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THEIR CULTURE AGAINST THEM: THE ASSIMILATION OF NATIVE  
AMERICAN CHILDREN THROUGH PROGRESSIVE EDUCATION, 1930-1960s

by

Jamie Danielle Henton

A Thesis  
Submitted to the Graduate School,  
the College of Arts and Sciences  
and the School of Humanities  
at The University of Southern Mississippi  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Master of Arts

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## ABSTRACT

The failure of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) to successfully assimilate Native Americans, especially Native children through education tactics such as boarding schools, led to a shift in the mid-twentieth century for pro-Indian reform. From the 1930s through the 1950s, BIA education reformers pursued progressive education. They imagined progressive education would allow the BIA to use Native American traditions and culture to educate and mold Native students into modern contributing American citizens. To appeal to students, the BIA commissioned a series of educational materials, primarily children's books, designed to use Native culture to teach children how to adapt to life in modern America. Despite the BIA's decision to move away from assimilation tactics and incorporate Native culture into the classroom, white officials still manipulated and Americanized Native culture.

This study examines how these materials undermined Native culture and promoted whiteness in Navajo, Sioux, and Mississippi Choctaw communities, under the false pretenses of uplifting and celebrating Native traditions. This thesis extends the discussion of Native American assimilation and education in the mid-twentieth century through a thorough investigation of education materials, and the vocal Native response to education policy. A collection of primary sources ranging from assimilation-driven education materials, like *The Indian Life Readers Collection*, along with native written documents from the National Congress of American Indians, enhances the historical value and contribution of this study. While literature and anthropological scholars have addressed these materials, no scholarly historical perspective has investigated the use of these educational materials.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I want to take this space to acknowledge the individuals and institutions which have made this work possible. The Smithsonian Institutes' Minority Awards Program allowed me the opportunity to conduct research at the Smithsonian of The American Indian, The U.S. Department of the Interior Library, and The United States National Archives. Fath Davis-Ruffins, a curator at the Smithsonian National Museum of American History, I appreciate your guidance and encouragement to pursue this project. I would also like to acknowledge my mentor Dr. Joshua Haynes. I appreciate your open door, support, and words of knowledge throughout the duration of this thesis. Dr. Andrew Haley and Dr. Douglas Chambers, I would like to thank you for being a supportive part of the committee. Finally, I would like to show appreciation to Dr. Douglas Bristol and Dr. Rebecca Tuuri for lending me your ears and words of wisdom whenever I needed them.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>BIA</i>	Bureau of Indian Affairs
<i>OIA</i>	Office of Indian Affairs
<i>PEA</i>	Progressive Education Association
<i>NCAI</i>	National Congress of American Indians
<i>IRA</i>	Indian Reorganization Act
<i>CCC-ID</i>	Civilian Conservation Corps – Indian Division
<i>WPA</i>	Work Progress Administration
<i>NWREL</i>	Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory

## CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION

Hilgard Thomas, a commissioned Bureau of Indian Affairs author, dedicated his 1944 children's book to "the many Navajo children I have known, and to children everywhere."<sup>1</sup> Through Thomas' words, his work was meant to be a gift to Native American children, but his words were merely words, thrust onto a page of a children's book designed to convert Indian children into assimilated and proper American Indians. Education played a significant role in the assimilation of Native Americans throughout the first century of United States federal Indian Policy, and well into the mid-twentieth century. The tactics and forms of assimilation evolved throughout the decades due to shifts in attitudes toward Native Americans. U.S. Army Captain Richard Henry Pratt, opened the first federally funded Indian school in 1879.<sup>2</sup> The United States Indian Industrial School, better known as The Carlisle Indian School, would set a precedent for the dismal conditions and the horrific attempts to destroy Native children's culture through assimilation efforts. Distant vocational boarding schools gave way to reservation vocational boarding schools, and then to reservation day schools from the late 1800s through the 1950s. Federal Indian policy would come under criticism in 1928 when Lewis Meriam and future Commissioner of Indian Education W. Carson Ryan conducted the Meriam Report. As historian Joseph Watras observed, the Meriam Report, "did not offer an evaluation of the performance of the Indian Service but compared the activities

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<sup>1</sup> Thompson, Hildegard, *Navajo Life Series: Primer*, (Washington, DC: United States Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs Division of Education, 1949),7.

<sup>2</sup> Margaret Szasz, *Education of the American Indian: The Road to Self-Determination Since 1928*, (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press., 1999),8.

of the agency to similar groups engaged in the same efforts.”<sup>3</sup> The Meriam report shed light on the horrible conditions of reservation and school life for Native Americans across the U.S. it found that the Indian Service lacked a well-considered education program.<sup>4</sup>

The Meriam Report changed the direction of Indian policy in the United States. The Bureau of Indian Affairs’ (BIA) failure to both assimilate and educate Native Americans led to a shift in the mid-twentieth century for pro-Indian reform. From the late 1930s through the 1950s the BIA re-imagined Indian education using Progressive Era theory and practices. BIA education officials began to establish an education policy that educated students using their culture and home life. The BIA’s new pro-Native reform resulted in an education program capable of taking advantage of Native American culture. The BIA created children’s literature, centered around Indian culture, for use in the classroom. This thesis argues that these children’s books, and federal policy undermined Native culture and promoted whiteness in Navajo, Sioux, and Mississippi Choctaw communities under the false pretense of uplifting and celebrating Native traditions.

The United States government’s attempt to cure the Indian problem came to a head in the late 1920s, setting off a radical wave of reform. New Indian policy, disguised as pro-Indian, sought to assimilate Natives through the manipulation of culture and trust. Leading the wave of reform was new Indian Commissioner John Collier. Commissioner Collier advocated that culture was more important than politics as a method of providing

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<sup>3</sup> Joseph Watras, “Progressive Education and Native American Schools, 1929-1950.” *Educational Foundations*, Vol 18, No. 3/4, (2004):83.

<sup>4</sup> Watras, “Progressive Education and Native American Schools,” (2004): 84.

social cohesion and unity.<sup>5</sup> Collier promoted, in a Progressive Era fashion, the use of cultural assimilation through the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934.<sup>6</sup> While Collier may have believed he was protecting and preserving Native American culture, he instead solidified the paternalistic role of the federal government over Native American communities.

Policy reform under Collier touched many aspects of Native life ranging from healthcare to education. He appointed William Willard Beatty to replacement for Ryan as director of Indian Education in 1936.<sup>7</sup> Beatty, like Ryan, was a key member of the Progressive Education Association (PEA) and an avid promoter of progressive era education and policy. Beatty's policies created *The Indian Life Readers Collection* along with other educational materials. *The Indian Life Readers Collection* was written by BIA teacher Ann Clark Nolan under the guidance of Beatty; the collection followed suit in using Native culture to teach Indian youth. With new policies coming into place and a new director of education, the BIA began a new tactic of assimilating Native children by using commissioned children's literature. Examining this literature exposes the intent of federal policy throughout the Progressive Era. As this study will demonstrate, like pro-Indian policy reform, these publications undermined Native culture and promoted whiteness.

Historians have discussed federal policy and education in the mid-twentieth century across many disciplines, but they have not combined these elements and used

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<sup>5</sup> Kenneth R. Philp, *John Collier's Crusade for Indian Reform, 1920-1954*, (Tucson, Arizona: University of Arizona Press, 1977), xiii.

<sup>6</sup> Watras, "Progressive Education and Native American Schools," (2004): 84.

<sup>7</sup> Philp, *John Collier's Crusade for Indian Reform, 1920-1954*, (1977), 128.

children's literature as a lens to understand Federal Indian policy. Two sets of secondary literature build a foundation for this study: critical scholarly work on Indian Education, Progressive education, and Americanization, as well as literature focusing on theoretical ideas and approach.

American Indian education spans from the colonial age of missionary schools to modern reservation schools. However, most of the historical work on Indian education focuses on the boarding school experience. Jon Reyhner and Jeanne Eder's *Education of the American Indian: A History* provides an analysis of the efforts of European immigrants and later, American efforts to assimilate indigenous people from the colonial age until the twenty-first century. Reyhner and Eder's work emphasized white and Native interactions with assimilation through education. As a synthesis work on Indian education, this book does not allow for a close look at education materials, but it is used in this thesis as a model for discussing the relationship between education and assimilation. David Adams's *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928* demonstrates "how policymakers sought to use the schoolhouse specifically the boarding schools as an instrument for acculturating Indian youth to 'American' ways of thinking and living."<sup>8</sup> Adams's work breaks down the boarding school experience from 1875-1928.<sup>9</sup> One level of the study is policy formulation, while the second level offers a detailed analysis of how officials and educators deployed policies. Adams argues that Native Americans were being "educated for extinction" by forcing children to learn English and separating students from their

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<sup>8</sup> David Adams, *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928*, (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1995), ix.

<sup>9</sup> Adams, *Education for Extinction*, (1995), ix.

parents through boarding schools. *Education for Extinction* provides the background knowledge for assimilation and education policy in earlier years. This study will push Adams' work into the mid-twentieth century.

Indian education expanded throughout the 1930s and 1950s as reservation schools and public schools started to emerge. Historians have only begun to scratch the surface of this era of Indian education. Margaret Szasz's *Education and the American Indian: The Road to Self-Determination Since 1928* is the groundbreaking work on mid-twentieth century Native education.<sup>10</sup> Szasz's work covers American Indian education from 1928 through the 1970s. She examines the conditions that shaped education policy and how policy shaped self-determination for Native Americans. While Szasz's work does briefly mention Beatty's commissioned children's books, the author does not examine these materials. This study, through an examination of the educational materials, will advance Szasz's work by linking these children's books directly to federal Indian policy. Case studies of individual Native communities will add to Szasz's argument by providing a closer look into how education affected individual groups throughout the United States.

Kim Warren's *The Quest for Citizenship: African American and Native American Education in Kansas, 1880-1935*, examines the efforts of Native and African Americans to fight against assimilation education.<sup>11</sup> Warren's work delves deep into minority and white relationships. Warren argues white "friends" of Natives used their relationships to assimilate students. The role of teachers as "friends" and pushers of assimilation will be

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<sup>10</sup> Margaret Szasz, *Education of the American Indian: The Road to Self-Determination Since 1928*, (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press., 1999)

<sup>11</sup> Kim Cary Warren, *The Quest for Citizenship: African American and Native American Education in Kansas, 1880-1935*, (Chapel Hill, N.C.: The University of North Carolina Press Chapel Hill, 2010),

carried over in this study and applied to BIA teachers and “pro-Indian” reformers. The incorporation of the idea of “friends” and assimilation will be furthered in this study to incorporate not only teachers but also “pro-Indian” reformers. Understanding this dynamic between Native and “friend” propels the discussion of assimilation in the mid-twentieth century beyond the boarding school experience.

Joseph Watras continues the conversation on Native American education through an examination of the influence of Progressive Era education on Native American schools. In “Progressive Education and Native American Schools, 1929-1950,” Watras argues that “the federal officials during the 1930s and 1940s sponsored legislation that introduced democracy in hopes that Native Americans would reinforce their traditional cultures.”<sup>12</sup> Watras establishes the ties between officials, such as Beatty, and progressive education policy, and argues these ties influenced Indian education. As a result, the teachers reinforced ideals of democracy and a faith in science rather than traditional Amerindian ways of life.<sup>13</sup> Watras like, Szasz, does not closely examine individual Native communities or explore the relationship between educational materials and Indian policy. The success of his work is linking national Progressive Era policy to Native Americans. Examining educational materials commissioned by the BIA will provide insight on federal Indian policy and establish a lens to view the broader experience immigrants and people of color had during America’s Progressive Era.

The timeline of the Progressive Era is still argued among historians. Tom Holm places the interactions of Native Americans and Whites during the Progressive Era from

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<sup>12</sup> Watras, “Progressive Education and Native American Schools,” (2004):82.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid,82.

1890 through the 1920s. Holm's *The Great Confusion in Indian Affairs: Native Americans and Whites in the Progressive Era* traces interactions between Natives and Whites, including the Federal government. Holm's work gives agency to Native Americans during this time period and illuminates how they held on to their culture in the face of assimilation. This thesis will expand the timeline of the Progressive Era past the 1920s to the 1950s, an essential step to understand how policymakers' Progressive Era ideals continued to form Indian policy past the 1920s. Holm's work provides the context needed to understand the flow of events between Native and White communities that helped shape the Native experience during the Progressive Era.

Education across the U.S. changed during the Progressive Era and those evolving theories and practices shaped the view of BIA officials such as William W. Beatty. Beatty was the president of the Progressive Education Association in 1936 at the time of his appointment to BIA Director of Education.<sup>14</sup> Progressive education theory did impact Native American education as Watras suggests, but in more ways than teachers focusing on democracy and faith. Progressive policy resulted in the creation of *The Indian Life Readers Collection* and other literature. This literature played on Native children's interests, primarily their culture. The aim of Progressive education for Native Americans correlates with some of the progressive reformers in Arthur Zilversmit's *Changing Schools: Progressive Education Theory and Practice, 1930-1960*. Reformers were concerned with the problem of absorbing new immigrants; they wanted the schools to be a major force in unifying the nation and producing loyal citizens.<sup>15</sup> Zilversmit provides a

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid,82.

<sup>15</sup> Arthur Zilversmit, *Changing Schools: Progressive Education Theory and Practice, 1930-1960*, (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1993),2.



detailed analysis of practices and theories of progressive education in western schools. American Indian education progressed from the Assimilation Era to the Progressive Era, from boarding schools to reservation schools. The transitions and policies that played a role in the education of Native Americans can be seen by examining the materials created through progressive theory and values. An inspection of this literature provides a broader picture of not only Indian policy but the Progressive Era.

Americanization and assimilation are critical to the discussion of American Indian Education. Russel Kazal's work "Revisiting Assimilation: The Rise, Fall, and Reappraisal a Concept in American Ethnic History," assesses the historiography of assimilation and the approaches historians have used to discuss the process of assimilation in their work.<sup>16</sup> Stephen Steinberg's "The Long View of the Melting Pot: Ethnic and Racial Studies," pushes the scholarly debate of assimilation past European immigrants to people of color. Kazal and Steinberg's works will provide a methodological approach to discussing assimilation from a historical standpoint.<sup>17</sup>

Throughout policy reform and the Progressive Era, anthropologists closely studied Native communities and produced field reports. This study focuses on the assimilation of Native children but draws on acculturation studies from anthropologists. Native American scholar Lee Little Soldier's "To Soar with the Eagles: Enculturation and Acculturation of Indian Children" will be used to understand the anthropological concept of acculturation. The definition for acculturation for this study is "the process by which

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<sup>16</sup> Russell A. Kazal, "Revisiting Assimilation: The Rise, Fall, and Reappraisal of a Concept in American Ethnic History," *The American Historical Review* Vol. 100, No. 2 (1995.):437-471.

<sup>17</sup> Stephen Steinberg, "The Long View of the Melting Pot," *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 5, (2014): 790-94.

culturally diverse persons acquire the behaviors of another cultural group to gain access to and function within that group.”<sup>18</sup> Historians commonly use assimilation in place of acculturation; thus, this study will follow suit with historical practice and only interject acculturation when discussing anthropological studies from the period.

Native identity plays a role in the construction of the BIA’s commissioned children’s literature. To address this, Jace Weaver’s *Other Words: American Indian Literature, Law, and Culture*, will be used to explain concepts that constructed Native identity.<sup>19</sup> Beatty aimed to teach Native children through their culture, but what framed the BIA’s idea of Indian culture and tradition? Weaver explores the formation of Native American identity and argues that it is shaped through various interactions with outsiders or the white government. Weaver’s ideas on identity will be used to understand the complexities between the BIA and Native beliefs of Native American tradition, culture, and identity.

From the colonial age to the present day, indigenous people and outsiders have crossed paths and shaped each other’s worlds. Researchers of Indigenous communities have evolved their methods over time to contribute to these communities positively. Indigenous scholar Linda Tuhiwai-Smith has set the standard for new scholarly study of Native people. *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous People* requires researchers to decolonize their minds and provides a guideline for conducting ethical

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<sup>18</sup> Lee Little Soldier, “To Soar with the Eagles: Enculturation and Acculturation of Indian Children,” *Childhood Education*, Vol.61 No.3, (1985) 185.

<sup>19</sup> Jace Weaver, *Other Words: American Indian Literature, Law, and Culture*, (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001.),1-352.

research on indigenous communities.<sup>20</sup> Tuhiwai-Smith argues that all Indigenous research should contribute and give back to the communities they study. This study will contribute to these communities by exposing the colonized BIA commissioned education materials and policy. It aims to decolonize the minds of future readers and researchers.

This thesis will examine BIA commissioned children's literature, federal Indian policy, and the Native response to investigate how the BIA undermined Native culture and promoted whiteness in Navajo, Sioux, and Choctaw communities under the false pretense of uplifting and celebrating Native traditions. The research for this project was conducted primarily at the Smithsonian Institute's National Museum of the American Indian Archive Center and The National Archives and Records Administration in Washington, D.C. Materials from The University of Southern Mississippi's McCain Archives and rare books from the Department of the Interior's library will also be used in this study.

The Smithsonian Institute's National Museum of the American Indian Archive Center is home to the Records of the National Congress of American Indians, 1933-1990. The National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), founded in 1944, is the oldest nation-wide Native-led American Indian advocacy organization in the United States.<sup>21</sup> This collection contains letters, radio transcripts, Native American law bills, government correspondence, newspaper clippings, and informational pamphlets from individual

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<sup>20</sup> Linda Tuhiwai-Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous People: Research and Indigenous People*, (London: Zed Books Ltd, 2012),1-240.

<sup>21</sup> The Smithsonian Institute: National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Online Virtual Archives, "Records of the National Congress of American Indians, 1933-1990," <https://sova.si.edu/record/NMAI.AC.010?s=0&n=10&t=C&q=National+congress+of+American+indian&i=6>.

American Indian communities. The records used are from The Mississippi Band of Choctaws, Navajo, Cheyenne River Sioux, Oglala Sioux, Rosebud Sioux, and the Navajo United Effort Trust. From this collection, letters and other documents from Native communities addressing their concerns toward policy and the state of education will be used. The value this collection adds to this study is the dominant Native American voice that is present throughout the entirety of the collection.

The National Archives and Records Administration in Washington, D.C. houses Record Group 75.<sup>22</sup> This record group contains materials crafted by the BIA documenting their interactions with Native Americans. Three record groups will be used from this collection. The records used from this collection will be BIA school handbooks and diaries of school teachers. These documents provide insight into the preparation and experience of school teachers, the officials who pushed assimilation materials onto Native students daily. Government correspondence with BIA officials and Native communities will also be used. This correspondence ranges from personal letters between staff members, field reports, and letters to tribal council officials. This cluster of research materials is significant because it provides the government's actions toward Native American education from both a federal and individual viewpoint.

The essential component of this research is a collection of BIA commissioned children's books. An extensive collection of children's readers will be used in this study, but much of the literature will come from the *Indian Life Readers Collection* written by

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<sup>22</sup> National Archives, "Record Group 75," (September 25, 2017.)  
<https://www.archives.gov/research/native-americans/bia-guide>, (Accessed June 18, 2019).

Ann Nolan Clark.<sup>23</sup> The *Indian Life Readers* is a collection of rare books commissioned by the BIA and written by Clark from the late 1930s and into the 1950s. The collection can be found in its entirety at The Department of the Interior's Library in Washington, D.C. The collection of books focuses on the Navajo and Sioux Indians but also has readers for the Pueblo and Hopi. The *Indian Life Readers* are a good example of Native American children's assimilation literature produced by the Bureau of Indian Affairs because they were written through the mid-twentieth century as federal Indian policy evolved. The readers also demonstrate the influence of policy on Native people; for example, they included the works of Native American illustrators by the Works Progress Administration's art program.

