the technology of schooling to create safe educational spaces for Native youth and parents to learn in culturally grounded ways and to protect families from institutional child removal.<sup>88</sup> Responding to racism in the public schools and from state services, families and community organizers united to create a different vision of schooling that would “reinvigorate Indigenous extended family relationships and rebuild community support systems around Native youth.”<sup>89</sup> Halfway across the continent, in Mohawk territory, educators at the Akwesasne Freedom School protected local

<sup>87</sup>Davis, *Survival Schools*; McCarty, *A Place to Be Navajo*; Louellyn White, *Free to Be Mowawk: Indigenous Education at the Akwesasne Freedom School* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2015); and Lomawaima and McCarty, *To Remain an Indian*.

<sup>88</sup>Davis, *Survival Schools*, 91–97.

<sup>89</sup>Davis, *Survival Schools*, 125.

visions for schooling by refusing to apply for federal funds, recognizing the ways in which federal funding would inevitably constrain their own flexibility and influence over the school. This required major sacrifices from staff, but ensured that the school would have autonomy over its own operations and curriculum.<sup>90</sup> These survival and freedom schools laid the groundwork for culturally sustaining educators for decades to come, as evidenced by the expansion of Indigenous charter schools throughout the 1990s and early 2000s and the founding of the Mní Wíchóni Nakíčizhí Owáyawa school at Standing Rock in 2016.<sup>91</sup>

Among these schools, perhaps most familiar to historians of education is the Rough Rock Demonstration School in the Navajo Nation. It is with good reason that Rough Rock is so well known—its innovations have made it a symbol of self-determined schooling in the 1960s and 1970s. Situated within the longer timeline of experiments with schooling discussed here, Rough Rock represents the next phase in nearly a century of Indigenous innovation with schooling. As such, the well-documented story of Rough Rock is worth revisiting as an example of Indigenous experimentation with the technology of schooling and as characteristic of broader trends toward “position [ing] education as the path to cultural preservation, economic empowerment, and individual agency.”<sup>92</sup>

Founded in 1966, the Rough Rock Demonstration School offered a model to the movement of Indigenous K–12 schools that opened in the 1960s and 1970s in reservation and urban communities. Such schools did not appear out of nowhere; instead, Rough Rock grew out of a decades-long effort by local leaders.<sup>93</sup> A series of community conversations with Diné leadership and federal officials about local visions for the schools emerged out of the 1940s and 1950s: Following the federal government’s devastating program to reduce Diné sheep herds and prevent silt run-off into Hoover Dam,<sup>94</sup> many Diné, including some who had served in the Second World War, came to see schooling as a tool for helping youth prepare themselves for the changing social landscape. The only existing school options—often

<sup>90</sup>White, *Free to Be Mohawk*, 64–69.

<sup>91</sup>Alayna Eagle Shield et al., eds., *Education in Movement Spaces: Standing Rock to Chicago Freedom Square* (New York: Routledge, 2020).

<sup>92</sup>John J. Laukaitis, *Community Self-Determination: American Indian Education in Chicago, 1952–2006* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2015), 2.

<sup>93</sup>Hildegard Thompson, *The Navajos’ Long Walk for Education: A History of Navajo* (Tsaile, AZ: Navajo Community College Press, 1975); and Margaret Connell Szasz, *Education and the American Indian: The Road to Self-Determination since 1928*, 3rd ed. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1999), 115. For a thorough history of Rough Rock, see McCarty, *A Place to Be Navajo*.

<sup>94</sup>McCarty, *A Place to Be Navajo*, 56–57.

vastly under-resourced off-reservation boarding schools staffed by mostly non-Diné teachers—were not the kinds of schools Diné children would need. Instead, the community created a new form of schooling at Rough Rock, one with high degrees of Diné oversight, influence, and leadership.

