

“Without Destroying Ourselves”:
American Indian Intellectual Activism for Higher Education, 1915-1978

by

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines a long-term activist effort by American Indian educators and intellectual leaders to work for greater Native access to and control of American higher education. Specifically, the leaders of this effort built a powerful critique of how American systems of higher education served Native individuals and reservation communities throughout much of the twentieth century. They argued for new forms of higher education and leadership training that appropriated some mainstream educational models but that also adapted those models to endorse Native expressions of culture and identity. They sought to move beyond the failures of existing educational programs and to exercise Native control, encouraging intellectual leadership and empowerment on local and national levels. The dissertation begins with Henry Roe Cloud (Winnebago) and his American Indian Institute, a preparatory school founded in 1915 and dedicated to these principles. From there, the words and actions of key leaders such as Elizabeth Roe Cloud (Ojibwe), D'Arcy McNickle (Salish Kootenai), Jack Forbes (Powhatan-Renapé, Delaware-Lenape), and Robert and Ruth Roessel (Navajo), are also examined to reveal a decades-long thread of Native intellectual activism that contributed to the development of American Indian self-determination and directly impacted the philosophical and practical founding of tribal colleges and universities (TCUs) in the 1960s and 1970s. These schools continue to operate in dozens of Native communities. These individuals also contributed to and influenced national organizations such as the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) and the National Indian Youth Council (NIYC), while maintaining connections to grassroots efforts at Native educational empowerment. The period covered in this history witnessed many forms of Native

activism, including groups from the Society of American Indians (SAI) to the American Indian Movement (AIM) and beyond. The focus on “intellectual activism,” however, emphasizes that this particular vein of activism was and is still oriented toward the growth of Native intellectualism and its practical influence in modern American Indian lives. It involves action that is political but also specifically educational, and thus rests on the input of prominent Native intellectuals but also on local educators, administrators, government officials, and students themselves.

For my father, Dr. William Martin Goodwin, who has drawn on his own experience as a
“one-time intellectual” to offer advice and—more importantly—humor.
And for my mother, Constance Jean Mach Goodwin, who was an inspiration to all who
knew her.

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INTRODUCTION

The Resilience of an Idea

On a bright spring day in April of 1971, Navajo educators, medicine men, and tribal officials gathered near Tsaile, Arizona to bless and break the ground at what would become the central campus of Navajo Community College (NCC—now Diné College).¹ The school was sanctioned by the Navajo Tribal Council, run by a Navajo board of Regents, and dedicated to a mission in higher education that placed American Indian issues at the center—rather than the periphery—of the curriculum.² Though NCC had been two years running, the groundbreaking ceremony in 1971 served as a key moment in confirming the fledgling school as a distinctly Navajo entity. It was operating as a perfect example of what reservation residents had begun to call “*Diné Bi’Olta*” (the people’s school, or the Navajo school).³ As the campus site near Tsaile took shape, its carefully-selected construction materials mimicked the rugged beauty of the surrounding mesas and mountains, and even represented some of the foundational aspects of Navajo creation stories.⁴ In this process, the new campus became a protected space for Native

¹ Note on terms: As much as possible, I have tried to preserve the language of my sources, so long as meaning remains clear. This will occasionally result in alternate spellings or the use of multiple names for one institution. In order to achieve as much clarity and consistency as possible regarding these names, I have decided to use the names for the early TCUs and other institutions that are most relevant to and recognizable from the historical period and sources under study.

² Ned Hatathli, “Navajo Studies at Navajo Community College,” (paper, UCLA American Indian Culture Center 1971 EPDA Short Term Summer Institute, Many Farms, AZ, July 1971).

³ Translation comes from Robert A. Roessel Jr., “The Right to be Wrong and the Right to be Right,” *Journal of American Indian Education* [hereafter cited as *JAIE*] 7, no. 2 (January 1968), 2.

⁴ *The Navajo Culture Center Purpose and Plans: A Shrine and Living Symbol for the Navajo to be Located at Navajo Community College*, (Tsaile, AZ: Navajo Community College Press, 1972); Wilson Aronilth, Jr., *Foundation of Navajo Culture* (Tsaile, AZ: Navajo Community Press, 1991).

identity within an educational landscape that had for so long been hostile to expressions of Native culture. As the first tribally-controlled reservation college in the United States, Navajo Community College brought on a new era in American higher education. Because of this, it holds a distinct place in American history and in the history of Indigenous education.