The Ann Clark Nolan papers are in the De Grummond Collection at the University of Southern Mississippi's McCain Archives. The collection consists of annotated outlines of two of Clark's most popular children's books and different manuscripts of her work.<sup>24</sup> Clark's papers discuss her work with the BIA and her independent work: Native American themed children's books for mainstream America. Clark's papers are needed to demonstrate the vast difference between Clark's mainstream work and the intentions behind her work with the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Another author essential to this study is the Division of Education Commissioner for the BIA, William W. Beatty. The Department of the Interior Library contains a

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<sup>23</sup> Ann Nolan Clark, *Indian Life Readers Collection*, ed. William W. Beatty, (Washington, DC: United States Department of the Interior Bureau of Indian Affairs- Division of Education, 1942-1949).

<sup>24</sup> University of Southern Mississippi McCain Archives, "Ann Clark Nolan Papers," De Grummond Collection, [http://www.lib.usm.edu/legacy/degrum/public\\_html/html/research/findaids/clark.htm#related](http://www.lib.usm.edu/legacy/degrum/public_html/html/research/findaids/clark.htm#related) ( Accessed June 18, 2019).

collection of books written and edited by Beatty about American Indian Education. These books are *Education for Action: Selected Articles from Indian Education 1936-43* and *Education for Cultural Change: Selected Articles from Indian Education 1944-51*. Beatty's books are a two-volume collection of articles from 1936-1952, detailing the philosophy, policy, and practices of the Indian Education Service.<sup>25</sup> Beatty's work is essential to this thesis because it provides the goals and beliefs of BIA officials towards not only education but Native Americans as a collective during the time.

To demonstrate the assimilative nature of the BIA's commissioned children's literature and education policy this thesis will be constructed into three case studies: the Navajo, the Sioux, and the Mississippi Band of Choctaws. The Navajo (Diné) will be discussed in the opening chapter, "Economics and Play Time: The Diné." This chapter argues that BIA commissioned Navajo children's literature reflected the desire of policymakers to shape Navajo people into self-reliant capitalists. The economic crisis in the Navajo community resulted in millions of federal dollars and federal policy being used throughout the late 1930s and into the 1940s to stabilize and shape the community. Children's literature at this time emphasized Navajo sheep culture to make a profit from the "friendly white store owner," a character who appears in a significant number of Navajo children's tales. Authors like Clark made it a point to emphasize the English language, the concept of the good white "friend," and the benefits of capitalism. To interpret the primary sources for this chapter, Warren's "Friends" of Natives argument

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<sup>25</sup> Willard W. Beatty, *Education for Cultural Change: Selected Articles from Indian Education 1944-1951*, (Washington, DC: United States Department of the Interior Bureau of Indian Affairs, 1952), 198.

will be used. This chapter will extend Watras' argument and confirm that Progressive Era policy was apparent in education literature and federal policy. Letters from Navajo parents and community leaders will be used to explore the Native response to education and economic policy. The BIA rehabilitation plans for the Navajo community will also be used to demonstrate the ideals and goals of federal officials toward the Navajo economy and education. This chapter establishes the connection between children's literature and federal policy. The Navajo, the largest Native American nation, presented a dire problem for the BIA: How could they solve an economic crisis that had already caught the attention of the national media, while simultaneously and successfully assimilating the only hope of this community, the Navajo children, into American citizen's capable enough to keep their economy afloat in future years?

The thesis will then move on to explore the experiences of the Sioux communities in the chapter entitled "Raccoon, Mice, and the Sioux: Defining Sioux Identity." This chapter explores, despite significant diversity in Sioux communities, the aim of BIA commissioned literature was to create one uniform Sioux Indian capable of reading, writing, and speaking English. This argument explores how the BIA used the white ideal of race to create a homogenous Sioux people. The BIA Sioux children's literature reduces the Sioux language into only one dialect, Lakota. BIA officials ignore the various distinct groups of Sioux: the Santee-Dakota, Yankton/Yanktonai-Dakota, and the Teton-Lakota. All four branches of the Sioux are connected through origin, but are divided by distinct culture and two dialects, Lakota and Dakota. The BIA did not focus on each groups' unique identity but reformulated Sioux tradition to federal standards. The generalization of these Natives can be seen not only through the Lakota language guide in

the back of each reader, but also through the book's depiction of dance and clothing. The key primary sources for this chapter will be the Sioux portion of *The Indian Life Readers Collection* along with other BIA sponsored Sioux children's books. Beatty's writings on Indian education will also be used to explore existing ideas of Native American identity held by policymakers.

The final chapter of this thesis, "Moccasins and Sunday Hats: The Mississippi Band of Choctaw," examines the contrasting experience the Mississippi Band of Choctaw had with the BIA and education during this time. The Mississippi Choctaw goals and thoughts on education were different from the Navajo and the Sioux. While the Navajo and Sioux communities rejected education plans and facilities, the Choctaw embraced their teachers and demanded more education. The Choctaw embraced education and used their relationships with local white church members to gain greater influence on their education system. The Mississippi Band of Choctaw, due to the backing of local white leaders such as church members, benefitted from more self-involved education material and policy. The Choctaw historically have held a deeper connection to mainstream education through churches from an earlier period than the Navajo and Sioux. The embrace of education allowed Choctaw students and their teachers to create their own children's book entitled *The Mississippi Choctaw*. By using their white neighbors, Choctaws maintained their favorite teachers and ultimately obtained higher education for their children through a brand-new high school. The primary sources for this case study will primarily be letters from white church members and members of the Choctaw community. An examination of the co-authored children's book will also demonstrate the differences between Native and non-Native influenced course material. The Mississippi



Band of Choctaws' experience, though drastically different from the Navajo and Sioux communities, still involved assimilation. The Mississippi Band had a hand in their education material and teachers, but ultimately like the Sioux and Navajo, they would lose their native language to English.

## CHAPTER II – ECONOMICS AND PLAYTIME THE DINÉ

The Navajo reservation faced economic turmoil in the mid-twentieth century. The Great Depression had long ended for Americans, but the Navajos faced the horrors of the Navajo economic crisis. The horrible conditions that came along with the economic crisis were brought on by a lack of monetary support from the state and federal government for Navajo land and education. To address the crisis, the U.S. government began a campaign to better Navajo education and living conditions. The federal government took several approaches to grapple with economic crisis. One strategy targeted Navajo children with commissioned literature. Through children's literature, the BIA influenced Navajo children by promoting the use of English and encouraging the embrace of American capitalism in hopes to assimilate these children into adults capable of economically sustaining their community. However, the conditions on the reservation complicated the effectiveness of the government's plans.

The Navajo and the Office of Indian Affairs faced a tragedy that required the agency to view the Diné through a new lens. While the rest of America was prospering from the war-time economic boom, the Navajo people were destitute. In 1946, the Navajo population was growing by one thousand people yearly and 55,000 Navajo faced acute poverty.<sup>26</sup> By 1948 the Navajo reservation had "12,000 Navaho hogans, in which live more than 60,000 of America's poorest people."<sup>27</sup> Disease, illness, and hunger spread quickly among the Navajo people due to overcrowding and poor living conditions. In a

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<sup>26</sup> Kirk Brothers Indian Traders, *Urgent Navaho Problems*, (Gallup, New Mexico, na, 1946), NMAI.AC.10, Box 113, Folder Navajo (Arizona) 1946-1947, Records of the National Congress of American Indians, 1933-1990, National Museum of the American Indian Archive Center, Washington, DC.

<sup>27</sup> Ruth Falkenburgh Kirk, "The Navaho's Tragedy" *The Chicago Jewish Forum, a National Quarterly Magazine*, Vol.6. No. 3, (1948):175.

report to the chairman of the Public Lands Committee of the House, Richard Welch, Wesley A D'Ewart, Chairman of the Indian Affairs Subcommittee, provided an estimated list of destitute Navajos. D'Ewart's list included 10,100 people eligible for public assistance in Arizona and New Mexico but who lived with no aid.<sup>28</sup> Tuberculosis was ripping apart the Navajo community, children were starving, and the average wage for a Navajo was drastically below the national average. The average per capita income for a Navajo in 1940 was \$81.89 while the national average was \$861.<sup>29</sup> National media coverage was highlighting the destitution of the Navajo people across magazines, newspaper, and radio.<sup>30</sup> *Look Magazine* and the *Washington Tribune* published articles such as "Starvation Without Representation" written by Will Rogers Jr. Rogers' article was an outcry to Americans that "The Navaho Indians need immediate relief...One half of their children die before they are six."<sup>31</sup> Americans knew the Navajo were suffering and lacked basic human necessities such as access to clean drinking water.

Outside pressures rose rapidly demanding that the Office of Indian Affairs officials provide relief to the Navajo. By 1947, the OIA was rebranded as the Bureau of Indian Affairs. With urgency and importance, the new bureau scheduled hearings with

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<sup>28</sup> Correspondence from Wesley A. D'Ewart to Richard Welch, Chairman Public Lands Committee of the House, 24, November, 1947, MNAI.AC.10, Box 113, Folder Navajo (Arizona) 1946-1947, Records of the National Congress of American Indians, 1933-1990, National Museum of the American Indian Archive Center, Washington, DC. The Subcommittee of Indian Affairs provided a bulletin to the Public Land Administration in 1947 that contained an estimate of Navajos living without public assistance despite being eligible. The Navajos represented on this bulletin include: 1,800 aged, 8,000 dependent children, and 300 blind.

<sup>29</sup> Kirk Brothers Indian Traders, *Urgent Navaho Problems*, (Gallup, New Mexico, na, 1946), NMAI.AC.10, Box 113, Folder Navajo (Arizona) 1946-1947, Records of the National Congress of American Indians, 1933-1990, National Museum of the American Indian Archive Center, Washington, DC.

<sup>30</sup> Media coverage of the Navajo Economic Crisis can be seen from local media coverage in Gallup, New Mexico such as the Gallup Independent Newspaper, "What the Navaho Means to Gallup..." on KGAK Radio, *Look Magazine*, and the *Washington Tribune*.

<sup>31</sup> Will Roger, "Starvation Without Representation," *Look Magazine*, (1948): 36.

the Navajo tribal council. The BIA feared “the publicity that has been given to the destitute conditions of the Navajo Indians” would set the country ablaze with protests and public duress.<sup>32</sup>

With the signing of The Treaty with the Navaho of June 1, 1868, the United States government made several promises to the Navajo people including farmlands and access to education. The failure of the federal government to stand by their promises to aid the Navajo in protecting their land and providing education contributed to the Navajo Economic Crisis. The treaty established 16,750,000 acres of land as the Navajo reservation. The poor quality of land could not handle both the Navajo and livestock population. In 1868 the reservation held 8,000 Navajos, and 34,000 sheep. By 1933, the herd had grown to 1.5 million, and the Navajo population had grown to nearly 50,000.<sup>33</sup> The pressures on the land led to mass soil erosion. Chairman D’Ewart stated that his committee “has never seen a more badly-eroded area or one that shows more signs of over-grazing.”<sup>34</sup> D’Ewart’s subcommittee found that the land was practically worthless and had very little productivity. The pressures on the land resulted in low to no food production and the inability to raise sheep, the Navajos number one food and capital source. To become self-sufficient and improve their economic condition, the Navajo demanded the education they were promised in the 1868 treaty. In 1948, Congress was

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<sup>32</sup> Correspondence from Wesley A. D’Ewart to Richard Welch, Chairman Public Lands Committee of the House, 24, November, 1947, MNAI.AC.10, Box 113, Folder Navajo (Arizona) 1946-1947, Records of the National Congress of American Indians, 1933-1990, National Museum of the American Indian Archive Center, Washington, DC.

<sup>33</sup> Kirk, “The Navaho’s Tragedy,” (1948),177.

<sup>34</sup> Correspondence from Wesley A. D’Ewart to Richard Welch, Chairman Public Lands Committee of the House, 24, November, 1947, MNAI.AC.10, Box 113, Folder Navajo (Arizona) 1946-1947, Records of the National Congress of American Indians, 1933-1990, National Museum of the American Indian Archive Center, Washington, DC.

drafting a Navajo rehabilitation plan. The Navajo Tribal Council wrote a letter to congressional representatives demanding a plan that was “prepared for the permanent rehabilitation of the Navaho people to a way of life in which they will be completely self-sustaining and in due time will require no hope, no assistance from anyone.”<sup>35</sup>

From the earlier years of the economic crisis, the Navajos and U.S. officials understood a lack of education factored into the economic predicament. Despite these realizations, the damage was already done. The U.S. government had failed to support Navajo education properly for at least eighty years. The 1868 treaty had promised a new schoolhouse and a teacher for every thirty Navajo children, but the government had failed to supply this.<sup>36</sup> The Division of Education officials understood that without proper English skills the Navajo would be limited in employment opportunities.

In 1933, a suggested plan for Navajo education services was created by the Superintendent of the Navajo Vocational School Fort Wingate, E.B. Dale. The rehabilitation plan was based on the present needs and situation existing on the Navajo reservations. The plan was almost entirely vocational and did not attempt to follow the usual system in use among white communities.<sup>37</sup> Dale’s plan focused on using Navajo

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<sup>35</sup> Correspondence from Sam Ahkeah and Zhealy Tso to John Taber, Chairman of Appropriations Committee House of Representatives, 19, March, 1948, NMAI. AC.10, Box 113, Folder Navajo (Arizona) 1948, Records of the National Congress of American Indians, 1933-1990, National Museum of American Indians Archive Center, Washington, DC.

<sup>36</sup> Department of the Interior, Office of Indian Affairs, “The Navajo Treaty 1868,” by Charles J. Kappler, *Laws and Treaties Vol II*, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1904), 1017. “The necessity of education is admitted, especially of such of them as may be settled on said agricultural parts of this reservation, and they therefore pledge themselves to compel their children, male and female, between the ages of six and sixteen years, to attend school; and it is hereby made to the duty of the agent for said Indians to see that this stipulation is strictly complied with; and the United States agrees that, for every thirty children between said ages who can be induced or compelled to attend school a house shall be provided, and a teacher competent to teach the elementary branches of English education shall be furnished, who will reside among said Indians, and faithfully discharge his or her duties as a teacher.”

<sup>37</sup> E.B. Dale, “A Suggested Plan of Educational Service for the Navajo Reservation,” (Washington, DC: Department of the Interior, 1933), 11.

culture to teach Navajo children labor skills, agriculture skills, and English. Dale believed the failure of Indian education was on the part of English-speaking instructors. He aimed for Navajos to receive instruction in their native language.<sup>38</sup> These ideals followed suit with Progressive Era reformers and educators. In 1936, President of the Progressive Education Association, Willard W. Beatty, became commissioner of Indian Education, and like Dale, promoted a Navajo education plan aimed to address key issues in the Navajo community: economic instability. To educate and address these concerns Beatty used children's literature as a tool to shape Navajo children into assimilated American adults capable of economic proficiency.

Navajo children's books were written throughout the Navajo Economic Crisis from the 1930s into the 1950s as a product of BIA education policy alongside federal policy for Navajo rehabilitation. Beatty's and Ann Clark's *Indian Life Readers* collection is one example of Navajo children's literature. New education policy encouraged incorporating Native language and culture into the classroom and Beatty argued that, "Native American education should enrich the Native way of life in the face of inevitable contacts with the outside world."<sup>39</sup> Navajo children would need skills that every American needed to possess to be successful in "inevitable contacts." Like American children, they needed to read, write, and speak English, to compete in a capitalist economy.

Work and economics played an important role in Indian schools. From 1944 to 1951, the primary objectives of Indian schools included aiding students in analyzing the

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<sup>38</sup> Dale, E.B, "A Suggested Plan of Educational Service for the Navajo Reservation," (Washington, DC: Department of the Interior, 1933),11.

<sup>39</sup> Watras, "Progressive Education and Native American Schools, 1929-1950."(2004): 95.

economic resources on their reservation and giving students an understanding of the social and economic world around them.<sup>40</sup> The Navajo economic and cultural world centered around sheep. Before the Livestock Reduction Program the Navajo had remained self-sufficient for nearly two centuries due to pastoralism and agriculture.<sup>41</sup> The Dinés' own creation narrative casts sheep in an important role. In the Blessingway, one of the most important components to the Navajo creation story, sheep and other livestock were created between the land of the Four Sacred Mountains. Blessingway recounts the Navajo creation story by chronicling the life of Changing Woman, the most admired of the Diyin Diné.<sup>42</sup> Changing Woman gave life first to sheep and through the process of their birth, plant life sprouted and filled the Earth. Sheep played a pivotal role in Navajo culture from their creation story to the Navajo family structure. The Navajo people's nomadic lifestyle arguably began with their pastoral ways in the early eighteenth century.<sup>43</sup> The Navajo way of life relied heavily on herding sheep and other livestock to be a source of food, wool, and income.

The significance of sheep did not go unnoticed by the BIA. Bureau of Indian Affairs writers incorporated sheep into Navajo children's books. The most popular of the Navajo children's books, *The Little Herder* series, emphasized sheep culture and taught students how to make it profitable. *The Little Herder in the Spring, Winter, Summer, and Fall* is a four-part collection chronicling the life of a young Navajo herder girl through the changing seasons. Written by Ann Clark, these depictions of herding life were

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<sup>40</sup> Beatty, *Education for Cultural Change: Selected Articles from Indian Education 1944-51*,13.

<sup>41</sup> Marsha Weisiger and William Cronon, *Dreaming of Sheep in Navajo Country*. (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2009),4.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid,75.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid,115.

dramatically different from conditions on the reservation. Due to mass erosion and the threat to the Hoover Dam, the federal government, in 1934 started a stock reduction program.<sup>44</sup> Navajo sheep, horses, and goats were slaughtered. The largest number of slaughtered animals were the traditional Navajo sheep, the Churro. Killing off the Churro damaged the Navajo economy severely. They could not survive without herds, so, the federal government introduced a breed of sheep more standard to market demand.<sup>45</sup> The sheep in Clark's children stories were standard government issued sheep with no connection to Navajo culture. This disconnect between real Navajo culture and an interjection of a BIA concocted culture was based purely on capitalist ideals.

“Of all the kinds of sheep, Navaho sheep give the best wool for weaving.” These words laid out a continuous theme in *The Little Herder* series. Clark foregrounded the profitability of weaving. Clark discussed weaving at length, taking Navajo children through the process of sorting and cleaning wool, carding and spinning, and then dyeing and weaving. Weaving was a gendered job within Navajo culture. Women wove blankets and rugs for their homes. Navajo women had sold their products to U.S. army men in 1863 when the Navajo were marched across New Mexico.<sup>46</sup> The U.S. textile market in the 1930s and 1940s perfected “Navajo” themed products with the uniformity of mass production. The typical Navajo woman would earn between three to seven cents an hour

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<sup>44</sup> Hal Cannon, “Sacred Sheep Revive Navajo Tradition, For Now,” *Weekend Sunday Edition*, National Public Radio, <https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=127797442>.

<sup>45</sup> Cannon, “Sacred Sheep Revive Navajo Tradition, For Now,” <https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=127797442>

<sup>46</sup> Kirk, “The Navaho’s Tragedy,” (1948):177. Cont’d The Long Walk, took place in the 1860s. The United States Army marched Navajos and other Native American groups across New Mexico to a reservation, Bosque Redondo. Along the way of the 10,000 marched nearly one third died.



for their tedious weaving efforts.<sup>47</sup> While rugs and blankets were not the most lucrative, it still offered opportunities. Navajo children needed to be taught weaving so that they could find jobs weaving outside the household. In Hilgard Thompson's 1944 *Navajo Series: Primer*, sales of blankets and rugs are significant enough to be illustrated. From the *Navajo Series: Primer* children learn that trading post owners buy sheep, wool, rugs, and pinyon nuts.<sup>48</sup> Selling to store owners was a drastic transition from the occasional selling or trading of a rug to a U.S. Army soldier in 1863. Store owners represented a more American form of capitalism than Navajo had practiced in the 1800s. There were now stores that would be permanent fixtures in their communities unlike the occasional presences of white soldiers at times of unrest or government control. Instead of trading with soldiers, some Navajo became trapped in a cycle of debt and credit similar to the consumer culture of white Americans.