Rough Rock's approach to bilingual Diné-English schooling was a milestone for the development of bilingual education in the United States. Though there had been innovations with bilingual curricula for Diné students as early as the 1940s, by 1965 the federal government still insisted that "English language capability is fundamental to Indian progress."<sup>95</sup> Rough Rock imagined another way, one in which Diné knowledge and *Diné bizaad* (the Diné language) would be fundamental to student success.<sup>96</sup>

No school is free of criticism. And yet, as McCarty observes, while "Rough Rock's development has been far from untroubled, the school was and is about Indigenous language, culture and education rights."<sup>97</sup> When Rough Rock teachers reflected on the school's most important contributions, they pointed to its role as a leader in bilingual education, the high degree of parental involvement, the student-centered approach to best teaching practices, and its emphasis on local control. Their comments reflect a view of school as a tool for self-determination, as "Rough Rock has . . . instilled into Indian life the idea that he is capable of *directing his own educational endeavors* [emphasis added]."<sup>98</sup>

A movement for a tribally controlled institution of higher education soon followed. Across Indian Country, the K-12 and tribal college movements were closely linked in philosophy as organizers believed that both "could be used to strengthen reservations and tribal culture" and "serve the practical needs" of Native nations.<sup>99</sup> Echoing Henry Cloud's belief in the potential of college education from the early part of the twentieth century, tribal colleges developed because their founders saw education as "more than a tool for personal advancement. . . . [The schools] could empower and inspire the whole community." Unlike in Cloud's day, by the 1960s, tribal nations found

<sup>95</sup>Thompson, *The Navajos' Long Walk*, 227.

<sup>96</sup>Lomawaima and McCarty, *To Remain an Indian*, 122–26; Szasz, *Education and the American Indian*, 172; and Reyhner and Eder, *American Indian Education*, 273–82.

<sup>97</sup>McCarty, *A Place to Be Navajo*, xvi. For a robust explanation of criticisms of Rough Rock, see Reyhner and Eder, *American Indian Education*, 282–89.

<sup>98</sup>"Navajo Culture Program," *Akwesasne Notes* 2, no. 3 (June 1970), 42.

<sup>99</sup>Even as some Diné felt that a tribal college in the style of non-Native schools was not in alignment with Diné values, a group of tribal leaders, local educators, and federal officials saw the potential for reshaping the technology of higher education to prioritize local vision and needs. See Stan Steiner, "Student Activists: The Navajo Way," *Akwesasne Notes* 1, no. 9 (Oct. 1969), 12–13.

themselves in a position to run these schools themselves.<sup>100</sup> Moreover, the need to promote tribal sovereignty through education was a matter of urgency; following in the wake of termination and relocation, tribal colleges could support sustainable nation-building and community development on each nation's own terms.<sup>101</sup>

The first officially established tribal college was Navajo Community College (now Diné College), which opened in 1968.<sup>102</sup> Many who had advocated for Rough Rock also contributed to Diné College, so it should come as no surprise that the college shared an emphasis on bilingual, bicultural education.<sup>103</sup> As it did, it pushed back against social pressures to assimilate to Whiteness, signaling a paradigm shift in education within and beyond the Navajo Nation. As Diné College president Ned Hatathli said, "What we're trying to prove is that Indian people are capable. We have the ability to run our own affairs."<sup>104</sup> It worked. Diné College was followed quickly by several tribal colleges across the Dakotas. Tribal colleges soon joined together to establish the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC), a collective body to advocate for funding and

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<sup>100</sup>For the earliest tribally controlled colleges, conversations about the need for locally controlled higher education began as early as the 1950s and were taken up over time by tribal governments.

<sup>101</sup>Paul Boyer, *Capturing Education: Envisioning and Building the First Tribal Colleges* (Pablo, MT: Salish Kootenai College Press, 2015), 20, 23–24, 28.

<sup>102</sup>It is important to recognize that while Diné College was the first official institution of the current tribal college movement, the idea of tribally controlled higher education has been around since at least the 1880s, when the Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina founded a normal school to train teachers. Like the tribal colleges that took root in the 1960s and 1970s, when the Croatan Normal School was founded in 1887, it represented Lumbee "determination to tell their own story and assert their own benchmarks of progress." And like many other Native nations, for Lumbee people, schooling was a technology "not so much for becoming Americans as for maintaining their survival as a distinct community that had the same opportunities as other Americans." See Malinda Maynor Lowery, *The Lumbee Indians: An American Struggle* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018), 96, 100. Croatan Norman School was soon followed by Indian University (now Bacone College) in Tahlequah, Oklahoma. For the history of Bacone College, see Reyhner and Eder, *American Indian Education*, 309–13; and Lisa K. Neuman, *Indian Play: Indigenous Identities at Bacone College* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2014).