While it stood out for its uniquely Navajo characteristics, NCC was also just the spearhead of a much broader and interconnected movement to bring about other tangible sites of American Indian self-determination in higher education. By the late 1970s, half a dozen tribal colleges and universities (TCUs) had become candidates for permanent accreditation, and today 37 of these schools continue to carry out educational missions that are at once tribally-driven and connected to modern educational and economic trends in America.⁵

This work will serve not simply as a history of tribal colleges and universities, but as a history of how Native people have built an intellectual and activist movement to fundamentally reshape their relationship with American institutions of higher education over the past century. More than that, this history will serve as one illustration of a broader struggle by racial and ethnic activists to secure greater access to and control of institutions of power in modern America.

Tribal colleges and universities are all in some way connected to a long history of interactions between American Indian tribes and institutions and agents of Euro-

⁵ Higher Learning Commission, *Distinctive and Connected: Tribal Colleges and Universities and HLC Accreditation—Considerations for HLC Peer Reviewers* (Chicago: Higher Learning Commission, 2013); See also “About AIHEC,” American Indian Higher Education Consortium Web site [hereafter AIHEC], <http://www.aihec.org/who-we-are/index.htm> (accessed May 1, 2016).

American colonialism. In turn, they are informed by a recognition of the increasing power of formalized systems of education in modern American society. In some form, institutions of education have always conveyed practical and symbolic power to students. However, in the United States over the past century or more, this relationship between education and power in society has become especially formalized and rigid, in a way that is still recognized and accepted today.⁶

So how, then, do these legacies and roots impact the story of tribal colleges and universities? What aspects of American culture, economics, and politics motivated (and still motivate) the Native intellectual leaders and educators who sought to better empower Native people and their communities? How have Native people attempted to address the pitfalls and restrictions in their relationships with American higher education and its attendant resources, and how have tribal college founders learned from and built on previous efforts? Exploring these questions, I tell an important Native story but also an important American story.

Up to now, few histories have explored the unique characteristics of tribal colleges and universities and the curricular missions they undertake. Even fewer have probed TCUs in relation to the deep American Indian intellectual movements upon which they were built. Wayne Stein (Turtle Mountain Chippewa), a long-time TCU administrator and advocate, has been one of the few individual scholars to explore the history of American Indian-controlled education—and specifically TCUs—as a central

⁶ John R. Thelin, *A History of American Higher Education* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 155-156.

topic in book-length form.⁷ His framing of the topic rests largely on the various legislative acts that provided funds for the institutions, which he persuasively argues is the constant concern of the colleges. This focus gives clarity to the sequence of milestone moments for TCUs. And yet it provides little analysis of the intellectual arguments surrounding the fundamental idea of Native control. Indeed, Stein himself has argued for delving deeper into this intellectual history, pointing out that “no one has fully explored the reasons for [tribal colleges’] genesis and continued existence.”⁸ Even since the publication of his assessment in the 1990s, few major projects have examined the topic in detail.⁹

As I attempt to address this scholarly gap and the questions raised above, I employ a methodology that is most heavily influenced by cultural and intellectual history. Cultural history has been vital to my understanding of American Indian history in its insistence that scholars look closely at moments of ambiguity in terms of identity, power, and meaning.¹⁰ History is full of these moments for American Indian people, as they have repeatedly sought to adapt and to pursue successful living on their own terms, even as they have been forced to exist within oppressive systems of social, economic, and

⁷ Wayne J. Stein, *Tribally Controlled Colleges: Making Good Medicine* (New York: Peter Lang, 1992).

⁸ Stein, 1.

⁹ Bryan M. J. Brayboy, Amy J. Fann, Angelina E. Castagno, and Jessica A. Solyom, eds. *Postsecondary Education for American Indian and Alaska Natives: Higher Education for Nation Building and Self-Determination* (San Francisco: Wiley Subscription Services, 2012).