The introduction of weaving to children's books allowed the BIA to stick to its Progressive Era education goals. Teaching Native Americans using their culture, the BIA was able to reinforce how to sell and compete in the American marketplace. Similarly, weaving, silversmithing and turquoise mining were also used in children's books as examples of jobs using local economic resources. Clark depicts the father in several different occupational roles in each *Little Herder* book. Using local economic resources, Navajo fathers could be jewelry makers, ranchers, builders, and most importantly, sheep farmers. To achieve success, Navajos had to learn to differentiate themselves within the

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<sup>47</sup>Kirk Brothers Indian Traders, *Urgent Navaho Problems*, (Gallup, New Mexico, na, 1946), NMAI.AC.10, Box 113, Folder Navajo (Arizona) 1946-1947, Records of the National Congress of American Indians, 1933-1990, National Museum of the American Indian Archive Center, Washington, DC.

<sup>48</sup> Hildegard Thompson, *Navajo Life Series: Primer*, (Washington, DC: United States Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs-Division of Education. Interior, 1949), 16.

white American marketplace by creating products geared toward the American consumer jewelry and wool rugs.<sup>49</sup>



Figure 1. Navajo Series: Primer, Van Tsihnajinnie, Andrew, (1949),16.

The official position of the U.S. Office of Indian Affairs was to sponsor education in ways that would help Native Americans adjust to modern life and contribute to modern civilization.<sup>50</sup> Native Americans could contribute by working and building the capitalist economy. To ensure a smoother transition to the workforce, Navajo children needed to understand American gender roles. The Office of Indian Affairs had been teaching gender roles for years through handbooks such as 1911's *Some Things That Girls Should Know How to Do: And Hence Should Learn How To Do When In School*. The manual informed OIA educators how to teach gendered skills to Indian girls. Cooking, sewing, and shopping along with other girl-skills were lessons in the manual. Young girls needed to understand how to shop for kitchen supplies, discriminate between the values of goods of different quality, and how to pay for household items. Educators needed to teach girls “how not to pay \$36 for a \$22.50 tailored suit.”<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Erika Bsumek *Indian Made: Navajo Culture in the Marketplace, 1868-1860*, (Kansas City, KA: University of Kansas Press, 2008),210.

<sup>50</sup> Watras, “Progressive Education and Native American Schools, 1929-1950,” (2004):90

<sup>51</sup> Office of Indian Affairs, *Some Things Girls Should Know How To Do and Hence Should Learn How To Do When in School*, (Washington Government Printing Office, Washington, DC, 1911),5.

Later children's literature followed a more disguised lesson on gender. The *Little Herder* series taught Navajo children not only how to work, but also the American Post-World War II stance on gendered labor. Women were now expected to stay at home and take care of the kids while the husband went to work to support the family financially.<sup>52</sup> The *Little Herder* series supports American gender roles by correlating each character with an assigned gender specific job. The little girl and her mother complete all the household tasks, along with cooking and cleaning. The only other jobs the women in this story can perform are weaving, and partially aiding with herding the sheep and lambs. American gender roles are further pressed onto Native children through men's control of women's herding jobs in the series. Navajo society is matrilineal. Sheep inheritance passes through the line of women in a given family; women own their sheep and the products of their sheep.<sup>53</sup> Clark does not emphasize the key role Navajo women play in sheep herding. Instead, the mother plays a subordinate role to her husband throughout the four books of the *Little Herder* series. "All day I heard my mother's sheep," indicates briefly the mother's ownership of the family's sheep.<sup>54</sup> The only role the daughter plays in herding is her controlled trip to the watering hole, "From the corral we go to the waterhole and through the arroyo to the sage bush and back again."<sup>55</sup> Clark's form of Navajo sheep herding is male dominated with women only briefly being allowed to herd

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<sup>52</sup> American Women! A Celebration of Our History, "From Fifties to Feminism." (Accessed May 5, 2018.) <http://www.hoover.archives.gov/exhibits/AmericanWomen/fities-feminism/index.html>.

<sup>53</sup> Gary Witherspoon, "Sheep in Navajo Culture and Social Organization," *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 75, No. 5 (1973): 1441-1447

<sup>54</sup> Ann Clark and Hoke Denetsoie, *Little Herder in Spring*, (Washington, DC: U.S. Office of Indian Affairs Bureau of Indian Affairs- Division of Education, 1942) and Ann Clark, *The Little Herder in Spring*, (Washington, DC: United States Department of the Interior Bureau of Indian Affairs-Division of Education, 1940), 43.

<sup>55</sup> Clark, *The Little Herder in Spring*, 43.

over short, controlled distances. Though Navajo women contributed more time and labor to sheep herding than Clark depicts in her books, Clark attributes work such as sheep herding, constructing fences, performing hard labor, and sales to men.

Raising sheep played a pivotal role in most BIA commissioned Navajo children's tales. Herding and selling sheep were carefully taught skills because of their importance to Navajo economic sustainability. A typical herding day is described in Mabel Friend's 1951 children's book *A Day with Hoskie and Deshab*, "Hoskie and Desbah like to go with the sheep. They take the sheep up on the mountain. The grass is pretty and green up there. They ride Black-Pony. Smokey helps drive the sheep. They take their lunch and stay with the sheep all day."<sup>56</sup> Friend depicts the task of herding as a fun afternoon with sunshine, lunch, and friends; a great time for young Navajo to play and enjoy their work. Friend's story ends with the main characters watering their sheep herd and heading off into the sunset. Clark's *Little Herder* series takes children on a longer journey across four seasons of herding. Clark depicts feeding, watering, building stables and selling sheep and lambs in her work. A 1958 Navajo children's book entitled *Billy Black Lamb*, despite not having any human Navajo characters, still depicts sheep ranching as little Billy Black Lamb plays in the fields while he should be grazing like his mother.<sup>57</sup> The end of Billy's story is the lamb coming to terms with how he should act during the grazing season. The incorporation of herding into classroom reading material followed E.B. Dale's education

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<sup>56</sup> Mabel Friend, *A Day with Hoskie and Desbah*, (Washington, DC: Department of the Interior Bureau of Indian Affairs- Division of Education, 1951), 7.

<sup>57</sup> Caroline H. Breedlove, *Billy Black Lamb*, (Washington, DC: United States Department of the Interior Bureau of Indian Affairs-Division of Education, 1958)

rehabilitation plan. Herding fit directly into the agricultural vocational training Dale suggested for the Navajo.

Herding was placed with emphasis in the Navajo reader collections. Books in the collection such as *The Little Man's Family* series and *The Navajo Life* series depicted either a portion of the herding process or the selling of lamb and sheep. Dale's reservation day schools provided education for grades one to six as a foundation to build on more advanced vocational programs. Students participated in agriculture, livestock, homemaking, arts and crafts, occupations, and health and hygiene activities.<sup>58</sup> The hope for future stability rested in the hands of Navajo children. BIA officials found it imperative that Navajo Children would be able to contribute and navigate the world around them through the means they held, such as access to sheep, lamb, and the trading post.

For BIA writers it was essential for herding to entertain and teach Navajo children because the economic future of the Navajo depended on it. To capture their attention, children were introduced to a motley crew of characters like Billy Black Lamb and the friendly white store owner. The white male store owner is the most important of all the stories' characters because he represented wealth, the marketplace, and a respected white American masculine presence. The friendly white store owner or trading post owner appeared in several children's books, often at the climax of the story. *The Little Herder* series depicts a friendly white store owner in each of the four books. Clark names the trading post owner "Hosteen White Man." Hosteen, often found in the Navajo language

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<sup>58</sup> Dale, "A Suggested Plan of Educational Service for the Navajo Reservation," 11.

as Hastiin, is the Navajo term to respectfully address a man: Mr.<sup>59</sup> The phrase also refers to First Man or Áłtsé Hastiin to whom the Navajo people were born, in the Navajo creation story<sup>60</sup> The name choice clearly provides the white store owner with a sense of authority and respect. To make Navajo children comfortable with the idea of “Hosteen White Man,” Clark describes him as a keeper of intriguing goods and delicious candies. Clark writes, “he has red stick candy that he keeps just for me. Hosteen White Man at the trading post is such a good man. Sometimes, I forget he is not one of The People.”<sup>61</sup> Clark like many educators before her wanted to depict the white man, the key to monetary success for so many Navajo families, as a friend.

Commissioned Navajo children’s literature from the 1930s through the 1950s uses sheep culture as a tool for teaching capitalism in other ways. One essential part of lessons on capitalism was selling. Selling is a pivotal component of American capitalism, so, Clark devoted a chapter of each book in her *Little Herder* series to selling at the trading post

In his wagon my father drives to the trading post. He takes the lambs and he takes me, too. He wants me to know about selling. He tells me that sometimes he trades the lambs, and sometimes he gives them in payment for a debt. This time he will sell them to the trader. When we get to the trading post the trader looks at the lambs. Then he tells my father how much he will pay. I wonder if the lambs like

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<sup>59</sup> “The Tony Hillerman Portal: An Interactive Guide to the Life and Work of Tony Hillerman,” University of New Mexico Libraries, <http://ehillerman.unm.edu/#sthash.vEp8B71Z.dpbs>, (Accessed March 8, 2019).

<sup>60</sup> Traci Brynne Voyles, *Wastelanding: Legacies of Uranium Mining in Navajo Country*, (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2015),133.

<sup>61</sup> Clark, Ann, *The Little Herder*,14.

to have my father sell them to the trader. My father sells the lambs for hard round money to Hosteen White Man at the trading post. Then he chooses cans of food to put into his wagon, and he gives Hosteen White Man some of the round hard money back again. My father calls this selling, but I think it is a game they play together, Hosteen White Man and my father at the trading post. My father likes this game of selling. He did not tell me, but, somehow, I know that he likes it.<sup>62</sup>

Selling in Clark's chapter gives Navajo children an illustrated picture of how selling equaled access to food, goods, and most importantly money. Selling is also turned into a fun game between Native and white man, but the dependence of the Navajo community and economy on selling in the white man's store is far from a game.

Clark's depiction of selling and trading at the trading post teaches Navajo children several different important lessons including a lesson about store debt. Stores like the Wide Ruin Trading Post owned by Sally and Bill Lippincott, ran on a cycle of trade, credit, and debt. When the Navajos needed money or credit and had nothing to trade, the Lippincotts would allow "the Indian to bring in anything of value that he had and pawn it."<sup>63</sup> Pawning contributed to a continuous cycle that left Navajos with a loan to pay and without their items of value. Navajos pawned items so frequently at the Wide Ruin Trading Post that the Lippincotts would tease customers by tying a pawn tag on their baby's leg and offering a price.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Clark, *The Little Herder*, 15.

<sup>63</sup> Sallie R Wagner, *Wide Ruins: Memories from A Navajo Trading Post*, (Albuquerque, NM: The University of New Mexico Press, 1997), 10.

<sup>64</sup> Wagner, *Wide Ruins*, 11

Trading post properties did not need to know the Navajo as flesh and blood people but commercial commodities. In order to maintain a lucrative business, trading post owners made it their business to know the approximate size of each family's flock to assign store credit.<sup>65</sup> In the spring, store owners collected the family's flock as payment of debt, and then the cycle of credit and debt continued to the next season. A continuous cycle of debt kept Navajos in economic turmoil. A lesson in repaying debt taught Navajo children how to use their economic resources to not only make a profit but to earn store credit and pay back debt. In the same sense, the presence of lending and debt establishes to Navajo children that the cycle of debt is okay if it is contained.

Teaching a poor nation the value of capitalism and the benefits of selling and trading was only a portion of the BIA's goals of assimilating Navajo children. Access to better-paying jobs demanded Navajo people be able to speak English instead of their native language. The policy of repression of Native languages had come to an end in 1934 under Commissioner of Indian Affairs John Collier, but white officials still manipulated and used Native language to their advantages. Beatty used Navajo language as a tool to encourage and reinforce Navajo children's English skills. Beatty boasted, "Strange as it may seem, native language is more likely to contribute to the child's intellectual growth and ultimate mastery of English than its suppression."<sup>66</sup> Bilingual readers allowed BIA educators to mask the conversion of Navajo children into English speakers. Beatty boasted that Native American communities who resisted the use of

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid,9

<sup>66</sup> Willard W. Beatty, *Education for Cultural Change: Selected Articles from Indian Education 1944-51*. (Washington, DC: Department of the Interior Bureau of Indian Affairs, 1953), 147



English now were, “requesting instruction in English for adults as well as children.”<sup>67</sup>  
“Psychologically, [the BIA] had won a great advantage in the schooling of Indians.”<sup>68</sup>  
Beatty’s goal was to produce Navajo children who could speak and think in English.  
Fluency in English would open the job market for Navajos to work in a variety of skill-  
based jobs.

World War Two put Americans to work in the booming wartime industry; fifteen thousand Navajos worked off the reservation.<sup>69</sup> The number of Navajos active in wartime industry jobs could have been greater, but literacy rates barred many from working. The U.S. government, however, did alter their stance on literacy and English proficiency to take advantage of untapped labor forces like the Navajo. During World War Two it became customary to hire nineteen Navajo men that could not speak English, and a twentieth man who was bilingual in order to be an interpreter.<sup>70</sup> The Indian Citizenship Act of 1924 made Navajos U.S. citizens, without the right to vote, but unprotected against the draft. Some Navajo volunteered to serve while others were drafted; a total of 2,693 Navajos registered to serve in February, 1942.<sup>71</sup>

Late February, 1942, World War One veteran Philip Johnston and Communication Officer Major James E. John gathered together a select group of Navajo men to create the Navajo Code Talkers.<sup>72</sup> More than four hundred Navajos were recruited as Code Talkers throughout the Second World War. The Code Talkers allowed the U.S.

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<sup>67</sup> Beatty, *Education for Cultural Change*, 146

<sup>68</sup> Ibid, 146

<sup>69</sup> Kirk, “The Navaho’s Tragedy,” 178.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid, 178

<sup>71</sup> Kenneth Townsend, *World War II and the American Indian*, (Albuquerque, NM: The University of New Mexico, 2000), 62.

<sup>72</sup> Townsend, *World War II and the American Indian*, 145.

military to take full advantage of the Navajo language.<sup>73</sup> They were used against America's Japanese enemies, devastating them with the inability to translate the language. While the Navajo served their country using their native tongue, back home their children, like the Japanese, were having the language used against them.

World War II ended in 1945, and the standards for workplace literacy and fluency in English went back to pre-war standards. Navajo lost their jobs off the reservation, and their economy plummeted back to resemble the days of The Great Depression.<sup>74</sup> World War II did not permanently solve the Navajos economic issues. The Navajos went back to economic turmoil, the federal government had to further economic rehabilitation efforts. Coming to terms with what exactly these rehabilitation plans would look like was a difficult task to grapple with. The federal government was challenged by numerous outside advocates and the Navajo Tribal Council. Each group insisted they held the answers to solve the Navajo problem.

The destitute state of the Navajo left three groups at odds: the Navajo, the BIA, and outside advocates. The commonalities between these groups were their determination to resolve the economic crisis and provide the Navajo with better education, but the beliefs about how to achieve these goals were different. Reformers believed they knew what was best for the Navajo and took whatever means necessary to advocate for their plan. Reformers and advocators referred to themselves as friends of the Navajo.<sup>75</sup> Being

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<sup>73</sup> National Museum of the American Indian, "Native Words and Native Warriors: Code Talking, Intelligence and Bravery," <https://americanindian.si.edu/static/education/codetalkers/html/chapter4.html>. (Accessed March 4, 2019).

<sup>74</sup> Kirk, "The Navaho's Tragedy," 178.

<sup>75</sup> Kim Cary Warren, *The Quest for Citizenship: African American and Native American Education in Kansas, 1880-1935*, (Chapel Hill, N.C.: The University of North Carolina Press Chapel Hill, 2010),32.

friends to Indians meant that reformers and advocates believed they held the best ideals to change the lives of Native Americans for the better. Reformer ideals were not new. Reformer groups had started to pop up across America in the 1800s. In 1883 the Indian Rights Association was established along with several other humanitarian organizations devoted to Indian progress.<sup>76</sup> Advocates and reformers had been “saving” the Indian for more than fifty years through policies of swift assimilation into mainstream American society. More than fifty years later, white reformers pushed similar agendas and spread their word through media outlets, debates, and policy to bolster their plans for saving the Navajo people.

Advocates for the Navajo came in many different forms: the chairman of the New Mexico Welfare Board, Indian traders, and national media outlets. Ruth Falkenburgh Kirk headed the New Mexico Welfare Board along with her position over the General Federation of Women’s Clubs. She was one of the biggest advocates of the Navajo. Kirk argued that the Navajo were good hard-working people that had been neglected by the U.S. government. Advocates protested that the government was more preoccupied with counting sheep than the Navajo people. Many like Kirk felt the federal government’s preoccupation with land resources overshadowed the human aspects of the Navajo economic turmoil. Advocates did not understand why the BIA was promoting an economic plan centered around natural economic resources like herding. America’s economy was running on industry, and advocates believed it was archaic for the government to expect the Navajo “to remain on reservations with uneconomic agriculture

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Warren argues that both “advocators” and “reformers” presented themselves as “friends of Indians” because they thought their work was saving Indians from themselves.

<sup>76</sup> Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 11.

and stock raising as their resource base.”<sup>77</sup> Reformers pushed the desire for Navajo to have more opportunities to live and work off the reservation. Like reformers of the 1800s Progressive Era, advocates pushed the for policies that would lead to the “assimilation and civilization of Indians.”<sup>78</sup> Advocates did not support the Indian Reorganization Act (IRA), a federal act created by Commissioner Collier, and still in place after WWII. The IRA addressed the federal governments concerns with improving Native American economies and assuring efficient political practices throughout tribal governments. Reformers viewed the IRA as a manipulation method to disguise further control of Natives by the Office of Indian Affairs. Instead, advocates pushed for quick assimilation. Kirk urged that “the Indian must be as much a part of today’s one world as other Americans, and Indian Office heads must honestly face their responsibility of encouraging the assimilation of Indians more quickly into our national life.”<sup>79</sup> Indian traders, The Kirk Brothers, also advocated for the Navajos. They dispersed informational pamphlets devoted to exposing the grievances of the Navajo. The Kirk Brothers did not promote assimilation in their advocacy materials. Instead they celebrated traditional Navajo craftsmanship.

Two common elements are found in both forms of advocacy, the dire need of the Navajo and a demand for better access to education. Kirk would go as far to accuse the Office of Indian Affairs of purposefully not educating the Navajo. There was not any record indicating the agency had ever requested or attempted to build enough schools for

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<sup>77</sup> Kirk, “The Navaho’s Tragedy,” 179

<sup>78</sup> Donald Fixico, *Bureau of Indian Affairs*, (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2012), 45

<sup>79</sup> Kirk, “The Navaho’s Tragedy,” 179

the children or provide other social services.<sup>80</sup> Advocates against assimilation did not offer a permanent solution for the Navajo problem outside of government aid.