<sup>103</sup>For detailed accounts of the community's role in forming the school's curriculum, see Cary Michael Carney, *Native American Higher Education in the United States* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1999); Szasz, *Education and the American Indian*, 176; Kimmis Hendrick, "Navajos Start Something Special," *Akwesasne Notes* 1 no. 8 (Sept. 1969), 35; and Steiner, "Student Activists," 12–13.

<sup>104</sup>Paula Dranov, "Navajo College to Rise: Construction Program to Get Under Way Next Month," *Akwesasne Notes* 3, no. 3 (April 1971), 21.

share strategies for successful institutions.<sup>105</sup> In 1978, after years of political strategizing, tribal colleges successfully lobbied the federal government to pass the Tribally Controlled Colleges and Universities Assistance Act, securing a much-needed source of financial support.<sup>106</sup>

Less than a decade after Diné College opened its doors, Lakota scholar Vine Deloria Jr. noted the significance of tribal colleges:

Indian people in the community college movement feel that they must have their own means of educating tribal members and that this system must be controlled by community people. Future leadership and the ultimate survival of the tribe will depend upon the success of the higher educational institutions in meeting the expanded expectations of community members in helping them find solutions to their everyday problems.<sup>107</sup>

The rise of Rough Rock and Diné College suggests that schools were leading sites in the movement for Indigenous self-determination in the 1960s and 1970s. These institutions were (and continue to be) community-driven initiatives to promote their nations' interests. Indeed, Diné College's mission is to "ensure the well-being of the Diné People" through postsecondary learning "rooted in Diné language and culture."<sup>108</sup> These schools embody not only the trends toward educational self-determination across Indian Country but also the continued effort of Indigenous educators to tailor the technology of schooling for Indigenous ends. As with the Cherokee Nation's schools, charting the continuing histories of tribally controlled schools, both K-12 and higher education, offers an alternative educational genealogy, providing historical touchpoints for studies of community-developed schools, curriculum, institutional funding, and federal legislation.

### The Rise of Hawaiian-Language Schools, 1983-Present

Soon after the founding of Rough Rock and Diné College, Native Hawaiians developed their own programs for children that

<sup>105</sup> Szasz, *Education and the American Indian*, 236; Carney, *Native American Higher Education in the United States*, 109; and Boyer, *Capturing Education*, 70. Diné College also acquired funds from private foundations. See Szasz, *Education and the American Indian*, 167.

<sup>106</sup> Janine Pease-Prety On Top, "Events Leading to the Passage of the Tribally Controlled Community College Assistance Act of 1978," *Journal of American Indian Education* 42, no. 1 (2003), 6–21.

<sup>107</sup> Vine Deloria Jr., ed., *Technical Problems in Indian Education*, Indian Education Confronts the Seventies, vol. 4 (Washington, DC: Office of Education, 1974).

<sup>108</sup> "About DC," Diné College, 2019, [https://www.dinecollege.edu/about\\_dc/about-dc/](https://www.dinecollege.edu/about_dc/about-dc/).



emphasized Hawaiian language and identity. These Hawaiian schools would be full-immersion programs and, like Rough Rock and Winnemucca's school, have been designed as safe places for students to learn and grow as Hawaiian people.

Decades prior to the US coup of the Hawaiian kingdom, King Kamehameha III established the first Hawaiian public schools in 1841, which naturally were conducted in Hawaiian. Just as the Curtis Act interrupted Cherokee Nation schooling in 1898, so too did the United States interrupt Hawaiian schooling: After American businessmen and missionaries overthrew Queen Lili'uokalani in 1893, their illegally established government replaced Hawaiian with English in schools. Just three years later, they banned Hawaiian as a language of instruction.<sup>109</sup> This led to devastating outcomes for the Hawaiian language: by the 1980s—less than a century after the coup—only a few dozen children could speak Hawaiian fluently.<sup>110</sup>

By the 1970s, Indigenous activism began to turn the tide. Hawaiians protested US expansion of military activity, tourism-related construction, and industrial agriculture. At the same time, Native Hawaiians promoted their intellectual and technological traditions, turning to the Hawaiian language and ocean voyaging as symbols of Hawaiian achievement.<sup>111</sup> As young Hawaiians expanded their interest in Hawaiian languages and lifeways, some became Hawaiian language teachers.<sup>112</sup>

Inspired by the Māori Kōhanga Reo, or language nests for the Māori language in Aotearoa (New Zealand), Native Hawaiian