¹⁰ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994); Ulick Peter Burke, Natalie Zemon Davis, and Patrick Joyce, “Cultural History,” Making History Web site, http://www.history.ac.uk/makinghistory/themes/cultural_history.html (accessed March 1, 2017).

political power.¹¹ Relying on the work of Manley Begay Jr. (Navajo) and others, I see these moments as important in the shaping of culture, which encompasses three key dimensions of human life: how people think, how they behave, and what materials they use to face life pragmatically as well as symbolically.¹² In the context of this history, however, discussions of culture are not specifically meant to reveal the origins of Native cultural belief and practice in an ethnohistorical sense. Rather, I focus on these moments of ambiguity and struggle as crucial to revealing Native efforts to structure, restructure, and utilize available materials to protect and advance those beliefs. In other words, while these moments are part of a constant process of cultural production and adaptation, they are also vital for revealing the emergence and maintenance of the self-reflective and pragmatically active form of Native intellectualism I study.

My focus on a form of Native intellectualism that emerged in an interaction with Euro-American institutions and cultures is not to imply that older or more guarded bodies

¹¹ Much of my thinking on the use of cultural history and intellectual history and on the study of power and cultural adaptation in the lives of American Indians and other marginalized peoples in America is impacted by Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998); Donald L. Fixico, *The American Indian Mind in a Linear World: American Indian Studies and Traditional Knowledge* (New York: Routledge, 2003); Paige Raibmon, *Authentic Indians: Episodes of Encounter from the Late-Nineteenth-Century Northwest Coast* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005); and Ned Blackhawk, *Violence over the Land: Indians and Empires in the Early American West* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006). In terms of my particular historical topics, especially the re-appropriation of American institutions and rhetorical platforms, this approach and my thinking is also heavily influenced by K. Tsianina Lomawaima, *They Called It Prairie Light: The Story of Chilocco Indian School* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995); K. Tsianina Lomawaima and Teresa L. McCarty, *"To Remain an Indian:" Lessons of Democracy from a Century of Native American Education* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2006); and Lucy Maddox, *Citizen Indians: Native American Intellectuals, Race, and Reform*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006).

¹² Manley A. Begay Jr. et al., "Development, Governance, Culture: What Are They and What Do They Have to Do with Rebuilding Native Nations?" in *Rebuilding Native Nations: Strategies for Governance and Development*, ed. Miriam Jorgensen (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2007), 46; Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

of Native knowledge were non-intellectual. Rather, I am simply most interested in the interactions and adaptations that take place at the meeting points between America's dominant institutions of power and its marginalized people.

In particular, I focus on the articulation and pursuit of the belief that Native people deserved greater access to and control of institutions of higher education and leadership training in modern America. An institution in this case could often imply a school, but should be viewed as much more than a building and its blueprints. As the example of the Navajo Community College campus site near Tsaile, Arizona will illustrate, something as seemingly innocuous as a construction project for a new school could reify a shared culture and history in profound ways. Furthermore, an institution could just as likely take the form of an intellectual seminar, a government program, or a variety of other kinds of activist organization.

While this process was ongoing and difficult to pinpoint at any given time, I hope to capture it as clearly as possible by remaining closely attuned to the Native individuals and groups who took part in it. I rely heavily on a source base built by Native leaders themselves—diverse collections of correspondence, journals, newsletters, and other published and unpublished sources that reveal how the central themes of the movement for Native control in higher education were developed, shared, and revised over the course of many decades. Based on these Native voices, I argue that the development of tribal colleges and universities in the United States is in fact rooted in a deep American Indian intellectual tradition that dates to the early twentieth century.

Specifically, I begin this history with Henry Roe Cloud (Winnebago) and his American Indian Institute (AII), a preparatory school for American Indian boys founded

in 1915. Roe Cloud located his school in Wichita, Kansas, but purposefully took in students from across the country, working toward greater control of and access to higher education for the purpose of expanding Native intellectual leadership nationwide. Eventually, Roe Cloud also became the first Native Superintendent of Haskell Institute in Lawrence, Kansas—one of the largest and most influential of the government-run boarding schools for American Indians. At Haskell in the 1930s, Roe Cloud sought to broadcast his vision for Native-driven higher education and leadership on a larger scale, even as he struggled to exert creativity in the face of the bureaucracy that drove the school.