Assimilation advocates believed Americanization was the best solution: in their eyes the Navajo understood why this was necessary and aspired to live like the rest of America. Kirk suggested the relocation and Americanization of one thousand Navajo families at the Colorado River Reservation and another thousand families could be Americanized along the banks of the San Juan River at Shiprock where 100,000 acres would be at their disposal.<sup>81</sup>

The federal government passed the Navajo-Hopi Long Range Rehabilitation Program in 1947 and designated \$25,000,000 for educational purposes: to build schools, purchase equipment, and pay for all other educational measures. Under constant pressures from the Navajo Tribal Council and outside advocates, Congress set aside the largest portion of rehabilitation funds for education. Aside from education the act promised to better utilize the resources of the Navajo and Hopi Indian Reservations to combat hunger, disease, poverty, and demoralization among community members.<sup>82</sup> The rehabilitation plan aimed to support the Navajo in creating a self-supporting economy and a self-reliant community so that they could ultimately obtain a standard of living comparable to other American citizens. The BIA accepted that for economic sustainability Navajos would need to work off the reservation, but the Navajo would live their lives on the reservation attached to their culture. To secure their vision, Congress

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid,179.

<sup>81</sup> Kirk, "The Navaho's Tragedy," 180.

<sup>82</sup> U.S. 80<sup>th</sup> Congress, *Chapter 92, Public Law 473, Navajo and Hopi Rehabilitation Plan*. PUBLIC LAWS-CHS. 89, 92-APR. 17, 19, 1950. Pg.44.

designated \$88,570,000 to rehabilitation plans. The \$85,070,000 would be devoted to rehabilitation efforts that would keep Navajo on the reservation, and only 3.5 million dollars would go to employment off the reservation.<sup>83</sup> Congress also conceded to Kirk's colonization idea and designated \$5,750,000 to the relocation and resettlement of some Navajos on the Colorado River Indian Reservation.<sup>84</sup> The rehabilitation plan would help the Navajo and would tie them to the reservation through cultural assimilation, colonization, and education. Beatty's education goals had long been in motion before the approval of Congress's rehabilitation plans, and these plans would not change the direction of Beatty's education program and the bilingual readers.

The Navajos' voiced their outrages and demands over the rehabilitation act through their Tribal Council, but despite their oppositions, the Navajo favored the planned \$25,000,000 for educating their children. In response to earlier drafts of the rehabilitation plans, the Navajo Tribal Council issued four letters to congressional members Richard J. Welch, Styles Bridges, Hugh Butler, and John Taber in 1948. The

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<sup>83</sup> U.S. 80<sup>th</sup> Congress, *Chapter 92, Public Law 473, Navajo and Hopi Rehabilitation Plan*, Pg.44-45. The distribution of the Navajo and Hopi Rehabilitation Plan was distributed as follows: (1) Soil and water conservation and range improvement work, \$10,000,000.(2) Completion and extension of existing irrigation projects, and completion of the investigation to determine the feasibility of the proposed San Juan-Shiprock irrigation project, \$9,000,000. (3) Surveys and studies of timber, coal, mineral, and other physical and human resources, \$500,000. (4) Development of industrial and business enterprises, \$1,000,000. (5) Development of opportunities for off-reservation employment and resettlement and assistance in adjustments related thereto, \$3,500,000. (6) Relocation and resettlement of Navajo and Hopi Indians (Colorado River Indian Reservation), \$5,750,000. (7) Roads and trails, \$20,000,000. (8) Telephone and radio communication systems, \$250,000. (9) Agency, institutional, and domestic water supply, \$2,500,000. 10) Establishment of a revolving loan fund, \$5,000,000. \$2,500,000.10) Establishment of a revolving loan fund, \$5,000,000. (11) Hospital buildings and equipment, and other health conservation measures, \$4,750,000. (12) School buildings and equipment, and other educational measures, \$25,000,000. (13) Housing and necessary facilities and equipment, \$820,000. (14) Common service facilities, \$500,000.

tribal council revised the rehabilitation plans in hopes that Congress would concede to their ideas. The Navajo accepted the plans for water irrigation at the San Juan River but demanded that Congress further aid them in addressing race issues with white citizens using Navajo resources. The Navajo did not want to comply with the conditions in which Congress would allow the Navajo to draft a constitution under the Wheeler-Howard Act.<sup>85</sup> The Navajo wanted Congress to authorize the drafting of a constitution by the Navajo Tribal Council after due discussion with the Navajo people. The tribal council believed that would allow the Navajo the fullest possible exercise of their powers. The tribal council chided the American government for its total failure to live up to its treaty obligations. The Navajo noted, “Children are ready and willing to go to school and long have been, and the Council has repeatedly requested compliance with Treaty provision.”<sup>86</sup> The council warned that the amount of funds would only satisfy their needs if the Federal Government fully and completely complied with the rehabilitation act.

For the Navajo, the promised progression of education was moving too slow after the passing of the 1950 rehabilitation act.<sup>87</sup> In 1953, the Tribal Council, concerned about

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<sup>85</sup> Wheeler-Howard Act is another term of the Indian Reorganization act or The Indian New Deal

<sup>86</sup> Correspondence from Sam Ahkeah and Zhealy Tso to John Taber, Chairman of Appropriations Committee House of Representatives, 19, March, 1948, NMAI. AC.10, Box 113, Folder Navajo (Arizona) 1948, Records of the National Congress of American Indians, 1933-1990, National Museum of American Indians Archive Center, Washington, DC.

<sup>87</sup> Young, Robert W, *The Navajo Year-Book of Planning in Action*, (Window Rock, Arizona: Bureau of Indian Affairs Navajo Agency, 1955), 2. The Navajo-Hopi Long Range Rehabilitation Program promised, “ With regard to education, the original intent of the Long Range Program, in terms of construction, was (1) the repair and enlargement of 8 existing boarding schools, (2) the construction of 5 new large boarding schools, and (3) the remodeling, enlargement, replacement and/or conversion of 41 day schools to boarding school basis. In terms of objective, the intent was to (1) provide sufficient educational facilities on the Navajo and Hopi Reservations to ultimately give educational opportunities to all school age Navajo and Hopi children on a boarding or day basis as circumstances might dictate, (2) to provide for elementary and vocational education of children between the ages of 12-18 years who had not previously attended school, or who were 3 or more years retarded, (3) to transfer responsibility for the education of Navajo and Hopi children

the future of its school-aged children, demanded answers from new Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Glenn L. Emmons. The Navajo had waited far too long for all their children to receive education. On March 3, 1954, the Navajo Tribal Council adopted a new resolution that would allow Commissioner Emmons to take whatever steps he deemed necessary to quickly advance universal education for all Navajo children. Commissioner Emmons initiated the Navajo Emergency Education Program, an accelerated form of the program proposed in the rehabilitation act. The primary objective of the Navajo Emergency Education program was to provide educational facilities for an additional 7,946 Navajo children by September 1954 and to raise enrollment to 22,052.<sup>88</sup> The program setup off-reservation schools and established the Regular and Special Programs.

Emmons' Special Program mirrored Beatty's 1946 Navajo Education Special Program for adolescent and young adults.<sup>89</sup> The Regular program was geared toward children under the age of ten. Regardless of target age group, all three programs were designed to produce graduates in five years and had curriculum focused on comprehension of white culture, a basic knowledge of written and spoken English, as well as the development of vocational skills needed to work outside the reservation. Bilingual readers played an important role in accomplishing program goals. The Haskell Institute of Lawrence, Kansas, was added as a Special Program school in 1954.<sup>90</sup> The

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to the public school system as rapidly as possible, and (4) to provide high school opportunities on and off the Reservation as required.

<sup>88</sup> Young, *The Navajo Year-Book of Planning in Action*, 4.

<sup>89</sup> Szasz, *Education and the American Indian*, 116.

<sup>90</sup> Young, *The Navajo Year-Book of Planning in Action*, Pg.4



Haskell Institute printed many of Beatty's children's readers that would be used throughout out countless classrooms across Native America.

For the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the education plan was a success. During the period 1951-1954, the program graduated a total of 820 students, and 46.5% of these found employment off the reservation while 12.9% were unemployed.<sup>91</sup> The Navajo also found the results of government education programs to be acceptable. The Navajo wanted the provisions for education promised to them in the 1889 treaty, and by 1955 those terms had been met. The BIA and the Navajo were complicit with federal educational goals for Navajo children to learn English proficiency and vocational skills.

Congress believed it had achieved by the mid-1960s the Navajo demanded revisions to their education system.<sup>92</sup> DINE, a group of Navajo leaders, including Chairman of the Navajo Education Committee Allen D. Yazzie, and members of the Federal Office of Economic Opportunity believed that the Navajo should have the ability to run their own schools. In 1966 the BIA agreed to allow the Navajo to have an experimental community ran school, Rough Rock Demonstration School.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>91</sup>Ibid,6

<sup>92</sup> Szasz, *Education and the American Indian*, 170.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid,171.

Employment records relative to the Special Program graduates in reference reveal the following:

96 in the armed services.....	11.7%
381 employed off the reservation.....	46.5%
66 employed on the reservation.....	8.0%
44 going on to school.....	5.0%
33 housewives (full-time) off reservation.....	4.0%
40 housewives (full-time) on reservation.....	4.87%
6 deceased.....	0.7%
7 hospital patients.....	0.85%
9 unemployed off the reservation.....	1.09%
106 unemployed on the reservation.....	12.9%
21 unknown at this time.....	4.0%

Table 1 *The Navajo Year-Book of Planning Action*, Chart configurations by Robert w. Young.

Rough Rock Demonstration School’s curriculum did not follow BIA goals to promote English language skills and familiarize Navajos with white culture. The Navajo focused on the improvement of their community economy. The school was a key resource for the community and was more useful to the Navajo as a source of employment, laundry facilities, and improvement to health and living conditions. A 1969 study conducted by the Rough Rock Board of Education reported that Navajo parents believed their form of education was better than that provided by BIA ran schools because “it was community education and tribal education.”<sup>94</sup>

Despite the Navajo run education programs of the 1960s, Beatty’s Children’s literature had already made a mark on the Navajo community. Children’s literature was uniquely designed to play at Navajo culture while executing a stealth form of cultural assimilation. Navajo children learned English and how to compete in America’s competitive capitalist economy. The Navajo wanted their children to learn and prosper, but the cost was dear. By the 1950s Navajo readers were no longer bilingual, but rather

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<sup>94</sup> Szasz, *Education and the American Indian*, 173.

printed only in English like *Billy Black Lamb* and *A Day with Hoskie and Desbah*.

Through the successful assimilation of a large portion of Navajo children before the 1960s, the BIA was able to cripple the Navajo's native language for generations to come.

### CHAPTER III - RACCON, MICE, AND THE SIOUX: CRAFTING SIOUX IDENTITY

The Sioux Indians, like the Navajo people, were a constant variable in America's Indian problem. The Sioux are a diverse group of Indian bands that formed a powerful and worthy foe of the U.S. military across the Western plains of America. Like the Navajo, the Sioux posed severe problems for the federal government to answer: a suffering economy, vocal tribal leaders, a large population, and organizational pressures. When faced with the complexities of the Sioux, the federal government tried different approaches to bring them under control, from warfare to assimilative education. Spearheading Indian education in the late 1930s, Willard W. Beatty selected the Sioux along with the Navajo as his targets for his education plans including *The Indian Life Readers Collection*. One part of Beatty's readers focuses on the Sioux. Despite the significant diversity of the many Sioux bands, Beatty and the Office of Indian Affairs (OIA) later known as the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), disregarded the complexities of the Sioux while creating educational materials. In order to create a homogenous Sioux, not only capable of mastering English but unified through American culture and one Siouan dialect, the federal government produced children's literature centered around an artificially crafted Sioux culture and devotion to spreading the Lakota dialect across Sioux country.

Sioux country is a place of complexity and diversity, and it is home to three distinct economies, three regional cultures, and two distinct dialects. Understanding the Sioux as a people takes more effort than Beatty and the BIA showed while developing educational materials for the Sioux. The Anglo-American understanding of the Sioux people has been at a surface level since their first contact. The term "Sioux" is

problematic. The label “Sioux” must account for thousands of people throughout more than seven hundred years of different histories and consistently evolving cultures.<sup>95</sup> All of the Sioux recognize that they are part of the Oceti Sakowin or the Seven Council Fires, which has been grouped according to dialect and distinct cultural traits since 1800.<sup>96</sup> The term “Council Fire” is common imagery used across Native America to identify tribal division. An example of a “council fire” includes the Three Council Fires made up by the Chippewa, Ottawa, and Potawatomi.<sup>97</sup> The Sioux Council Fires include the three subdivisions of the Sioux. The Sioux speak two different dialects, Dakota and Lakota, contained within the Siouan language family. The Sioux, in essence, according to Native scholar Gregory Gagnon, “Were really three distinct subdivisions with a tribal origin in the misty past.”<sup>98</sup> The Santee-Dakota, Yankton/Yanktonai-Dakota, and the Teton-Lakota make up the three subdivisions of the Sioux.<sup>99</sup> Subdivisions refer to the three distinct cultural differentiations between the Sioux people: the Plains culture, the river culture, and the original culture found in Minnesota. Like other Native language and culture branches, the Siouan language is spread across different Native groups outside the Sioux. The Assiniboine-Nakhóta is an example of Siouan language speakers outside the Sioux. The Assiniboine have no political affiliation with the Sioux and do not speak their

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<sup>95</sup> Gregory Gagnon, *Culture and Customs of the Sioux Indians: Culture and Customs of Native People in America*, (Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2011), xi

<sup>96</sup> Gagnon, *Culture and Customs of the Sioux Indians*, 5.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid*, 104.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid*, 1

<sup>99</sup> Gregory Gagnon. *Culture and Customs of the Sioux Indians. Culture and Customs of Native People in America*, (Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2011), 104-105 The Sioux Council Fires consist of the Sisseton, Wahpeton, Mdewakanton, and Wahpekute. These fires collectively are referred to as the Santee-Dakota; the Yankton and the Yanktonai fires, and the Teton-Lakota fire. The Sioux Council Fires represents their common language, similarities between cultures, kinship ties, and their ancestral ties to the supernatural beings that created them. The United States would recognize the Sioux Council Fires as validation for considering the Sioux one tribe.

dialects. By 1300, the Dakota and Lakota became distinct dialects of solely the Sioux people.<sup>100</sup> Along with regional cultures and dialects, the Sioux also developed three separate economies based on regional dynamics ranging from woodland fur trades to farming, fishing, and raising livestock. Regardless of the clear distinctions among Sioux subdivisions, the United States viewed the Sioux as a single tribe and often used the term Dakota as a blanket term for the Sioux. The extensive range of cultures, economies, and identities across Sioux country would become a purposefully muddled blunder in Beatty's children's literature because he attempted to homogenize the Sioux Indians, during his reign over the Education Division of the BIA.

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<sup>100</sup> Gagnon, *Culture and Customs of the Sioux Indians*, xii.

<b>Political Division and Number of Council Fires Held</b>	<b>Language Spoken and Dialect</b>	<b>Origin</b>	<b>Modern Location</b>	<b>Population Estimate</b>
Assiniboine  Not a member of Council Fires	Assiniboine (Siouan) Nakhóta Dialect	westward expansion and offshoot from the Sioux by the 1600s	Carry the Kettle Reservation, southern Saskatchewan	1780: 10,000 1904: 2,605
Yankton–Yanktonais  Two Council Fires	Siouan Dakota Dialect	westward migration from Minnesota, 1700s	Yankton and Crow Creek reservations, South Dakota; Fort Totten and Standing Rock reservations, North Dakota; Fort Peck Reservation, Montana; Oak Lake Reserve, Manitoba; Standing Buffalo Reserve, Saskatchewan.	1807: 4,300 1886: 6,883 1978: 17,626
Santee  Four Council Fires	Siouan Dakota Dialect	westward migration from region where Minnesota, Iowa, Wisconsin, and Illinois join, circa A.D. 1750–1800	South Dakota; Standing Rock Reservation, North Dakota; Fort Peck Reservation, Montana; Wood Mountain Reserve, Saskatchewan.	1780: 25,000 1930: 25,934 1978: 65,340
Teton  One Council Fire	Siouan Lakota Dialect	westward migration from Minnesota, 1700s	Cheyenne River, Lower Brule, Rosebud, and Pine Ridge reservations,	1890: 16,426 1909: 18,098 1978: 34,315

Table 2 The branches of the Sioux and the Assiniboine.<sup>101</sup>

Federally sponsored Indian education followed the words of Carlisle Indian school founder Captain Richard Henry Pratt, “Kill the Indian, Save the Man.”<sup>102</sup> Pratt

<sup>101</sup> Daniel J. Gelo, *Indians of the Great Plains*, (Boston, MA: Pearson Education, Inc., 2012), 37-38.

<sup>102</sup> “Kill the Indian, and Save the Man,” Capt. Richard H. Pratt on the Education of Native Americans. Source: Official Report of the Nineteenth Annual Conference of Charities and Correction (1892), 46–59. Reprinted in Richard H. Pratt, “The Advantages of Mingling Indians with Whites,”

believed stern assimilation was the answer to the “Indian problem.” Beatty’s progressive era ideals took another approach with aims to incorporate Indian culture into the classroom. To simultaneously “save the man” and incorporate Native culture into the classroom, Beatty chose to recognize only the Lakota dialect. Of the Sioux, the Teton Lakota is the largest of the Sioux subdivisions. The Teton Lakota division encompasses seven individual bands of Natives: the Oglala, Two Kettles, Brule, Minneconju, Blackfoot, Hunkpapa, and the Sans Arc. Despite the large population, traditionally the Lakota only politically represented one of the Seven Council Fires. The Santee-Dakota held four fires and, the Yankton and Yanktonai Dakota held two council fires.<sup>103</sup> Beatty and the Indian Service did not understand the political dynamics of the Sioux and falsely placed emphasis on the Teton Lakota. The BIA’s errors continued in the development of the Sioux portion of Beatty’s readers. Beatty’s linguistic expert Edward Kennard wrote in the back of each Sioux reader that “the Dakota language is spoken by four political bodies, Santee and Yankton by the eastern groups, Teton by the western, and Assiniboine in the northwest. They are all mutually intelligible, although there is a greater difference between the Assiniboine and the others than there is among Santee, Yankton, and Teton.”<sup>104</sup> The “greater difference” between Assiniboine and other Sioux dialects is because the Assiniboine are not Sioux Indians. Other linguistic experts do not include the Assiniboine Nakhóta as part of the Sioux and understand that the Yankton and Yanktonai

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Americanizing the American Indians: Writings by the “Friends of the Indian” 1880–1900 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973), 260–271.

<sup>103</sup> Gagnon, *Culture and Customs of the Sioux Indians*, 5-6.

<sup>104</sup> Edward Kennard, “The Development of Written Dakota,” in *The Hen of Wahpeton* by Ann Clark, (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior Bureau of Indian Affairs- Division of Education 1943), 94.



use the Dakota dialect.<sup>105</sup> Kennard recognized that the Lakota dialect was used by approximately 18,000 Teton-Sioux in 1943, but that due to the lack of printed materials before the 1940s, the Lakota dialect was not widely spread across Sioux country.<sup>106</sup> Beatty chose to promote the Lakota dialect due to its large population and to gain further control over communications with tribal officials, by having government documents translated only into Lakota. As time progressed, Beatty's goal was to publish more material for children and adults along with the preparation, distribution, and translation of important documents dealing with Indian affairs into the dialect of Lakota. The errors in Beatty and the federal government's plans left all the Sioux from Santee-Dakota, Yankton/Yanktonai-Dakota, and the Teton-Lakota Sioux lumped together, no longer differentiated by culture or dialect.

Generalization of Native Americans has impacted the portrayal of Indians in American culture. The Sioux have permanently influenced the American ideal of Plains Indians: Indian braves adorned with full headdresses and buckskin moccasins. They are strong warriors and hunters of buffalo that live in tipis and smoke peace pipes around the fire. Sadly, for Sioux children, these same absurd generalizations and stereotypes are in Beatty's Sioux readers. The Sioux portion of the *Indian Life Readers Collection* consists of seven books with tales inspired by all three branches of the Sioux. Beatty noted that books like *The Hen of Wahpeton*, a part of the readers collection were, "prepared for use

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<sup>105</sup> Gagnon, *Culture and Customs of the Sioux Indians*, xii.