<sup>109</sup>Sam L. No'eau Warner, "The Movement to Revitalize Hawaiian Language and Culture," in *The Green Book of Language Revitalization in Practice*, ed. Leanne Hinton and Ken Hale (San Diego: Academic Press, 2001), 133–44; *Joint Resolution to Acknowledge the 100th Anniversary of the January 17, 1893 Overthrow of the Kingdom of Hawaii*, Public Law 103–150 (107 Stat. 1510), 1993; William H. Wilson and Kauano'e Kamanā, "Indigenous Youth Bilingualism from a Hawaiian Activist Perspective," *Journal of Language, Identity & Education* 8, no. 5 (Oct. 2009), 369–75; and Nāmaka Rawlins, William Pila Wilson, and Keiki Kawai'ae'a, "Bill Demmert, Native American Language Revitalization, and His Hawai'i Connection," *Journal of American Indian Education* 50, no. 1 (Jan. 2011), 74–85. For a transnational analysis of the circulation of assimilationist and militaristic pedagogies, including their relationship to American colonization of Hawai'i, see Khalil Anthony Johnson Jr., "The Education of Black and Indigenous People in the United States and Abroad, 1730–1980" (PhD diss., Yale University, 2016).

<sup>110</sup>Jim Kent, "American Indigenous Languages Face Crisis in the 21st Century," *News from Indian Country* (Hayward, WI), May 15, 2002, 14A; and "Language Revitalization Featured at Education Conference," *Indian Country Today* (Oneida, NY), Dec. 5, 2007, B1, B5.

<sup>111</sup>Rawlins, Wilson, and Kawai'ae'a, "Bill Demmert," 75.

<sup>112</sup>Warner, "The Movement to Revitalize," 135.

speakers turned to creating early childhood language programs, which they called Pūnana Leo.<sup>113</sup> In hopes of “revitalizing and perpetuating the Hawaiian language and culture through the creation of new generations of native Hawaiian-speaking children,” a group of educators from across Hawai‘i founded the ‘Aha Pūnana Leo nonprofit in 1983.<sup>114</sup> The first Pūnana Leo opened in 1984, six years after Hawai‘i declared Hawaiian an official state language.

Hawaiian families pushed hard to create Hawaiian-language environments for Hawaiian youth. In 1986, they successfully advocated to end the ban on Hawaiian-language teaching in schools.<sup>115</sup> One year later, following public refusal to attend public schools that did not offer Hawaiian-language programs, the community developed Ke Kula Kaiapuni Hawai‘i boycott schools, which became a model for kindergarten Hawaiian-language programs.<sup>116</sup> Kula Kaiapuni schools would allow students who had participated in Pūnana Leo to sustain their language learning in subsequent grades; they would also expand Hawaiian-language opportunities for children who had not had access to Pūnana Leo.<sup>117</sup>

These resurgent schools faced state-imposed regulations that limited the expansion of the Hawaiian-language school movement.<sup>118</sup> Yet advocates for Hawaiian-language education persevered, acquiring funds to develop their own curricula, school resources, and classroom tools.<sup>119</sup> They developed partnerships with institutions of higher education, leading to the establishment of teacher development programs for Hawaiian immersion schools.<sup>120</sup> They explored alternative school models, including charter schools and magnet schools.<sup>121</sup> Later, when standardized testing under No Child Left Behind (NCLB) threatened the future of Hawaiian-language classrooms, educators developed

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<sup>113</sup>Rawlins, Wilson, and Kawai‘ae‘a, “Bill Demmert,” 75; and William H. Wilson and Kauanoē Kamanā, “Mai Loko Mai O Ka ‘Īini: Proceeding from a Dream’: The ‘Aha Pūnana Leo Connection in Hawaiian Language Revitalization,” in Hinton and Hale, *The Green Book*, 149.

<sup>114</sup>Warner, “The Movement to Revitalize,” 136.

<sup>115</sup>Rawlins, Wilson, and Kawai‘ae‘a, “Bill Demmert,” 76.

<sup>116</sup>Wilson and Kamanā, “Mai Loko Mai O Ka ‘Īini,” 150.

<sup>117</sup>Warner, “The Movement to Revitalize,” 137–38.

<sup>118</sup>Warner, “The Movement to Revitalize,” 136–37; and Wilson and Kamanā, “Mai Loko Mai O Ka ‘Īini,” 154–56.

<sup>119</sup>Wilson and Kamanā, “Indigenous Youth Bilingualism,” 372.

<sup>120</sup>Warner, “The Movement to Revitalize,” 141.

<sup>121</sup>Office of Hawaiian Affairs, “OHA Board Approves \$3 Million to Go Directly to Charter Schools,” press release, Oct. 19, 2017, <https://www.oha.org/news/oha-board-approves-3-million-go-directly-charter-schools/>; and Warner, “The Movement to Revitalize,” 138.

standardized testing models in Hawaiian to combat intrusion of English-language testing into language revitalization efforts.<sup>122</sup>

Native Hawaiians built solidarity with other Native nations as they developed their schools. In addition to drawing inspiration from Māori models, Hawaiian educators traveled across the United States, connecting with other language revitalization programs through the Native American Languages Issues Institutes. They joined national efforts to advocate for the rights of Indigenous language speakers, leading to the Native American Languages Act of 1990.<sup>123</sup> The ‘Aha Pūnana Leo has continued to maintain close relationships with other Native-language schools and Native-language revitalization programs across Indian Country.<sup>124</sup>

Their efforts have made a profound difference in the world of Native-language schooling. Despite the low numbers of fluent Hawaiian youth in the 1970s, today “more than 2,000 [students are] enrolled in Hawaiian immersion programs, the largest enrollment for any Native language immersion effort.”<sup>125</sup> Hawaiian students in Hawaiian-language programs demonstrate high achievement on a variety of metrics, including Hawaiian- and English-language fluency, countering critics who feared that a focus on Hawaiian would limit students’ abilities to succeed in English-language contexts.<sup>126</sup>

By pushing for schools that centered the Hawaiian language, Hawaiian educators and families could focus on what was useful within the technology of schooling, removing much of what was detrimental to their students. Native Hawaiian school advocates fought to ensure their right to “choose Hawaiian as the daily language of their families and to extend that into government-supported education.”<sup>127</sup> The story of Hawaiian-language schooling provides an important historical hinge in understanding language revitalization, charter schools, standardized testing, and teacher preparation programs, among others.

### Hālau Kū Māna and Tribal Charter Schools, 2001–2020

Native education advocates have long strategized to enhance Indigenous influence over K-12 schools and to create learning

<sup>122</sup> Rawlins, Wilson, and Kawai‘ae‘a, “Bill Demmert,” 80–81.

<sup>123</sup> Rawlins, Wilson, and Kawai‘ae‘a, “Bill Demmert,” 76–77.

<sup>124</sup> William (Pila) H. Wilson, “USDE Violations of NALA and the Testing Boycott at Nāwahīokalani‘ōpu‘u School,” *Journal of American Indian Education* 51, no. 3 (Jan. 2012), 34.

<sup>125</sup> “Language Revitalization Featured at Education Conference.”

<sup>126</sup> Wilson and Kamanā, “Indigenous Youth Bilingualism,” 372.

<sup>127</sup> Wilson and Kamanā, “Mai Loko Mai O Ka ‘Īni,” 158.

environments that reflect local expectations, values, and visions for education. They have created schools where pedagogies, aligned with tribally specific ways of learning, knowing, and being, affirm tribal sovereignty.<sup>128</sup> Stories of Indigenous experimentation with the technology of schooling continue to emerge as Indigenous educators navigate the messy, complicated entanglements of creating schools for Indigenous survival through a system designed for their elimination. One school, beautifully documented by Kānaka Maoli scholar and educator Noelani Goodyear-Ka'ōpua, continues to do just that.

Since 2001, the Hālau Kū Māna (HKM) Public Charter School in Honolulu has repurposed neoliberal tools—in this case, the idea of the charter school—to center land-based, intergenerational, politically engaged learning. HKM frames its operations around *kuleana*, or teachers' and students' "relational obligations as shaped by genealogy and land," and recognizes that Indigenous knowledge and worldviews are the foundation of students' learning.<sup>129</sup> To this end, the curriculum revolves around "land-centered literacies," an expansive pedagogical practice that situates classroom learning within broader practices of stewardship and responsibility. Teachers blend science, math, literature, and arts lessons as students learn to tend crops that have sustained their people since time immemorial and sail with navigational strategies honed over generations. By using charter school models to center land- and sovereignty-based pedagogies, educators at HKM reject centuries of assimilative curricula and experiment with a new version of the technology of schooling.