<sup>106</sup> Edward Kennard, "The Development of Written Dakota," in *The Hen of Wahpeton* by Ann Clark, (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior Bureau of Indian Affairs- Division of Education, 1943),93.

in the schools of Sioux country.”<sup>107</sup> *The Hen of Wahpeton* is a tale centered around the Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate Sioux, part of the Santee division who speak the Dakota dialect. Despite the author, Ann Clark, setting the story on the Wahpeton reservation, the story is written in English and Teton-Lakota dialect. Across Sioux country, children read *The Hen of Wahpeton* on Santee-Dakota, Yankton/Yanktonai-Dakota, and Teton-Lakota reservations. A Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate child may have been excited to see their home as the setting of their reader, but their culture and dialect were not present on the pages.

Clark’s *The Hen of Wahpeton* is a prime example of the BIA’s intent to promote not only the comprehension of English, but new. Americanized ways of life. *The Hen of Wahpeton* tells the story of the War-Bonnets, a Santee-Dakota Sioux family, and their adoption of an incubator chick. The small chick devoted itself to learning English and used its reading skills to rise to fame, nearly landing a spot in the Hollywood limelight. The War-Bonnet family lived a simple life on the Wahpeton Reservation raising chickens and other livestock, similar to the real Santee-Dakota Sioux families of the 1930s through the 1950s. Things changed for the War-Bonnets when their young daughter, Bessie, was given an incubator chick by her English teacher. The War-Bonnets were in awe at Bessie’s talk of an incubator chick as if it were magic stating, "Who would have believed it! An incubator chick! Lets see it.”<sup>108</sup> To the War-Bonnets the incubator chick was foreign when compared to the black and white chickens they normally hatched. “No one knew why, and no one knew how, the incubator chick came yellow.”<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Willard W. Beatty, “Bilingual Readers,” in *The Hen of Wahpeton*, by Ann Clark, (Washington, DC: US Department of the Interior Bureau of Indian Affairs-Division of Education, 1943),90.

<sup>108</sup> Ann Clark. *The Hen of Wahpeton*. (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior Bureau of Indian Affairs- Division of Education, 1943),22.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid,23.

The family's astonishment at the idea of a yellow chicken and an incubator points to the rapid pace at which Indian Country was changing. The federal government was swiftly installing modern technology and innovative programs across Indian reservations focused on farming and conservation. Programs such as the Civilian Conservation Corps-Indian Division (CCC-ID) were set up on Sioux reservations in the 1930s, and the CCC-ID was funded until July 10, 1942. The program employed 8,405 Indians in South Dakota alone in agriculture and conservation jobs.<sup>110</sup> The program was spread across the Dakotas, Montana, Wyoming, and Nebraska. While employed with the CCC-ID, Sioux men worked with new farm and conservation equipment bought with the \$4,500,000 the program spent at the Rosebud, Standing Rock, and Pine Ridge reservations.<sup>111</sup> Programs like the CCC-ID would have made installations of egg incubators a common occurrence on Sioux reservations. Agriculture and conservation efforts were progressing so rapidly that the CCC-ID developed a special training program, the Enrollee Program, to teach the Sioux.<sup>112</sup> Native Americans had to quickly adopt or protest these changes as they were happening, but Beatty believed that the lack of translation stood in the way of the Sioux's "understanding of new opportunities" like incubation and soil erosion prevention.<sup>113</sup> For the Sioux to take advantage of all the new American techniques of farming, conservation, and policy the BIA was imposing upon them, Beatty emphasized they needed to confidently comprehend both written and spoken English.

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<sup>110</sup> Roger Bromert, "The Sioux and the Indian -CCC," *South Dakota History* Vol.8. No.4 (1978):355.

<sup>111</sup> Bromert, "The Sioux and the Indian -CCC." (1978):355.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid*,351.

<sup>113</sup> Beatty, "Bilingual Readers." in *The Hen of Wahpeton*,90.

With rapid change occurring across Indian Country and the demand of the BIA for Natives to adapt and Americanize, it was an obvious choice for Clark to place reading English at the forefront of *The Hen of Wahpeton*. The incubator chick is successful because it reads English, not because it understands Lakota or Dakota. The chick continued to learn how to read despite the negative words of her peers:

The other chicks kept on talking. They asked each other, “Whoever heard of such a thing as a chicken learning to read? Why should a chicken read a book? What does a chicken need with books? What is happening here in this chicken yard, anyway?” The yellow chick paid no attention. She just went along reading everything she could find and eating and getting' fat on the War-Bonnet supper scraps.<sup>114</sup>

Clark’s incubator chick is a champion for students who are stuck in the grey area between their American education and the cultural wisdom passed down through their elders. Beatty’s bilingual readers emphasized English in the classroom and the native tongue in the home. In this way, Beatty wrote, “the young people may help educate their parents in the use of English.”<sup>115</sup> Beatty continued to commission readers that emphasized the importance of learning English along with generalized tropes of Native American culture.

The animals depicted in Clark’s series of children’s books in the early 1940s provided examples of correct, mainstream American behavior and values for Sioux youth to mimic. Clark would write several Sioux children’s books from 1940 through 1943,

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<sup>114</sup> Clark, *The Hen of Wahpeton*,38.

<sup>115</sup> Beatty, “Bilingual Readers.” in *The Hen of Wahpeton*,90.

centered around playful animal characters learning how to read and farm, and a desperate raccoon who longed to become a real Sioux Indian. These collections of stories relied on generalized themes of Plains Indian culture, unspecific to the Sioux, and a firm conviction for displaying modern American ways. Clark's fictional Sioux children's books include *The Slim Butte Raccoon*, *The Grass Mountain Mouse*, *The Pine Ridge Porcupine*, *The Hen of Wahpeton*, and *There Still Are Buffalo*. Often Clark's children's books begin with an animal any white American would presume a Plains Indian would recognize: a chicken, a raccoon, a field mouse, a porcupine, or a buffalo. Assumed to be familiar to most Native children, these animals served as examples of correct, mainstream American behavior for young Sioux.

Clark's characters do not bicker and complain about reading English or American farming techniques, and they do not shy away from white schoolteachers and trading post owners. Instead, they embrace mainstream American culture and strive to be the best they can be. Mr. Coon the Raccoon, a native of Slim Butte, South Dakota, home to both Teton-Lakota and Yankton-Dakota Sioux, is the main character in Clark's *The Slim Butte Raccoon*.<sup>116</sup> *The Slim Butte Raccoon* provides Sioux children an example of how Americans should dress and act. Clark's story depicts an Americanized Sioux man, who the protagonist of her story, Mr. Coon, can idolize and emulate. The young raccoon dreams of living life as a real Sioux Indian. For Mr. Coon to reach his dream he must change how he looks, how he dresses, how he forages for food, and most importantly how he acts. Mr. Coon is a character that BIA teachers can use as a role model for their

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<sup>116</sup> Ann Clark, *The Slim Butte Raccoon, Paha Zizipela Wiciteglega*, (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, 1943).

Sioux students because of his ambition to be an Americanized Sioux. The raccoon in Clark's book learns how to properly raise a garden with modern equipment and emulates the proper way for a Sioux to dress. After observing the Sioux, Mr. Coon wears blue jeans, cotton button downs, sturdy boots, and dreams of owning dark black sunglasses.

Mr. Coon's perceived idea of Sioux dress does not resemble regalia worn in cultural dances or the stereotypical American ideal of Plains Indians wearing feather headdresses and buck skin moccasins. Native Americans are not frozen in time and place. Indigenous people progress with time like America has for more than two hundred years. However, the economic state of reservations across Sioux country at the time of Clark's raccoon tale left the average family scrambling for supplies and food, and the federal government hard-pressed to create rehabilitation programs. Nearly twenty years after the production of Beatty's readers, in the fall of 1960, rehabilitation plans were still being drafted for the Cheyenne River Sioux.<sup>117</sup> Given the economic turmoil surrounding Sioux country when *The Slim Butte Raccoon* was written in 1942, it is highly unlikely that a Sioux farmer would purchase sunglasses or any expensive fashionable clothing.



Figure 2. *The Slim Butte Raccoon*, Andrew Standing Soldier, pgs. 22 & 39.

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<sup>117</sup> Elizabeth Clark and David Clark, *Rehabilitation Program on the Cheyenne River Sioux Reservation*, (Philadelphia, PA: Indian Rights Association, 1961),ii.

Mr. Coon the Raccoon eagerly wants to look like the Sioux Indian. “He never did look like an Indian until one day one of the Indians wore a pair of dark glasses.”<sup>118</sup> No, the Sioux did not invent these dark glasses, and the hip modern frames were not a part of older Sioux culture. Sunglasses were a modern American trend invented by Sam Foster, as the founder of the Foster Grant firm, in 1929.<sup>119</sup> Sunglasses remained a stylish American fashion trend well into the 1940s when Clark wrote her story. The depictions of American fashion in this story is used to provide Sioux children with a modern, Americanized, and white sense of style they could emulate. The one depiction of Native regalia or fancy dress in *The Slim Butte Raccoon* is at the Sioux festival, yet all the attendees but one is in cowboy hats and blue jeans. The book uses one image of an Indian dancing in fancy dress to incorporate Sioux culture, like Beatty promised to do. The one appearance of something Sioux is easily lost amongst the book’s pages of English writing and depictions of an Americanized conception of a proper Sioux Indian.



Figure 3. *The Slim Butte Raccoon*, Andrew Standing Soldier, 30

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<sup>118</sup> Ann Clark, *The Slim Butte Raccoon. Paha Zizipela Wic'iteglea*, (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, 1943),18.

<sup>119</sup> Foster Grant Collection, “A description of the collection at Syracuse University” Syracuse University Library, [https://library.syr.edu/digital/guides/f/foster\\_grant.htm](https://library.syr.edu/digital/guides/f/foster_grant.htm), (Accessed May 6, 2019).

The era of assimilation policy ended in the 1920s, yet, in the 1940s, the BIA still wanted Sioux children to be Americanized. To achieve their goal, BIA authors took liberties in molding Sioux culture to fit their agenda. One of the liberties BIA authors took was reshaping Sioux horse culture through children's books. Horse culture would play a major part in the BIA's construction of a new Americanized Sioux identity. Through children's literature the BIA would teach Sioux children how to be a "proper" cowboy capable of trading, training, raising, and selling livestock and horses. Reading the Sioux portion of the *Indian Life Readers Collection*, it is almost impossible not to find some incorporation of horses throughout all of the children's tales. Ann Clark wrote two books devoted to Sioux horse culture: *Singing Sioux Cowboy Primer* and *Singing Sioux Cowboy Reader*. Clark's *Brave Against the Enemy*, a nonfiction book about who the Sioux people were, are, and will be, also includes a chapter about horse culture.

Horses hold a significant place within Sioux culture. By the 1750s, both the Teton-Lakota and Yankton-Dakota had acquired and incorporated horses into their hunting, trading, and gift giving traditions.<sup>120</sup> Horses allowed Sioux people to strategically use their ecosystem to support their diverse economies. Horses became an essential part of hunting the buffalo, a significant component of Sioux cultures and foodways in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The Sioux use horses in a variety of ways from buffalo hunts in earlier periods to modern giveaways. Giveaways are public demonstrations of generosity that are held in high regard in Sioux culture.<sup>121</sup> The Sioux would hold giveaways at wacipis or powwows, winners would be given a carved

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<sup>120</sup> Gagnon, *Culture and Customs of the Sioux Indians*, 117-118.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid*, 125.



horsestick that later would be traded for their prize. Given the importance of the horse to the Sioux, it was practical for Clark to incorporate the animal into her books. The goal of these readers was not to celebrate horses and Sioux culture, but instead to teach children the economic benefits of horses.

Learning to use horses for profit was an important skill for Sioux children to learn because of the severe economic problems in Sioux country. Economic turmoil was spreading across Sioux country throughout the 1930s and into the 1960s. The federal government launched rehabilitation plans to promote education, conservation, and better economic conditions on reservations. Severe poverty in Sioux country in the late 1930s led to the first round of rehabilitation plans initiated on Sioux reservations in South Dakota. Records collected through support of South Dakota governor Tom Berry in 1935 and 1936 reported that the Sioux owned close to seven million acres of low quality land and had a yearly family income around four hundred and forty dollars, of which 90% of family funds came from government aid.<sup>122</sup> Though a large portion of the Sioux were living off of federal aid, the federal government's rehabilitation programs only applied to those who signed on to the IRA or Indian Reorganization Act. The Yankton-Dakota refused to sign the IRA because of the limitations and supervisions it placed on tribal governments. Tribal actions and constitutions written under the 1934 IRA required approval by the Office of Indian Affairs.<sup>123</sup> The federal government pressured Native groups to sign on, or they would not receive much-needed federal aid. The Yankton-

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<sup>122</sup> Bromert, "Sioux Rehabilitation Colonies: Experiments in Self-Sufficiency, 1936-1942," (1984):33.

<sup>123</sup> Richmond L. Clow, "The Indian Reorganization Act and the Loss of Tribal Sovereignty: Constitutions on the Rosebud and Pine Ridge Reservations," *Great Plains Quarterly* Vol.7, No.2, (1987):125.

Dakota pursued the lesser of two evils, in their eyes, and chose instead to embrace American capitalism over the Indian Reorganization Act in order to retain their tribal sovereignty. In 1938, a group of Sioux families formed a corporation called the Rising Hail Cooperative Development Association on the Yankton Reservation. Despite the guidelines of the IRA, the federal government made a special exception for the Yankton-Dakota's company and gave them federal assistance.<sup>124</sup> Federal aid could be used to purchase farming equipment, livestock, and land. In 1938, the Yankton borrowed \$8,000 from the federal government and by 1942, the Sioux corporation had created a stable economy and owned 200 cattle, 180 hogs, 30 horses, 900 chickens, and their annual cash income was roughly \$13,000.<sup>125</sup> The economic success of the Yankton would not continue, and their economy would return to shambles before the late 1940s. Despite the efforts of Sioux communities to engage in capitalist agribusiness enterprises, Sioux economies were still not stabilizing in the late 1940s and 1950s. In response, the federal government continued rehabilitation efforts and teaching the future leaders of the Sioux, the children, skills they needed to make a profit and sustain life on the reservation. This included successfully using horses in a profitable way.

In Clark's Sioux children's books, horses are used not as war ponies, nor for buffalo hunts, or giveaways, but as lucrative tools. Between 1945 and 1947, Clark released two children's books under the management of Willard Beatty: *Singing Sioux Cowboy Primer* and *Singing Sioux Cowboy Reader*. Primers served as partners to Beatty's readers. They were a shorter and easier versions of the readers that teachers

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<sup>124</sup> Bromert, "Sioux Rehabilitation Colonies: Experiments in Self-Sufficiency, 1936-1942," (1984):39.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid,40.

could use to ease students into reading. Clark's primer first introduces Sioux children to the concept of using horses as lucrative farming tools. Horses are used as work horses that pull the family's wagons. The point of having work horses, Clark shows, is their ability to complete work fast under any conditions. In the story, the main protagonist, is a young Teton-Lakota boy who insists that his horses can pull his family's heavy wagon "in the rain, they pull it in the wind."<sup>126</sup> The Sioux incorporated the horses into their culture prior to involvement with the BIA, but the government viewed their uses of horses obsolete.

As the primer progresses Clark discusses the most important use for horses: aiding with cattle. Clark demonstrates through her story how horses could be used to herd cattle, to round up cattle for branding, to rope stray cattle, and to aid in harvesting hay to feed livestock. Cattle had become an important source of food and income for the Sioux after their introduction by the U.S. government through special programs. Due to the importance of cattle to Sioux, economic rehabilitation plans set aside thousands of dollars to purchase and maintain livestock. Given the immense value horses added to Sioux farms and cattle ranching, naturally Clark's books taught children how to properly care for horses. Sioux children learn from Clark's readers how to create a barn capable of safely housing horses and how to feed and water horses according to season. Most of *Singing Sioux Cowboy Reader* is devoted to teaching Sioux children precisely and repetitively exactly how to raise their horses and cattle. Some instances in the readers are used to grab the attention of children through short snippets of a fun day at the rodeo, but

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<sup>126</sup> Ann Clark, *Singing Sioux Cowboy Primer*, (Washington, DC: US Department of the Interior Bureau of Indian Affairs- Division of Indian Affairs,1945),11.

Clark's nonfiction book *Brave Against the Enemy* is mostly reserved for the "light hearted" nature and social use of horses by the Sioux.

*Brave Against the Enemy* was written by Clark and edited by Beatty in 1944. The book was not written as part of the *Indian Life Readers* collection, but as a nonfiction book discussing the Sioux. The book was created for a majority-white audience and captures readers through photography. Through an interview style of storytelling, Clark introduces white American children to the Sioux. The real stories captured in this book grasp the root of the problem of Clark's interpretation of Sioux horse culture. Clark's interpretation of the relationship between Sioux and horses does not represent the depth of how significant horses are to Sioux identity. In an account of village elders, horses are regarded with high esteem as older men recount painting their war ponies, taking part in rodeos, and horse raids on the Plains. Black Buffalo, a respected village elder, is the storyteller of Clark's book. Black Buffalo represents the Native view of the Sioux that is not Americanized. He still taught his children and grandchildren the ways of the Sioux in the 1940s. Black Buffalo believed Sioux men "should know what it meant to be a Lakota!"<sup>127</sup> Part of knowing what it meant to be a Sioux, Black Buffalo believed, was understanding the Sioux's relationship with horses. Black Buffalo taught the young Sioux boys who were surrounding him at a campfire:

Of the taming of the wild horses, not breaking them as the modern cowboy does it, but taming them, making them a part of a man's life and his heart and his mind.

He told how the wild colts were captured for the small boys. He described how

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<sup>127</sup> Ann Clark and Helen M. Post, *Brave Against the Enemy*, (Washington, DC: The Department of the Interior Bureau of Indian Affairs-Division of Education 1944),28.

these small boys played with them, ran with them, even swam with them in the rivers. As the boy grew, so did the colt. They became a part of each other with understanding and trust.<sup>128</sup>

Horses meant more to the Sioux than what Clark's children's books could depict. As the Sioux Americanized how they used horses progressed, Sioux did not forget how important the horses are to them. While the BIA wanted Sioux children to use and accept the American uses and ideals of horses, Sioux parents and grandparents wanted their children to learn about how the Sioux traditionally used horses. For the Sioux horses are more than modes of transportation or a living plow. They are both a means of economic stability, and a part of their culture and identity, stretching back two hundred years prior to Beatty, Clark, and the BIA's ideals. The BIA would justify their ideals through any means, including using Native American artists. The federal Works Progress Administration would be used to employ Native American artist to illustrate Beatty's *Indian Life Readers Collection*.

To justify their views of Sioux culture and provide, in the view of the federal government, the gift of monetary success, the BIA commissioned Sioux artists to illustrate Clark's books. Part of Commissioner of Indian Affairs John Collier's Indian New Deal put Native American artists to work under the Work Progress Administration (WPA). Sioux artist Andrew Standing Soldier worked as a muralist and a children's book illustrator. Standing Soldier illustrated many of Clark's Sioux readers, including *The Slim Butte Raccoon*, *The Grass Mountain Mouse*, *There Still are Buffalo*, *Singing Sioux*

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<sup>128</sup> Clark and Post, *Brave Against the Enemy*, 28.