And yet, HKM's commitment to Indigenous ways of teaching, learning, and interacting with the world do not exist in isolation, and tensions created by US policy have created barriers to the school's pedagogical practices. NCLB's rules for "highly qualified teachers," for example, sidelined cherished educators with decades of experience whose community-approved credentials did not emerge from a state credentialing pipeline. And despite students' rigorous use of mathematics as they sailed and built taro terraces, their state math assessment scores flagged the school for NCLB restructuring, a process that resulted in drastic changes to the school schedule, course offerings, and budget in ways that were at odds with the school's core mission.

Despite these challenges, HKM has continued to find ways to enact its responsibilities to the community. Rather than capitulate to imposed expectations for schooling, students and teachers have put

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<sup>128</sup>"Tribal School Choice," National Indian Education Association, <https://www.niea.org/tribal-choice-and-native-students>.

<sup>129</sup>Noelani Goodyear-Ka'ōpua, *The Seeds We Planted: Portraits of a Native Hawaiian Charter School* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 64, 103.

Indigenous sovereignty, Indigenous intellectual traditions, and stewardship of the lands and waters at the center of their educational practice. “Perhaps, the most effective way to loosen the powerful structuring influence of settler-colonial institutions like NCLB and to transform settler-colonial relations,” observes Goodyear-Ka‘ōpua, “is to rebuild the Indigenous structures that have historically allowed for sustenance and the kind of balanced interdependence about which [HKM teachers] have spoken.”<sup>130</sup>

HKM is now one of dozens of Indigenous charter schools across the United States that emphasize local needs, values, and goals; work toward the current and future health of Native families and nations; revitalize Indigenous languages; center Indigenous perspectives; and emphasize local relationships and community design.<sup>131</sup> As such, schools like HKM can focus on tribally specific teachings, languages, epistemologies, and histories and promote civically engaged tribal citizens.<sup>132</sup> They can “braid” tribally specific knowledge systems with mainstream standardized expectations, resulting in schools that “[conform] to the community, rather than the typical expectation that the community conforms to the school.”<sup>133</sup>

<sup>130</sup> Goodyear-Ka‘ōpua, *The Seeds We Planted*, 125.

<sup>131</sup> “Sovereignty in Education: Creating Culturally-Based Charter Schools in Native Communities” (Washington, DC: National Indian Education Association, 2018), 13; Dahlia Bazzaz, “Why There Aren’t Any Native American Charter Schools in Washington State,” *Seattle Times*, Aug. 1, 2018, n.p. (online edition); Vanessa Anthony-Stevens and Philip Stevens, “‘A Space for You to Be Who You Are’: An Ethnographic Portrait of Reterritorializing Indigenous Student Identities,” *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 38, no. 3 (June 2017), 328–41; Vanessa Anthony-Stevens, “Indigenous Parents Navigating School Choice in Constrained Landscapes,” *Diaspora, Indigenous, and Minority Education* 11, no. 2 (April 2017), 92–105; “Oklahoma Charter School Opens with Hopes to Better Serve Native American Students,” *All Things Considered*, NPR, Nov. 5, 2019, <https://www.npr.org/2019/11/05/776496243/oklahoma-charter-school-opens-with-hopes-to-better-serve-native-american-student>; Eve L. Ewing and Meaghan E. Ferrick, “For This Place, for These People: An Exploration of Best Practices Among Charter Schools Serving Native Students” (Washington, DC: National Indian Education Association, 2012), 62; and “Resolution #07-04: Resolution to Support Charter Schools for Native Hawaiian, American Indians, and Alaska Natives” (National Indian Education Association, 2007).

<sup>132</sup> Samantha A. Marshall, “To Sustain Tribal Nations: Striving for Indigenous Sovereignty in Mathematics Education,” *Journal of Educational Foundations* 31, no. 1/2 (March 2018), 9–37; Ahniwake Rose, “Native Students Do Better When Tribes Run Schools,” *BRIGHT Magazine*, July 12, 2017, <https://brighthemag.com/native-run-schools-do-better-when-tribes-run-schools-4789da471e25>; NIEA, “Sovereignty in Education,” see specifically 1, 9, 10, 49, and 58; and Ewing and Ferrick, “For This Place, for These People,” see specifically 14–60.