*Cowboy*, and *The Hen of Wahpeton*. Standing Soldier also was commissioned to do several works outside of his children's illustrations for the BIA. In 1939, he was commissioned to paint the mural in the lobby of the new Federal Post Office at Blackfoot, Idaho, on the Fort Hall Reservation.<sup>129</sup> Beatty saw Standing Soldier as an artist the Sioux could take pride in, and he wrote a glowing artist bio in the back of every Sioux reader in his collection. Beatty noted that "Andrew Standing Soldier is a 22-year-old full blood Sioux Indian who has had no formal instruction in art."<sup>130</sup> Beatty needed Standing Soldier to further validate that his readers were incorporating true Sioux culture within their pages. To his mind, nothing could be more authentic than illustrations drawn by a full-blooded Sioux. Andrew Standing Soldier was more than Beatty's generic terms could define, more than a "full blood." Standing Soldier was a young artist of the Oglala, a branch of the Teton-Lakota Sioux. He grew up and attended school on the Pine Ridge Reservation and painted in a way that captured both the simplicity and complexity of the places and people he depicted. Despite his talent and later work, while working with Clark, Standing Soldier was beholden to Beatty and the BIA. Like his BIA commissioned murals, *The Arrival Celebration* and *The Round-Up*, Standing Soldier's illustrations depicted Indian peoples who had integrated American Influences into their lives.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> Williard W. Beatty, "The Artist," In *The Hen of Wahpeton*, by Ann Clark, (Washington, DC: The Department of the Interior Bureau of Indian Affairs- Division of Education, 1943),92.

<sup>130</sup> Beatty, "The Artist." in *The Hen of Wahpeton*, by Ann Clark,92

<sup>131</sup> Meghan Navarro, "Indians at the Post Office Native Themes in New Deal-Era Murals: *The Arrival Celebration* and *The Round Up*," Smithsonian National Postal Museum. <https://postalmuseum.si.edu/indiansatthepostoffice/mural1.html> (Accessed May 13, 2019).



Figure 4. *The Arrival Celebration and The Round-Up* by Andrew Standing Soldier, Oglala Lakota Nation, Blackfoot, Idaho Post Office, Emerson, Jimmy Emerson, Smithsonian National Postal Museum.

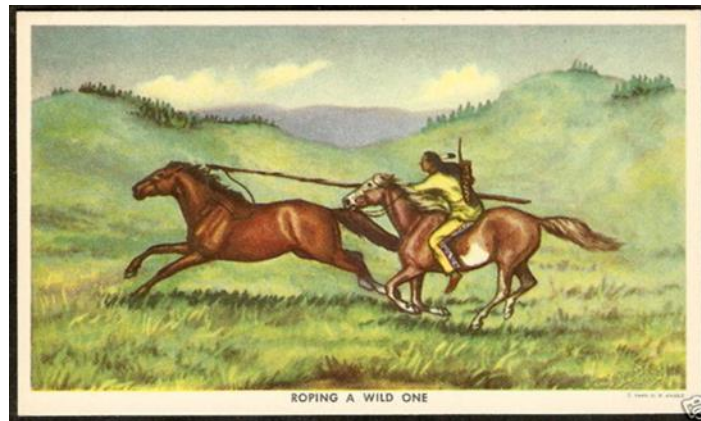
Comparing Standing Soldier's later projects outside the influence of the BIA, it is easy to see the federal government's control over how the artist depicted Sioux life. Standing Soldier's work commissioned by the federal government depicted Americanized Indians. His children's books illustrations and murals involved Indians dressed in jeans, bonnets, and frilly dresses. When looking at Standing Soldier's post office mural it is indiscernible whether the painting is of Native Americans and not whites. Standing Soldier incorporated few instances of Native culture into his BIA commissioned murals and illustrations, but these brief instances do not compare to the rich colorful paintings the young artist creates apart from the BIA.

Standing Soldier's own style aside from his commissioned BIA work were well executed paintings of Sioux life across the Pine Ridge Reservation.<sup>132</sup> While Standing Soldier was illustrating children's books for the BIA in the 1940s, he also sold printings of his private work to C.E. Engle publishing company. C.E. Engle published a collection

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<sup>132</sup> "Andrew Standing Soldier," Akta Lakota Museum and Cultural Center, <http://aktalakota.stjo.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=8784>, (Accessed June 2, 2019).

of postcards featuring Standing Soldier's oil paintings. The post cards were colorful displays of Sioux culture on the American Plains. Standing Soldier's post cards are a clear celebration of his pride in his Oglala Sioux heritage that he could only freely display outside of the BIA's influence. As a commissioned artist, Standing Soldier had to paint what he was paid to; his work outside the BIA allowed him to have full artistic expression.



*Figure 5. Roping A Wild One, by Andrew Standing Soldier, printed by C.E. Engle, 1949.*



*Figure 6. Ready to Move by Andre Standing Soldier, printed by C.E. Engle, 1949.*



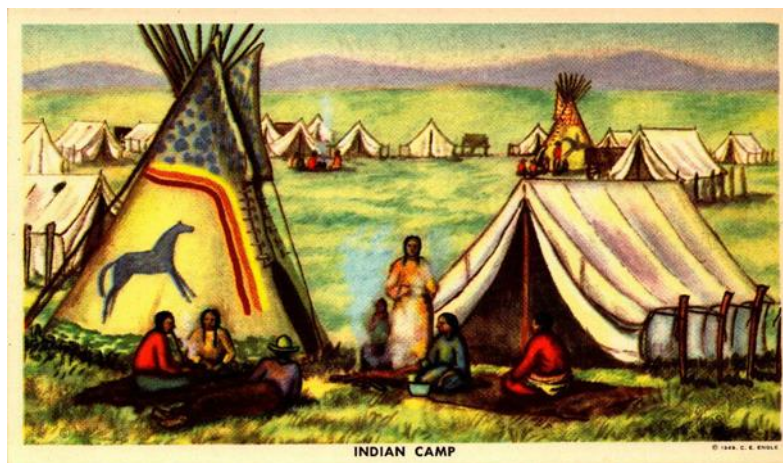


Figure 7. *Indian Camp* by Andrew Standing Soldier, printed by C.E. Engle, 1949.

Standing Soldier would continue his work outside the BIA. After the arrival of sculptor Korczak Ziolkowski in 1948 to the Crazy Horse Memorial grounds in the Black Hills of South Dakota, Standing Soldier lived on site for two years and painted the first tipis on the grounds.<sup>133</sup> In 1948, Standing Soldier was selling his art work at the Pine Ridge Reservation store. Art historians have noted that some of the artwork Standing Soldier sold on the reservation was done in the traditional Plains style. One noted piece of Plains style artwork created by Standing Soldier was his replica of early Oglala Sioux artist Kills Two's ( Nupa Kte) painting *An Indian Horse Dance*.<sup>134</sup> Standing Soldier mimicked Kills Two's classical Sioux hide painting style and charged \$3.00 for his replica at the arts and craft store on the Pine Ridge Reservation.<sup>135</sup> Aside from Standing Soldier, a number of Native American artists were used to illustrate Clark's work. It would take more than a "full blood" to convince Sioux parents and tribal officials that

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<sup>133</sup> Crazy Horse Memorial, "Andrew Standing Soldier & Hobart Keith Collection," <https://crazyhorsememorial.org/story/the-museums/collections/andrew-standing-soldier-hobart-keith>, (Accessed May 13, 2019).

<sup>134</sup> Edwin Wade, and Carol Haralson, eds, *The Arts of the North American Indian: Native Traditions in Evolution*, (New York City, NY: Hudson Hill Press, 1986),39.

<sup>135</sup> Wade and Haralson, eds, *The Arts of the North American Indian*, 39.

Beatty's readers and education plans were capable of preparing their children for the future.



*Figure 8. An Indian Horse Dance by Andrew Standing Soldier, Pine Ridge Reservation, South Dakota, 1948.*<sup>136</sup>



*Figure 9. Andrew Standing Soldier, Sioux Indian, painting mural in auditorium, OD School, Pine Ridge, South Dakota, Vachon, John, Ca.1940, Library of Congress.*<sup>137</sup>

In the 1930s Sioux people across North and South Dakota lost education funds and education programs for a multitude of reasons from the demands of World War Two to

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<sup>136</sup> Wade and Haralson, eds *The Arts of the North American Indian*, 39

<sup>137</sup> Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/resource/fsa.8a32678/>. (Accessed May 13, 2019).

personal issues on the reservation.<sup>138</sup> The community day schools that Beatty had established had become centers for community life due to the access the Sioux had to communal gardens on school grounds. However, those schools were quickly closing throughout the 1930s and 1940s. By 1944, the Sioux along with the Navajo were losing access to crucial sources of income, food, and supplies as the U.S. Congress pushed for the closure of community day schools.<sup>139</sup> Congress felt as though native children did not benefit from attending day schools. Instead, the benefits of day school were handicapped due to children, “having to spend their time out of school hours in tepees, in shacks with dirt floors and no windows, in tents, in wickiups, in hogans where English is never spoken.”<sup>140</sup> Congress instead advocated for sending children to off reservation boarding schools to ensure progress and acceptance of the “white man’s way of life.”<sup>141</sup> The switch to boarding schools over community day schools was not in favor with the Sioux. The Sioux wanted to retain day schools so that the community could continue to use the facilities and keep their children close to home.

The BIA was not committed to providing the Sioux with education equivalent to that of white American children across the United States. In 1949, plans were set in motion by the federal government to get rid of the Cheyenne River boarding school as well as the Moreau River and Four Bears day schools so that the Oahe Dam could be rebuilt.<sup>142</sup> In instances when the BIA put full support in Sioux education it resulted in

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<sup>138</sup> Szasa, *Education and the American Indian*, 109.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid*, 109.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid*, 109

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid*, 109

<sup>142</sup> Department of the Interior, *Missouri River Basin Investigations: Part I Report of Socio-Economic Survey, 1949-1950, Cheyenne River Reservation, South Dakota*. ( Billings, MT: Department of The Interior Bureau of Indian Affairs Aberdeen & Billings Areas, 1951), 24.

young children doing hard labor and bearing the burden of supporting their communities' economic success. Throughout the 1920s and into the 1930s, boarding schools required Sioux children to work half-days to learn patterns of "civilized" labor and work to maintain the school and its facilities.<sup>143</sup> At the Pine Ridge Reservation students had to manage a herd of one thousand cattle in 1940, and similar labor demands were found on the Cheyenne River Sioux reservation.<sup>144</sup> Sioux children and parents did not have the respect or courtesy of the federal government, nor the simple comforts that white Americans enjoyed everyday their children were sent to well-funded schools only short distances from home in safe environments with proper lunches and insightful school activities.

Murray and Rosalie Wax conducted the Indian Education Research Project from 1965-1968 and concluded that Oglala Sioux parents felt that federal schools were, "instrumentalities of the Whites, designed to inculcate Indian children with alien values and to transform them into "whites."<sup>145</sup> The sentiment of Sioux parents and tribal officials had not changed much from their views during the 1930s through the 1950s. During a field study conducted on the Cheyenne River Sioux reservation from 1949 through 1950, a survey was given to reservation residents soliciting their thoughts on federally-sponsored education. The survey consisted of four questions addressed to heads of households. The four questions dealt with what types of values and opportunities parents wanted for their children and the attitudes of adults toward federal schools. The BIA researchers reported that Sioux parents wanted their children highly trained in a variety of

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<sup>143</sup> Gagnon, *Culture and Customs of the Sioux Indians*,51.

<sup>144</sup> Szasa, *Education and the American Indian*,66.

<sup>145</sup> Szasa, *Education and the American Indian*,147.

courses ranging from agriculture to literature. They also wanted their children to have the opportunity to find work and education both on and off the reservation. The BIA commissioned reports painted the federal government's work in high regard, but the truth of the matter was the complete opposite. Yes, Sioux parents like white parents, wanted their children to have the best opportunities and they understood education would help them, but they wanted more control over what their children were taught. The Sioux had been fighting for this right since the early 1900s.

The Sioux since 1911, with the formation of the Society of American Indians, fought for better rights to land, education, self-government, and federal aid.<sup>146</sup> The Society of American Indians was the first pan-Indian reform organization in the U.S. during the Progressive Era, created by Gertrude Bonnin and Dr. Charles Eastman.<sup>147</sup> Both were members of the Sioux. Bonnin and Eastman set an example for decades to come, for pursuing Native American rights. Bonnin cofounded the National Council of American Indians in 1926.<sup>148</sup> She was instrumental in persuading the General Federation of Women's Clubs to form their Indian Welfare Committee, and worked with their chairwoman Ruth Falkenburgh Kirk to spearhead the campaign to end Navajo poverty in New Mexico and Arizona throughout the 1930s. More leaders sprang into action in the late 1940s and onward after the continued failures of the federal government. The Lakota and Dakota dialects began to disappear in the early 1950s, and Native activist would not

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<sup>146</sup> Gagnon, *Culture and Customs of the Sioux Indians*, 54.

<sup>147</sup> National Archives, "Society of American Indians,"

<https://www.archives.gov/nhprc/projects/catalog/society-of-american-indians>, (Accessed June 8, 2019).

<sup>148</sup> American Indian Relief Council, "Biographies of Plains Indians: Gertrude Simmons Bonnin," [http://www.nativepartnership.org/site/PageServer?pagename=airc\\_bio\\_simmonsbonnin](http://www.nativepartnership.org/site/PageServer?pagename=airc_bio_simmonsbonnin), (Accessed June 8, 2019).

get their voice heard in regard to retaining their native languages and cultures until decades later.<sup>149</sup> In 1972, the Sioux would finally take education into their own hands; with funding from the National Institute of Education and a partnership with the Northwest Regional Education Laboratory, readers would be developed by Native people specifically for Indian children.<sup>150</sup>

Nearly forty years after Beatty's bilingual readers were sent across Sioux country enforcing English and concocting an Americanized Sioux identity, the Sioux people finally held in their hands an opportunity to take back the education of their children from the grips of the BIA. The Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL) is an organization that partners with communities across the American Northwest to provide all children the quality education they deserve. The Sioux along with eleven other Northwest Native groups collaborated with the NWREL to create the Indian Reading and Language Development Program. The program created one hundred and forty books compared to Beatty's seven Sioux readers. The books were "culturally relevant stories written by local Indian authors and illustrated by Indian artists."<sup>151</sup> The program made it a priority to authenticate the contents of the books with each Native group that participated. The readers were authenticated by twelve tribes and field tested by 1200 Native American and non-Indian children in 93 classrooms across the Northwest.<sup>152</sup> Unlike

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<sup>149</sup> John Andrews, "Saving Their Language: Speakers Try To Revive Lakota And Dakota Before They Disappear," South Dakota Magazine, 2009, <https://www.southdakotamagazine.com/lakota-saving-their-language>, (Accessed June 8, 2019).

<sup>150</sup> Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, "Indian Reading Series: Stories and Legends of the Northwest," <http://apps.educationnorthwest.org/indianreading/index.html>, (Accessed May 15, 2019).

<sup>151</sup> Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, "Indian Reading Series: Stories and Legends of the Northwest," <http://apps.educationnorthwest.org/indianreading/index.html>, (Accessed May 15, 2019).

<sup>152</sup> Ibid, (Accessed May 15, 2019).

Beatty's readers, the Indian Reading and Language Development Program did not use their children's books to teach any form of culture or for language development. In the Indian backed program, Native groups were not overly generalized or lumped together. The Assiniboine were not included with the Sioux stories, though forty years prior Beatty and Kennard had lumped them into the Sioux language and culture family. The Sioux portion of the children's tales were not written in either Lakota or Dakota dialect, but English. English was the language of choice because by the 1970s the majority of the Sioux spoke English at home and in the classroom. Despite the readers being written in English they were filled with rich illustrations bringing to life the cultures of the Sioux.

The stories written as part of the Sioux portion of the NWREL series were drastically different than the readers commissioned by Beatty. The NWREL Sioux stories mirrored the children's books white American children read. *The Turtle Who Went to War* was written and illustrated by Sioux author Lavina Perry and Sioux illustrator Lisa Ventura. The Sioux children's book tells the story of Chief Turtle's revenge on the Sioux Indians who had eaten his people. The story does not showcase anything American, besides the English language. The cast of characters wore Sioux themed face paint and Chief Turtle wears a full headdress. The story also discusses scalping, a violent tradition amongst the Sioux. In the NWREL Sioux readers there is little to no representation of American culture, but instead culturally rich depictions of Sioux legends and myths. The Indian Reading and Language Development Program was a success across the Northwest with Native Americans. Sioux parents did not question whether reading materials were aimed to whiten their children.



Figure 10. *The Turtle Who Went to War*. Illustrated by Lisa Ventura, 1978.<sup>153</sup>

When Willard W. Beatty's bilingual readers began their production in 1940, the Commissioner of Indian Education dreamed of starting a bilingual learning program that would help the BIA craftily introduce their version of Native American culture into the classroom while simultaneously teaching Indian children English and American ways. Beatty's readers played a role in Americanizing Sioux youth but did not successfully win over the Sioux as a whole. The Sioux people have always fought back, from the great warriors on the plains like Short Bull, Red Cloud, and Sitting Bull, to the unwilling Sioux child that refused to go to day school. The Sioux acted just as much as they were acted upon. Sioux country, however, still faces many struggles with federal education policy and the aftereffects of Americanization. A 2009 article for *South Dakota Magazine* noted that "just 14 percent of Indians living on reservations in North Dakota and South Dakota

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<sup>153</sup> Lavin Perry, *The Turtle Who Went to War*, (Beaverton, Oregon: Educational Systems, 1978), 15. The picture depicts Chief Turtle holding two Sioux scalps.



speaking Lakota, according to 2000 census figures. And estimates suggest the number has dropped another 25 percent in the last eight years.”<sup>154</sup> Standing Rock Reservation spent \$108,000 to establish a language revitalization program for grades K through 12 in 2007.<sup>155</sup> Aside from reviving their native language, the Sioux still struggle with federally sponsored education. Only 65% of Sioux children graduated high school in 2011. Parents no longer have Beatty to blame but point to federal policy like No Child Left Behind, initiated by President George W. Bush, which often sanctioned Indian schools for not meeting requirements.<sup>156</sup> Poverty and the harsh use of education as a weapon against the Sioux still impacts the quality of education and the performance of students in the classroom. Since the 1970s, Sioux people have worked to improve education for their children through government and tribal resources.

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<sup>154</sup> John Andrew. “Saving Their Language: Speakers Try to Revive Lakota and Dakota Before They Disappear,” *South Dakota Magazine*, 2009, <https://www.southdakotamagazine.com/lakota-saving-their-language>. (Accessed June 04, 2019.)

<sup>155</sup> Andrews, “Saving Their Language: Speakers Try to Revive Lakota and Dakota Before They Disappear,” <https://www.southdakotamagazine.com/lakota-saving-their-language>.

<sup>156</sup> Gagnon, *Culture and Customs of the Sioux*, 154.

## CHAPTER IV – MOCCASINS AND SUNDAY HATS: THE MISSISSISSIPPI BAND OF CHOCTAW INDIANS

Across the United States in the progressive era, the Bureau of Indian Affairs was challenged to transform Indian education. Before John Collier took on the position of Commissioner of Indian Affairs in 1935, the Office of Indian Affairs (OIA) ran an education program which used firm assimilation tactics to push Indian children closer to Americanization. Boarding schools were the typical institutions used by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) for education facilities. Boarding schools became distrusted by many Native Americans. Collier initiated a transition to a more culturally sensitive and softer form of assimilation implemented by his chief of the Education Division Willard W. Beatty. The new education program was designed to be bilingual and culturally sensitive while still maintaining the ability to assimilate Native children through classroom activities and children's books. Beatty first went after the two most concerning Indian problems for the federal government: the Navajo and the Sioux. The Navajo and Sioux had the largest populations among American Indian tribes and dire economic needs. Beatty's education program was a combination of blunders and successes. His bilingual readers and curricula for the Navajo and the Sioux successfully helped in assimilation efforts but were unpopular with both children and adults. Of the programs and initiatives set in place by the BIA, however, the Navajo and Sioux embraced educational facilities for public purposes and agreed education would ensure their children's futures. Not all Native groups shared the same grievances with state and federal education like the Navajo and Sioux. From the progressive era into the 1960s,

other Native groups, including the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians had contrastingly different experiences.