<sup>133</sup> For more on the concept of “braiding,” see Bryan McKinley Jones Brayboy and K. Tsianina Lomawaima, “Why Don’t More Indians Do Better in School? The Battle

Though HKM defines its mission as driven by *kuleana* rather than school choice, other Indigenous charter schools across the United States have embraced a version of “tribal school choice” defined by “tribally led, culture-based leadership.”<sup>134</sup> This vision builds upon decades of Native educators creating alternative school options, including creating safe spaces within public schools and Bureau of Indian Education schools and founding Native-specific charter, magnet, private, compact, and contract schools.<sup>135</sup> As National Indian Education Association (NIEA) Executive Director Diana Cournoyer notes, “Where we’ve been is, kill the Indian, save the man mentality. A lot has changed, but not enough, which is why charter schools are a part of the conversation now in Indian country.”<sup>136</sup> Indeed, education researchers Eve L. Ewing and Meaghan E. Ferrick observe:

By indigenizing school design, mission, pedagogy, and curriculum to match the culture, values, and aspirations of the contemporary community, schools as institutions have been transformed—from places haunted by the ghosts of oppressive boarding schools, cultural decimation, and forced assimilation, to community centers of cultural and language preservation and revitalization.<sup>137</sup>

Still, barriers persist that may limit the feasibility of charter schools for many Native communities: Funding for charters can be difficult to sustain.<sup>138</sup> In rural areas, poorly maintained or underdeveloped infrastructure, limited housing for staff, teacher shortages, and transportation can be challenging for school leaders to navigate.<sup>139</sup>

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between U.S. Schooling and American Indian/Alaska Native Education,” *Daedalus* 147, no. 2 (March 2018), 82–94; Tiffany S. Lee, “Complex Ecologies of Indigenous Education at the Native American Community Academy,” paper presented at the Annual Conference of the American Educational Research Association, Denver, CO, May 1, 2010; and Koren L. Capozza, “Education Innovation: Indian Alternative Schools on the Rise,” *American Indian Report* 15, no. 7 (July 1, 1999), 24–25.

<sup>134</sup>NIEA, “Tribal School Choice”; and Goodyear-Ka’ōpua, *The Seeds We Planted*, 64.

<sup>135</sup>Angelina E. Castagno, David R. Garcia, and Nicole Blalock, “Rethinking School Choice: Educational Options, Control, and Sovereignty in Indian Country,” *Journal of School Choice* 10, no. 2 (April 2016), 233; NIEA, “Tribal School Choice”; NIEA, “Native Education Factsheet: Choice Innovation in Native Education,” Oct. 2017, <https://www.niea.org/fact-sheets>; NIEA, “Sovereignty in Education”; and Bazzaz, “Why There Aren’t Any Native American Charter Schools,” n.p. (online edition) For other models of tribal school choice, see NIEA, “Choice Innovation in Native Education.”

<sup>136</sup>NPR, “Oklahoma Charter School Opens.”

<sup>137</sup>Ewing and Ferrick, “For This Place, for These People,” 63.

<sup>138</sup>Marshall, “To Sustain Tribal Nations,” 28.

<sup>139</sup>NIEA, “Choice Innovation in Native Education.”

Standardized testing can limit schools' flexibility to focus on high-priority topics like Native languages, and since charter schools are still subject to local approval and state and federal requirements, they may actually pose a threat to tribal sovereignty in some areas.<sup>140</sup>

Still, many Native education advocates, like those at HKM, have set up a vision for Indigenous-run charter schools that takes advantage of charter flexibility without capitulating to non-Native visions for charter school operations. As those charters navigate this alternative path, they serve as an important moment in histories of culturally sustaining curricula, school funding, and alternative education.

## Conclusion

In this article, we highlighted examples of the diverse ways in which Indigenous people have engaged with schooling as a social technology. Following this paradigm, we believe that these engagements with schooling are best understood as a history of experimentation in education. Together, they bring to life nearly two hundred years of Indigenous people evaluating problems, surveying possible solutions, and implementing strategies to address them using the technology of the school. Not all of these efforts were successful. Schools were shut down by federal policies, ran out of money, and lacked a stable land base. Schools and teachers reproduced settler colonial gender, race, and class hierarchies and were constrained by the expectations of the system in which they operated. The variety of outcomes these undertakings produced underscores the numerous contingent factors that shape the outcomes of a given engagement with schooling. Nevertheless, they were all instances of Indigenous educators experimenting with schooling in an attempt to secure the present and future well-being of their children and nations.