The Mississippi Choctaw excelled under Beatty's education policies throughout the 1930s and 1940s. The Choctaw took advantage of the bilingual and agricultural programs, impressing anthropologists and Indian Service officials. In 1950, anthropologist Robert R. Solenberger wrote a letter to the Indian Rights Association praising young Choctaws both for retaining their own language and their ability to have a conversation in English. Solenberger wrote, "They seem alert, and those I talk to had clear and positive ideas."<sup>157</sup> Through determination and a multitude of government programs and aid, the Choctaw transformed throughout the progressive era, dramatically improving their economy, taking on racism, and educating their community. The Choctaw achieved their success, partially through their embrace of state and federally sponsored education.

The unique circumstances that surrounded the state of Mississippi allowed the Choctaw to establish a relationship with local white people. The relationship between the Choctaw and white Mississippians was beneficial for access to resources, better education, and power. The Choctaw understood the benefits of education for their economic and social success, so, they demanded more education than the federal government had given them. To achieve their goals, the Mississippi Choctaw used their

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<sup>157</sup> Correspondence from Solenberger, Robert to Lawrence E. Lindley, Secretary of Indian Rights Association, 31, January, 1950, NMAI.AC.010, Box 102, Folder Choctaw (Mississippi) 1947-1950, Records of the National Congress of American Indian, 1933-1990, National Museum of the American Indian Archive Center, Washington, DC.

connection with local whites to lobby for the establishment of a Choctaw high school and more control over their children's education.

Mississippi's complicated relationship with the Lost Cause narrative and complex issues with racism are fundamental to how the Choctaw experienced education from the first removal in 1830 to government-sponsored education in the twentieth century. After the close of the Civil War, the Choctaw played a role in white Southerners' memorialization of heroism, masculinity, and Southern pride. By the 1820s, the Choctaw had established articulate race codes, legalized slavery, and restricted the rights for any person of African American descent among them.<sup>158</sup> Choctaw participation in slavery led to most of them supporting the Confederacy during the Civil War. Many Choctaws supported the Confederacy, including Chief Greenwood Leflore, an elite planter who owned countless slaves, while lower class Choctaws became Confederate soldiers.<sup>159</sup> Before and after joining forces with the Confederates, however, the Choctaw fought their white allies who were trying to remove them from their homelands forcibly. After the Civil War, the Choctaw's efforts to protect their homelands were idolized by Lost Cause supporters. The Mississippi Choctaw were a perfect representation of Southern pride and devotion. Connections felt by white Lost Cause supporters to the Choctaws, through similar trials and tribulations, led to a line of support from whites determined to help the Choctaw progress into white society.

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<sup>158</sup> Theda Perdue, and Gabrielle Tayac, "Native Americans, African Americans, and Jim Crow," in *Indivisible African-Native American Lives in the Americas*, ed. Gabrielle Tayac, (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institute National Museum of the American Indian, 2009), 23.

<sup>159</sup> Perdue and Tayac. "Native Americans, African Americans, and Jim Crow." in *Indivisible African-Native American Lives in the Americas*, 23.

In the late nineteenth century, white Southern educators praised the Choctaw on their devotion to preserving their Native identity and their progression toward American and European ways. Educators believed the Choctaw achieved this by accepting Christian religion and education.<sup>160</sup> Despite white officials viewing education as the foundation to the Choctaws's progression into white society, Mississippi's segregation laws banned Indians from attending white schools. The Choctaw practiced racial separatism from the African American community, in efforts to keep their Native identity and seek refuge from racism. Due to their separatism, Choctaw parents did not send their children to African American schools. State-sponsored Indian schools were open for the Choctaw in 1882. These schools were bilingual and taught basic subjects such as arithmetic, English, and reading.<sup>161</sup>

The church was a significant part of Choctaw education because preachers were often their teachers and the church house was their classroom until 1892 and 1893. Before the Indian Service was established in 1918, the American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions established a boarding school and mission with the intent of "qualifying [Choctaws] as useful members of society."<sup>162</sup> Eight state and Christian based Choctaw schools were created in the counties of Newton, Neshoba, Jasper, Kempe, and Leake between 1892 and 1893, but they fell in and out of use.<sup>163</sup> The Mississippi Choctaw used their schools similar to the Navajo and Sioux, for their

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<sup>160</sup> Katherine Osburn, *Choctaw Resurgence in Mississippi: Race, Class, and Nation Building in the Jim Crow South, 1830-1977*, (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2014),33.

<sup>161</sup> Osburn, *Choctaw Resurgence in Mississippi*,33.

<sup>162</sup> Joe Jennings, Vernon Beggs, and A.B. Caldwell. "A Study of the Social and Economic Condition of the Choctaw Indians in Mississippi in Relation to the Educational Program," (Washington, DC: The Bureau of Indian Affairs, June 1945),4.

<sup>163</sup> Osburn, *Choctaw Resurgence in Mississippi*,33.

facilities and as centers for community needs. State-run schools held class for four months per year and used Choctaw teachers who earned twenty-five dollars a month for their services.<sup>164</sup> Choctaw education transitioned away from state regulated education soon after the second removal in 1898.

The Choctaw's second removal from Mississippi in 1898 dramatically impacted their education system. After the end of removal in 1918, the federal Indian Service was established in Mississippi. The federal government executed a second Choctaw removal through a combination of acts and agreements that, for the first time, allotted land in Indian territory. Federal acts and agreements directly affecting the Mississippi Choctaw included the Curtis Act and the Atoka Agreement in 1897.<sup>165</sup> The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma signed the Atoka Agreement in 1897. The agreement was incorporated into the Curtis Act the following year. These two federal actions allowed Mississippi Choctaws who fit the federal government's criteria to apply for land allotments in Indian territory in Oklahoma and leave Mississippi. The second removal greatly impacted the Mississippi Choctaws' population. In the 1903 there were 2,335 Choctaws registered on the federal Indian census; by 1910 their population was 1,253.<sup>166</sup> The Mississippi Choctaw lost fifty percent of their population due to the second removal.<sup>167</sup> The second removal marked a pivotal point for the Mississippi Choctaw in gaining legitimacy and recognition from the federal government that they already had received at the state level.

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<sup>164</sup> Jennings, Joe, Vernon Beggs, and A.B. Caldwell, "A Study of the Social and Economic Condition of the Choctaw Indians in Mississippi in Relation to the Educational Program," ( Washington, DC: The Bureau of Indian Affairs, June 1945), 4.

<sup>165</sup> Osburn, *Choctaw Resurgence in Mississippi*, 37.

<sup>166</sup> Clara Sue Kidwell. " The Choctaw Struggle for Land and Identity," in *After Removal: The Choctaw in Mississippi*, ed. Samuel J. Wells and Roseanna Tubby (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 198), 87.

From the beginning of the second removal, more traditional Choctaw refused to leave Mississippi and petitioned the federal government for the rights to access all resources and land in the Choctaw Nation. This included monetary gain from oil and mineral resources on the Oklahoma reservation. The Mississippi Choctaws' pursuit for rights in the Choctaw Nation was grounded in their claims of being full blood, but the OIA did not grant them access to resources in the Choctaw Nation. Despite their failed attempts, the OIA recognized the legitimacy of the Mississippi Choctaw in 1918 and began giving them federal assistance.<sup>168</sup>

Government officials cited the, "miserable educational conditions, the very poor health conditions, and the destitute state of the Choctaw," as the major factors for setting up the Indian Service in Mississippi.<sup>169</sup> The OIA found state-sponsored education dismal, and Choctaw teachers "academically unprepared."<sup>170</sup> The Indian Service brought Beatty's education programs and new facilities to Choctaw communities in Mississippi beginning in 1918. Seven day schools were setup by the Indian Service in its first ten years in Mississippi. Some OIA day schools included Pearl River, Standing Pine, Tucker, Bogue Homa, Red Water, and Conehatta. Indian Service schools were for grades one through six and were capable of teaching a larger number of students. Later, the Indian Service would set up several other schools including a middle school that could service grades seven through ten. Like Beatty's education plans for the Navajo and Sioux, the Choctaw also

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<sup>168</sup> Osburn, *Choctaw Resurgence in Mississippi*,56.

<sup>169</sup> Jennings, et al, "A Study of the Social and Economic Condition of the Choctaw Indians in Mississippi in Relation to the Educational Program," (Washington, DC: The Bureau of Indian Affairs, June 1945),4.

<sup>170</sup> Jennings, et al, "A Study of the Social and Economic Condition of the Choctaw Indians in Mississippi in Relation to the Educational Program," (Washington, DC: The Bureau of Indian Affairs, June 1945),4.

were taught a curriculum that Beatty believed fit the needs of the students and the community. The school programs for the Choctaw centered around systematically learning the foundations for the English language, arithmetic, and health.

Regarding the ability to read English, students in Indian Service Schools were successfully reaching remedial goals set by the Service by 1945.<sup>171</sup> The Choctaw did not have special readers commissioned by Beatty like the Navajo and Sioux; the Mississippi Choctaw were not a major concern for the BIA. Instead, used schoolbooks were given to Choctaw day schools by neighboring white schools. Choctaw children created their own reader alongside BIA primary teacher Thelma Bound. Bound wrote three books involving Choctaw children: *Children of Nanih Waiya*, *Meet Our Choctaw Friends: An Indian Tribe of Mississippi*, and her first book, *The Story of the Mississippi Choctaw*.<sup>172</sup> Only Bound's first work, *The Story of the Mississippi Choctaw* was created in partnership with the BIA and illustrated by her students at Conehatta day school. Bound's reader provided students with a brief history of the Mississippi Choctaw. The Choctaws' reader was not bilingual, but it incorporated student-drawn interpretations of traditional dress, stickball games, and Choctaw farming techniques. While the reader incorporated Choctaw children and their interpretations, BIA officials still dictated the message of the story. Regardless of the message of the book, Choctaw students were reaching BIA standards for reading and English comprehension.

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<sup>171</sup> Jennings, Joe, Vernon Beggs, and A.B. Caldwell. "A Study of the Social and Economic Condition of the Choctaw Indians in Mississippi in Relation to the Educational Program," (Washington, DC: The Bureau of Indian Affairs, June 1945), 30.

<sup>172</sup> Thelma Bound, *The Story of the Mississippi Choctaw*, (Washington, DC: United States Department of the Interior Bureau of Indian Affairs – Division of Education, 1958), 1-38. Thelma Bound, *Children of Nanih Waiya, Meet Our Choctaw Friends: An Indian Tribe of Mississippi*, ( New York, NY: Exposition Press, 1961),1-30.



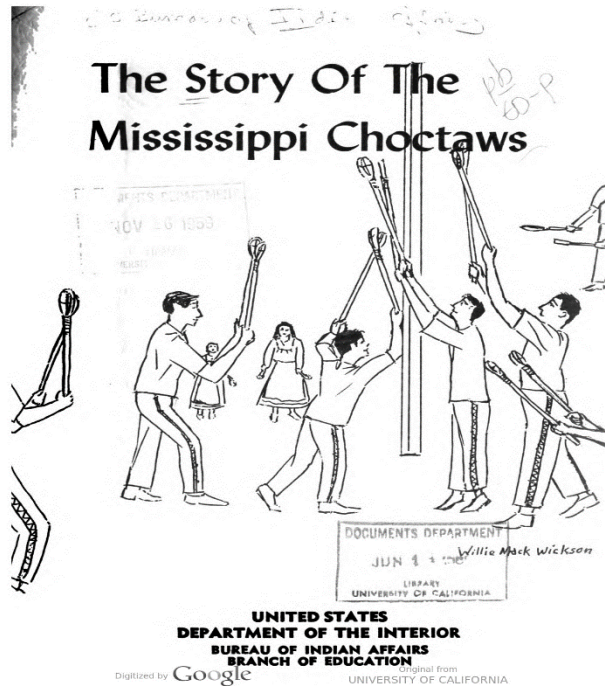


Figure 11. *The Story of the Mississippi Choctaw*, Students of Conehatta Day School, ca. 1958, Hathi Trust Digital Library.

The shift from state to federally funded education set the Choctaw up for success under Beatty’s new education programs. Choctaw children also demonstrated consistency in social lessons like home, local community, and agriculture through surveys conducted in the 1940s.<sup>173</sup> Unlike most Navajo and Sioux schools, Choctaw school facilities were reported by Superintendents of Indian Education, Joe Jennings and A.B. Caldwell, along with Supervisor of Indian Education Vernon L. Beggs to be adequate for use. Most Choctaws accepted federal education programs and teachers. In a 1949 petition commissioned by the Standing Pine Choctaw Community, the Choctaws demanded the retention of their favorite teacher and the dismissal of the school principal. Forty-three

<sup>173</sup> Jennings et al, “A Study of the Social and Economic Condition of the Choctaw Indians in Mississippi in Relation to the Educational Program,” (Washington, D.C.: The Bureau of Indian Affairs, June 1945), 33.

members of the Standing Pine community signed the petition.<sup>174</sup> The Choctaws felt a sense of control over their education system. The Choctaw were accepting of federal education, but economic turmoil and racism still affected the lengths to which education could successfully change the community.

Education was the foundation for BIA rehabilitation plans for the Mississippi Choctaw throughout John Collier's reign as Commissioner of Indian Affairs, but Choctaw communities in Mississippi faced some serious economic problems. Anthropological field reports conducted by the BIA in 1945 noted fourteen issues that contributed to the Choctaw's economic circumstances. One factor impeding Choctaw prosperity was a dependency on child labor.<sup>175</sup> Sharecropping and farming were primary forms of employment for many Choctaws. Due to this, some children were not in school. The BIA wanted Choctaw children in school because the Indian Service believed "that it is the job of the school to assist the people in achieving a better social and economic life."<sup>176</sup> Children would not reap the benefits of federal education if they were tending cotton fields in rural Mississippi. There were one hundred and thirty-four sharecropping families and seven private farming families within the Choctaw communities from 1940-

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<sup>174</sup> Correspondence from The Standing Pine Choctaw Community to the John R. Nickols, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 17, June, 1949, NMAI.AC.010, Box 102, Choctaw (Mississippi) 1947-1958, Records of the National Congress of American Indian, 1933-1990, National Museum of the American Indian Archive Center, Washington, DC.

<sup>175</sup> Jennings et al, "A Study of the Social and Economic Condition of the Choctaw Indians in Mississippi in Relation to the Educational Program," (Washington, DC: The Bureau of Indian Affairs, June 1945), 62.

<sup>176</sup> Jennings et al, "A Study of the Social and Economic Condition of the Choctaw Indians in Mississippi in Relation to the Educational Program," (Washington, DC: The Bureau of Indian Affairs, June 1945), 4.

1945.<sup>177</sup> “Of the total 202 children from sharecroppers’ homes of school age, only 66, or 33%, enrolled in school.”<sup>178</sup>

The economic benefits of children sharecropping put Choctaw parents and their landlords at odds, and the Indian Service attempted to resolve the issue. Parents wanted their children educated but had to meet sharecropping obligations placed on them by their landlords. To combat this, Superintendents of Indian Education, Joe Jennings and A.B. Caldwell, along with Supervisor of Indian Education Vernon L. Beggs, offered improvement to transportation options, compulsory attendance laws, and a longer school year as suggested remedies for school enrollment issues. Jennings, Caldwell, and Beggs also encouraged home visitation and a number of individual conferences led by principals and teachers. The Indian Service education specialists believed stressing the importance of school attendance at every opportunity would boost attendance. To increase attendance, the three Indian education specialists argued that “good attendance should be given special recognition and perhaps awards to rooms with the best records might be affective.”<sup>179</sup> While Choctaw children might have been delighted to receive a small prize for simply attending school, the demands of sharecropping and farming left rewards an unlikely remedy to attendance problems. While the Indian Service did see concern for the sixty-seven percent of sharecropper children not enrolled in school, they had room for

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<sup>177</sup> Jennings et al, “A Study of the Social and Economic Condition of the Choctaw Indians in Mississippi in Relation to the Educational Program,” (Washington, DC: The Bureau of Indian Affairs, June 1945),19

<sup>178</sup> Jennings et al, “A Study of the Social and Economic Condition of the Choctaw Indians in Mississippi in Relation to the Educational Program,” (Washington, DC: The Bureau of Indian Affairs, June 1945),19

<sup>179</sup> Jennings et al, “A Study of the Social and Economic Condition of the Choctaw Indians in Mississippi in Relation to the Educational Program,” (Washington, DC: The Bureau of Indian Affairs, June 1945), 21.

celebration because eighty-eight percent of Choctaw children living on the reservation were enrolled into day schools by the mid-1940s.<sup>180</sup>

Location, distance, and financial obligations prevented sharecropper and farming children from attending school, but the option of attending closer, more accessible off-reservation schools was commonly unavailable for Choctaw children due to Mississippi's racial climate. Laws and social structure across the South were racially charged. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Jim Crow laws and Black codes controlled everyday life for people of color. Jim Crow laws mandated separate transportation, public accommodations, hospital wards, prison cells, and most impactful to Native children, schools.<sup>181</sup> Choctaw relations with African Americans had been deteriorating since the abolition of slavery. The pressures of Jim Crow laws and white southern racism threatened Choctaw identity. Despite their legal equality with whites, Choctaws could not attend white schools by Mississippi state law code 6586, Separate Districts for the Races.<sup>182</sup> Third race Mississippians, those not white or Black, challenged segregation laws but continually failed. The Lums, a small Chinese family in the Mississippi Delta,

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<sup>180</sup> Jennings et al, "A Study of the Social and Economic Condition of the Choctaw Indians in Mississippi in Relation to the Educational Program," (Washington, DC: The Bureau of Indian Affairs, June 1945), 27.

<sup>181</sup> Perdue and Tayac, "Native Americans, African Americans, and Jim Crow," In *Indivisible African-Native American Lives in the Americas*, 21.

<sup>182</sup>Jennings et al, "A Study of the Social and Economic Condition of the Choctaw Indians in Mississippi in Relation to the Educational Program," (Washington, DC: The Bureau of Indian Affairs, June 1945), 29. Mississippi State Law Code 6586. Separate Districts for the Races- Description of Districts, Separate districts shall be made for the schools of the white and colored races, and the districts for each race shall embrace the whole territory of the country outside the separate school districts. A regular school district which the district is established, except where too great distance or impassable obstructions would debar children from school privileges. In such cases the board may, in its discretion, establish a regular district containing not less that fifteen educable children. The district shall be so arranged as to place all children within reasonable distance of the schoolhouse; and one public school shall be maintained in each district; but when the average attendance at any school shall be less than five children for any month, the school shall be discontinued by the superintendent.

brought their fight against school segregation to Mississippi's Supreme Court in 1927. The Lum v. Rice case favored segregation laws and decreed that the term "colored" applied to anyone who was not white in Mississippi by state constitutional law.<sup>183</sup> Despite the Lum v. Rice decision, the Mississippi Choctaw still insisted they were inherently different than African Americans. The Choctaws' rejection of African Americans took away most of the opportunity they had to access public off-reservation schools in Mississippi. The Choctaws chose to isolate themselves completely from the African American community and only selectively chose to interact with whites when it was beneficial.

It was extremely important to the Choctaw to secure their Native identity in the face of Mississippi's brutal race climate. The Choctaw did not want to be legally categorized as African American. Distinguishing their Native identity involved practicing their cultural food, art, and clothing purposefully amongst white Mississippians. Some Choctaws wore distinctive clothing, such as traditional regalia or fancy dress well into the late twentieth century to distinguish themselves as Native and not Black.<sup>184</sup> The Choctaw also established the Choctaw Indian Fair in 1949 to market themselves and their culture to white Mississippians. The Choctaws put on a spectacle of tradition, culture, and heritage for the local white community through live stick ball games and elaborate displays of Choctaw food, dress, and dance.

Efforts to detach themselves from African Americans were working for the majority of the Choctaws, but they wanted more opportunities to solidify their position as

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<sup>183</sup> Gong Lum v. Rice, 29 P.275 U.S. 78 (1927).

<sup>184</sup> Perdue and Tayce. "Native Americans, African Americans, and Jim Crow," In *Indivisible African-Native American Lives in the Americas*,30.

the third race of Mississippi. The Choctaws viewed education and economic growth as the best options to distinguish themselves from their Black and white neighbors. Off the fairgrounds and into the classrooms the Choctaw carried their desire to remain distinct and separate from other races. From the 1910s to the 1940s, like white schools, Choctaw schools barred other races from attending due to Mississippi state laws. By bending and accepting segregation laws when beneficial to their own needs, the Choctaw unknowingly set the stage for changes in their own education system. Isolationism and state laws kept full blood Choctaws secluded on their reservations and small communities, but, for mixed children, receiving education seemed impossible.

The 1950s was a time of revolution, and landmark cases like *Brown v. Board of Education* determined that the segregation of public schools was unconstitutional, though integration took decades.<sup>185</sup> While full blood Choctaws had been receiving the benefits of federal education, segregation laws barred mixed children from Choctaw families from attending both on-reservation and off-reservation schools. In 1960, Victor M. Kaneubbe, a member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, a Baptist reverend, and a father to a mixed Choctaw and white child sparked a wildfire of controversy and outrage against the federal government's continuing compliance to state-sponsored segregated schools. Kaneubbe's daughter Viki did not qualify for attendance in federal day schools because she was mixed and was denied access from starting the first grade in Neshoba County's

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<sup>185</sup> United States Courts, "History -Brown v. Board of Education (1954, 1955)," <https://www.uscourts.gov/educational-resources/educational-activities/history-brown-v-board-education-re-enactment>. (Accessed June 5, 2019). The *Brown v. Board of Education* was a set of five cases that were heard by the U.S. Supreme Court concerning issues of state-sponsored segregation in public schools. The cases rested on the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. The case was settled on May 14, 1954, the judgement stated that state-sponsored segregation of public school was unconstitutional.

white schools.<sup>186</sup> Viki's mixed race barred any opportunity for her to attend school in Mississippi. Despite the decree from the United States Supreme Court, Mississippi did not desegregate schools in the 1950s.<sup>187</sup> Kaneubbe fed up with segregations impact on education, started a campaign for a Choctaw high school with his first letter in 1957 to the National Congress of American Indians. In his address to the NCAI, a pan-Indian lobbying group in Washington, D.C., fighting for Indian rights, Kaneubbe urged the organization to aid the Choctaw in Mississippi. Kaneubbe took on a paternalistic tone as he wrote to the NCAI about the Mississippi Choctaw. Like white Christian missionaries before him Kaneubbe became the savior for the Choctaw who he claimed "were poor, [their] educational level is second grade. The average income runs between \$500-\$800 a year for an average family of 4."<sup>188</sup> Kaneubbe's letter included a five-dollar donation to the NCAI and a promise to encourage Choctaw members of his congregation to join the organization. In exchange for his efforts, Kaneubbe wanted NCAI support for obtaining a high school for the Choctaw and aid in ending segregation in Mississippi. Kaneubbe's statements in regard to the educational levels of the Choctaw were without grounds and fueled by his outrage over his daughter's dismissal from any chance of education in Mississippi. The Reverend's first letter caught the attention of BIA official Paul Fickinger, who took offense to Kaneubbe's words about the education and financial condition of the Mississippi Choctaw.

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<sup>186</sup> Correspondence from Kaneubbe, Victor To Mr. Paul L. Fickinger, Area Director for Bureau of Indian Affairs Muskogee, Oklahoma, 11, February, 1960, NMAI.AC.010, Box 102, Choctaw (Mississippi) 1959-1960, Records of the National Congress of American Indian, 1933-1990, National Museum of the American Indian Archive Center, Washington, DC.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

Kaneubbe continued to send letters on the behalf of the Choctaw to the Department of the Interior and Paul Fickinger, BIA Area Director for Muskogee, Oklahoma, describing the dismal state of Mississippi Choctaw education and demanding a desegregated high school for the Mississippi Choctaw. Kaneubbe did not gain the support of Fickinger or the BIA. The Bureau of Indian Affairs stood behind field reports that proved the success the Choctaw had with federal education. Fickinger and the BIA saw no fault in not having a high school on location in Mississippi since Choctaw children could obtain eleventh and twelfth grade education at boarding schools in Kansas and Oklahoma. Fickinger and the BIA felt that Kaneubbe's statements were "a misrepresentation of the facts."<sup>189</sup> Kaneubbe insisted that the Choctaw had no access to public schools or a high school education. Fickinger goaded Kaneubbe for withholding his knowledge about "a number of Choctaw children attending public school in Meridian, Mississippi" and making false claims that "the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades are not available to the Choctaw Indian student."<sup>190</sup> Fickinger and Kaneubbe continued their dispute over establishing a high school for the Mississippi Choctaw, but the debate outgrew the two men as whites began to rally behind the movement.

The 1950s and 1960s Civil Rights Movement had race tensions in Mississippi at an all-time high. The Choctaw took advantage of race tensions and Kaneubbe's efforts to actively use their voice as well as the sympathies of their white allies to gain recognition for their separate, Choctaw identity. Despite the Mississippi Choctaw denying

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<sup>189</sup> Correspondence from Fickinger, Paul. To Rev. Victor M. Kaneubbe, 31, December, 1959, NMAI.AC.010, Box 102, Choctaw (Mississippi) 1959-1960, Records of the National Congress of American Indian, 1933-1990, National Museum of the American Indian Archive Center, Washington, DC,1

<sup>190</sup> Ibid,1



Kaneubbe's daughter access to their school, they joined his fight to gain their own high school. Indian Service schools had allowed the Choctaw to solidify their place as a third race in Mississippi between 1918 and 1960 by banning outside races from attending.<sup>191</sup> The addition of a high school would further cement Choctaw identity. Kaneubbe spread word to his white peers in the Baptist ministry who then began to write letters and petition the state on behalf of the Choctaw. Kaneubbe wrote a Choctaw fact sheet that was spread through the ministry circuit across Mississippi as far as Illinois, Texas, and Tennessee. White preachers and church members wrote dozens of letters citing Kaneubbe's portrayal of the Choctaw people.

An onslaught of letters written by white church members across the United States poured into the state legislature, the BIA, and the NCAI. Kaneubbe had compiled his fact sheet supplied to white supporters, government entities, and independent organizations from his own viewpoints and experiences while living with the Mississippi Choctaw. In it, he outlined five points defining their condition including his statements about their second-grade educational level and dismal economic conditions. Kaneubbe continued his critique of Choctaw education by stating, "In the approximately forty years of education among the Choctaw Indians, there have been about 72 high school graduates, Of this number approximately fifty-five graduated during the last six years."<sup>192</sup> While Kaneubbe did not provide cited material for his claims, white supporters latched onto his words.

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<sup>191</sup> Osburn, *Choctaw Resurgence in Mississippi*,192.

<sup>192</sup> Correspondence from Fickinger, Paul. To Rev. Victor M. Kaneubbe, 31, December, 1959, NMAI.AC.010, Box 102, Choctaw (Mississippi) 1959-1960, Records of the National Congress of American Indian, 1933-1990, National Museum of the American Indian Archive Center, Washington, DC,3.

Picayune residents Mr. and Mrs. Harry Kaupp wrote a letter in support of the Choctaw to the NCAI on May 20, 1959. The Kaupps' letter was a verbatim copy of Kaneubbe's Choctaw fact sheet. The only original words in the Kaupps' letter were four short sentences begging the chairman of the NCAI to help the Choctaw who they described as, "good, quiet, law abiding people who need help and encouragement, most of all an education and a way of making a living."<sup>193</sup>

Further white support came from Mississippi Baptist churches. John R. Maddox, pastor of the First Baptist Church of Picayune, Mississippi wrote his letter to the NCAI on June 12, 1959, asking the organization to "use your influence to secure these two much needed grades of high school study for these Choctaw Indians."<sup>194</sup> Kaneubbe's ministry connections led to pastors and church members from Texas, Illinois, and Tennessee writing letters of support for the Choctaw. The collection of letters can be summarized in one simple sentence written and agreed upon by eighteen members of the Central Baptist Church of Jacksonville, Texas: "As individual Christians we urge you to study this situation and if at all possible provide this educational opportunity for these Choctaw."<sup>195</sup>

The NCAI and the BIA took little direct action toward establishing a high school for the Choctaw beyond responding to letters from 1959-1960, though they attempted to

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<sup>193</sup> Correspondence from Mr. & Mrs. Harry, Kaupp To the Chairman of the National Congress of American Indians, 20, May, 1959, NMAI.AC.010, Box 102, Choctaw (Mississippi) 1959-1960, Records of the National Congress of American Indian, 1933-1990, National Museum of the American Indian Archive Center, Washington, DC, 2.

<sup>194</sup> Correspondence from Maddox, John to the National Congress of American Indians, 12, June 1959, NMAI.AC.010, Box 102, Choctaw (Mississippi) 1959-1960, Records of the National Congress of American Indian, 1933-1990, National Museum of the American Indian Archive Center, Washington, DC.

<sup>195</sup> Correspondence from the members of Central Baptist Church to the National Congress of American Indian. 1, June, 1959, Records of the National Congress of American Indian, 1933-1990, National Museum of the American Indian Archive Center, Washington, DC.

enlist another key ally: women's clubs. The NCAI communicated through their responses to supporters that their "extremely limited budget and small staff" did not allow them the resources to properly support the Mississippi Choctaw.<sup>196</sup> The NCAI decided to transfer all of the collected letters and materials dealing with the Choctaw to the "Mississippi State Federation of Women's Clubs, thinking this group might want to investigate the needs of the Choctaw people."<sup>197</sup> The Mississippi State Federation of Women's Clubs, however, declined to take on the Mississippi Choctaw's plight. After conducting investigations on the state of education for the Choctaw, the Mississippi State Federation of Women's Clubs reported to the NCAI "that all the needs of the Indians have been taken care of by the agencies now at work."<sup>198</sup> Federation President, Evelyn Davis felt that the organization could not help the Choctaw because, "there would only be a very few children that this would help."<sup>199</sup> The government and nonprofit organizations Kanuebbe and white supporters contacted were uninterested in establishing a Choctaw high school in Mississippi.

Lack of support from the BIA and independent organizations changed Choctaw tribal leaders' outlook towards segregation; they no longer supported segregation and planned to use Choctaw tribalism to fight against racial prejudice.<sup>200</sup> Supporting segregated schools no longer helped them. If they wanted a Choctaw high school, they

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<sup>196</sup> Correspondence from Craygun, Hilda to Rev. J. Curtis Martin, 22 June, 1959. Records of the National Congress of American Indian, 1933-1990, National Museum of the American Indian Archive Center, Washington, DC.

<sup>197</sup>Ibid.

<sup>198</sup> Correspondence from Davis, Evelyn to Helen L. Peterson of the National Congress of American Indians, 18, June, 1959, Records of the National Congress of American Indian, 1933-1990, National Museum of the American Indian Archive Center, Washington, DC.

<sup>199</sup>Ibid.

<sup>200</sup> Osburn, *Choctaw Resurgence in Mississippi*, 196.

needed to prove to the federal government that it would help all children regardless of race or if they lived on or off the reservation. In the early 1960s, tribal leaders Emmet York and Philip Martin began supporting school integration. Placing a high school on the reservation would not solve the problem for students of sharecropping families that lived off-reservation. Choctaw students needed the legal right to attend white schools in Mississippi. Changing their stance on segregation allowed tribal officials to gather a larger number of children who would benefit from establishing a local high school. By 1962, the Choctaw had identified one hundred and ninety-eight children, a large enough number to meet the requirements for a federally sponsored high school.<sup>201</sup> Tribal Chairman Philip Martin and Chief Emmet York called a special council meeting and presented their plans for the new high school.<sup>202</sup> While the Choctaw leaders were now embracing integration, they still cautiously approached integrating fully with white schools. Martin's plan for the Choctaw high school was to support a segregated facility initially but use the high school as a method of integration through interschool sports and academic activities.<sup>203</sup>

Originally Martin had wanted to have the high school built in the town of Philadelphia, Mississippi, as a display of Choctaw power. Fellow members of the Choctaw tribal council objected to Martin's plan. Councilwoman Nettie Jimmie believed mixing Choctaw and white students together would jeopardize their Native identity.<sup>204</sup> York and Martin did not share the same fears as Councilwoman Jimmie and were more

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<sup>201</sup> Ibid, 196.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid, 196.

<sup>203</sup> Osburn, *Choctaw Resurgence in Mississippi*, 196.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid, 197.

concerned with further solidifying their American identities. To York and Martin, they were entitled to certain liberties as Americans and establishing a Choctaw high school off the reservation was one of them. Like Councilwoman Jimmie, the BIA disagreed with York and Martin's ideas. The BIA changed the location of the high school. Choctaw Central High School was built in the Pearl River community, and, by 1970, sixteen percent of Choctaw students were integrated into white public schools.<sup>205</sup> The Choctaw had successfully established a local high school and combated segregation in the midst of the Civil Rights Movement and racial violence in Mississippi, with the help of white supporters and BIA officials.

The importance of the Mississippi Choctaws' experience with OIA and BIA education is not the grievances of bilingual readers and federally-spun culture narratives. The story of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians is their skillful manipulation of segregation, integration, and their white supporters. The Choctaw molded their circumstances through Beatty's reign as Commissioner of Indian Education and beyond. The Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians has become one of the most economically successful Native American groups in the United States. Their controlled interactions with whites has allowed them to establish methods of income like the Choctaw Indian Fair which is celebrating its seventieth anniversary in 2019. Like the Navajo and the Sioux, the Choctaw experienced assimilation through education, and many Choctaws did not retain their native language. Beatty wrote as part of his *Indian Life Readers Collection* about the importance of language to all ethnic people. Language helps to define who people are. Beatty said, "Of all cultural traits, language is the most

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<sup>205</sup> Ibid, 198.

persistent,” and the progressive education enthusiast was correct.<sup>206</sup> Since its creation, the Office of Indian Affairs has used assimilation tactics on thousands of Native children, including the Navajo, Sioux, and Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians. In the twenty-first century Native Americans’ are reclaiming their native language through successfully and persistently developing programs used in classrooms and universities across America to teach their children the languages the federal government tried so hard to eradicate.<sup>207</sup>

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<sup>206</sup> Beatty, “Bilingual Readers,” In *The Hen of Wahpeton*, by Ann Clark, (Washington, DC: US Department of the Interior, 1943),90.

<sup>207</sup> The Choctaw Nation, “Chahta Anumpa Aikhvna School of Choctaw Language,” <https://www.choctawnation.com/history-culture/language/about-choctaw-language>. (Accessed June 5, 2019). The School of Choctaw Language was established in 1998 to promote and preserve the language, history and culture of the Choctaw. Swathmore College, “The Navajo Language Academy Inc.” <https://www.swarthmore.edu/SocSci/tfernal1/nla/nla.htm> (Accessed June 5, 2019). The Navajo Language Academy was established in 1997 as a non-profit educational program devoted to preserving the Navajo language.

## CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION

The federal government began a new campaign for Indian education in the 1930s, based on Progressive Era education practices. Spearheaded by William W. Beatty, the Bureau of Indian Affairs Education Division developed the *Indian Life Readers*. The *Indian Life Readers* are a collection of bilingual children's literature created to Americanize Native children through the manipulation of their culture. The Navajo and Sioux were chosen as Beatty's first test subjects for his readers because of their large population size and dismal economies. The Navajo and the Sioux were America's biggest Indian problems. Along with education reform, the Office of Indian Affairs (OIA) and the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) created federal policies, like the Indian Reorganization Act, to transform Native American ways of life. Federal policy used both education and rehabilitation programs that focused on assimilating Native Americans. In a Progressive Era style, the federal government incorporated Native American culture into their policies concerning education and rehabilitation, but these new reforms instead undermined Native American culture. Beatty's Commissioned children's literature, instead of supporting Native culture and traditions, promoted whiteness in Navajo, Sioux, and Mississippi Choctaw communities, but the BIA enforced these policies.

The BIA faced national criticism from the later 1930s through the 1940s because of the Navajo economic crisis in Arizona and New Mexico. Reformers and the national media chided the federal government's inactions toward the economic turmoil the Navajo faced. When the BIA finally acted, they centered their rehabilitation plans around education, seeing it as the key to successfully preparing the future leaders of the Navajo, the children. The BIA needed Navajo children to be able to sustain economic stability as

adults. Teaching children to be economically sufficient, led Beatty's Navajo readers to focus on American capitalism and entrepreneurship. BIA commissioned children's books taught Navajo children how to farm and sell like Americans. The BIA's education and rehabilitation efforts were not to the standards of the Navajo tribal council and by the 1960s they took control of their children's education. The Navajo transformed day school facilities into community gardens and laundry services. Instead of focusing on bilingual education, the Navajo's lesson plans centered around developing agriculture and technical skills. The BIA's efforts to fully Americanize Navajo children damaged native language retention, but the Navajo created programs in the twenty-first century to revive their native language.

Persistent use of Native American languages troubled the BIA. The federal government wanted Native Americans to speak English. Beatty used bilingual children's readers, and lesson plans to combat Native languages. Beatty enforced a strict practice of using English in the classroom and encouraged children only to speak their Native languages in their homes. The Sioux, however, created a problem for Beatty's bilingual approach because they had two distinct dialects. Aside from their dialects, the Sioux also had diverse cultures and consisted of several different bands. To better control the Sioux, the BIA lumped the four separate branches of the Sioux together, disregarding their differences. Beatty supported the homogenizing of the Sioux by creating bilingual readers that BIA authors wrote only in Lakota dialect and used a generalized Sioux culture. Beatty's Sioux readers aimed to Americanize Sioux children by supplying them with protagonist that embraced American culture. The Sioux people combated the BIA's plans by creating pro-Indian rights organizations like the Society of American Indians and the



National Congress of American Indians. During the 1970s the Sioux would create children's books that provided their children with culturally rich stories and illustrations that did not homogenize the Sioux. While the Sioux and the Navajo combated federal education, the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians embraced federally sponsored education.

The Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians used state and federal education to manipulate their social status in Mississippi and obtain a Choctaw high school. The Choctaw's experiences with federally sponsored education began in 1918 when the Indian Service was established in Mississippi. Racism and segregation stopped mixed Indian children and Choctaws from attending school with white children. Before the 1960s, the Choctaw used segregation and education to define themselves as distinctively Native and distinguish themselves from African Americans. With the help of Victor M. Kaneubbe, a Choctaw Reverend, the Mississippi Choctaw again manipulated education and segregation to their favor and campaigned the BIA for a high school. Choctaw tribal leaders Philip Martin and Chief Emmet York secured Choctaw Central High School in 1962. Despite their success in manipulating education and policy to benefit them, like the Navajo and the Sioux, large portions of the Choctaw population lost their native language.

Culture and language once lost to the BIA are being revived through language school and cultural centers. Linda Tuhiwai-Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous People* warns scholars of the negative affects surveys, research, and outside intervention can do to Native communities. Beatty and the BIA intervened, conducted research, and imposed their ideas on the Navajo, Sioux, and the Mississippi

Band of Choctaw Indians. Regardless of the federal government beliefs that their actions were with good intent, they disrupted Native communities and enforced Americanization. Scholars cannot step back in time, but through their work, they can decolonize the minds of future readers, students, and researchers.

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