These are just some of the many models that illustrate the long history of such experiments with the technology of schooling, and which continue to be an active part of innovation in education today. As touchpoints for new tellings of Indigenous histories with schooling, the examples discussed in this article demonstrate how Indigenous education advocates have attempted to advance their students' and nations' interests over time. Repurposing a technology long

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<sup>140</sup> Marshall, "To Sustain Tribal Nations," 32; and Ewing and Ferrick, "For This Place, for These People," 70. In addition, some Native educators worry that a larger discourse regarding charter schools outside of Indian Country may conflict with the community-centered model of Native charter schools. For example, some charter networks frame school as a ticket out of their neighborhoods rather than a means of contributing to their communities. See Marshall, "To Sustain Tribal Nations," 30–31.

implemented to control Indigenous bodies and minds, these educational innovators found ways to, however briefly, insulate themselves against colonial meddling. Exercising their own autonomy, they found ways to use the classroom to shape Indigenous futures. Their stories suggest new ways to periodize a history of Indigenous schooling, with two lessons in mind.

First, a methodological insight: by treating schooling as a technology made malleable through Indigenous experimentation, Indigenous students, teachers, and administrators emerge from the archive as active changemakers. While some of these schools are notable for their status as “firsts,” these educators and their schools are more significant for how they exemplify Indigenous people recrafting the technology of schooling to their own ends. Their guiding intention to create safer spaces for Indigenous youth—where students can be protected from anti-Indigenous violence and where students’ identities are assets to their learning—resound across these examples. By centering their stories, we can free ourselves from our frequent reliance on United States Indian policy as the means to periodize histories of Indian education.

Second, an insight relative to narrative: viewing schooling as a social instrument or technology also offers an opportunity to decouple our narrative of the past from federal policies as the defining structure of our tellings of Indian education history. As this approach suggests alternative periodizations of the history of schooling in Indian Country, we hope scholars will reimagine Indian education’s historical hinges in a way that centers the creative and strategic work of generations of Indigenous educators. We hope that grounding this story in Indigenous agency while documenting the unique harm that schooling has wrought will prompt historians to interrogate narratives that traffic in damage-centered tellings. Following Unanga scholar Eve Tuck, we instead argue for a desires-based approach that emphasizes the “complexity, contradiction, and the self-determination” of Indigenous people’s lived experiences.<sup>141</sup> This allows us instead to recenter Indigenous educators’ strategic use of schooling, recognizing Indigenous people at the head of classrooms, in school bureaucracies, in federal education agencies, and at the forefront of histories of schooling in the United States.

In selecting these examples, we sought to offer touchpoints for a new reframing of the history of Indigenous efforts to resolve the

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<sup>141</sup>Eve Tuck, “Suspending Damage: A Letter to Communities,” *Harvard Educational Review* 79, no. 3 (Sept. 2009), 416.



tension between education and schooling.<sup>142</sup> As Lomawaima and Bryan McKinley Jones Brayboy have noted, all examinations of Indian education history must substantially engage issues of power and persistence in the education-based fight for Indigenous futures. We believe this record of Indigenous experimentation can be part of a foundation for new tellings of American Indian education history that accomplish this imperative.<sup>143</sup> Federal agents, church officials, and education reformers have long used schooling as a weapon to eliminate Indigenous people; at the same time, Indigenous individuals and communities have long repurposed schooling to protect tribal sovereignty, reconstitute their communities, and shape Indigenous futures. Rather than a story of change over time, this is a history of continuity and persistence.

We believe it will continue.

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<sup>142</sup> Philip J. Deloria et al., "Unfolding Futures: Indigenous Ways of Knowing for the Twenty-First Century," *Daedalus* 147, no. 2 (Spring 2018), 12.

<sup>143</sup> Bryan McKinley Jones Brayboy, "Culture, Place, and Power: Engaging the Histories and Possibilities of American Indian Education," *History of Education Quarterly* 54, no. 3 (Aug. 2014), 395–402; and K. Tsianina Lomawaima, "Tribal Sovereigns: Reframing Research in American Indian Education," *Harvard Educational Review* 70, no. 1 (April 2000), 1–21.