While I believe in Roe Cloud’s individual importance, I do not argue that he was the first Native leader to work toward a similar vision. Tribal groups had of course always controlled and refined their own complex forms of education. At times, some tribes had even appropriated Euro-American schooling models under their own authority.¹³

Still, Roe Cloud’s efforts stand out as the most significant for this project, which examines the interaction between Native intellectual activists and the dominant systems of higher education in America, and the long-term impact and relevance of that activism. Roe Cloud’s establishment of Native-driven higher education at the American Indian Institute is the most notable such effort in the post-allotment era of Native history, when the land bases, economic opportunities, and political power of tribes had been pushed to some of their lowest limits in American history. The General Allotment Act of 1887,

¹³ See for example Devon A. Mihesuah, *Cultivating the Rosebuds: The Education of Women at the Cherokee Female Seminary, 1851-1909* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997).

whatever the intentions of its sponsors, had accelerated the process of American Indian land loss that continued into the early twentieth century. It also coincided with an effort by many off-reservation boarding schools to pulverize tribal identity and assimilate Native students into a Euro-American model of citizenship.¹⁴ In response, Roe Cloud established the American Indian Institute in direct opposition to that model and the government power behind it, and in doing so laid out an educational vision that far outlasted his own life.

Roe Cloud's work came at a crucial time in the history of American higher education. In his own schooling experiences, he observed that institutional higher education was becoming an increasingly important part of the American perception of model citizenship and personal empowerment. As historian John Thelin has pointed out, the connection between higher education and earning power, social status, and overall prestige in America became firmly cemented during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.¹⁵ Though he understood well this development, Roe Cloud sought not straightforward assimilation to a white American model, but flexible adaptation for Native people to protect their Native and tribal identities and communities even as they gained a greater foothold in modern American power structures. He persistently pursued

¹⁴ Thomas J. Morgan, "Supplemental Report on Indian Education, December 1, 1889," in *Documents of United States Indian Policy*, 3rd ed., ed. Francis Paul Prucha (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 176-179. For broader assessments of the boarding school era see David Wallace Adams, *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995); Lomawaima, *They Called It Prairie Light*; Brenda Child, *Boarding School Seasons: American Indian Families, 1900-1940* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998); Clifford E. Trafzer, Jean A. Keller, and Lorene Sisquoc, eds., *Boarding School Blues: Revisiting American Indian Educational Experiences* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006); Jeffrey R. McDade, *The Birth of the American Indian Manual Labor Boarding School: Social Control Through Culture Destruction, 1820-1850* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2008).

¹⁵ Thelin, 155-156.

the expansion of higher education “by and for” Native people, with the explicit purpose of building and maintaining an influential body of Native professionals and intellectuals.¹⁶

The momentum of the arguments behind Roe Cloud’s work would eventually be stunted by the preoccupations of World War II and challenged by the implementation of American Indian Termination and assimilationist policies thereafter. However, even while segments of Congress attempted to terminate the unique tribal status and identities of Native people, the core of Roe Cloud’s intellectual vision remained intact in a nationwide Native discourse in postwar America.

Much of this was due to Roe Cloud’s wife Elizabeth (Ojibwe), who had served at times as an administrator for the American Indian Institute in her own right. After Henry’s death in 1950, she carried forward the key principles of the AII’s mission into broader arenas involving higher education but also community development and government.¹⁷ Together with Elizabeth, other notable activists like D’Arcy McNickle (Salish Kootenai) also kept alive Roe Cloud’s focus on Native leaders *as Native people*, as well as his general argument for greater self-government.¹⁸ Eventually, McNickle too

¹⁶ See for example Haskell’s newspaper, *The Indian Leader* 38, no. 37-38 (May 24, 1935); Henry Roe Cloud to Dr. Will Carson Ryan, Jr., August 7, 1934, Box 135 – Personal Correspondence July 1934-Feb 1935, Haskell Series: Correspondence of the Superintendents, 1890-1942 (ARC ID 2143367), Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Record Group 75, National Archives and Records Administration—Central Plains Region (Kansas City) [Hereafter cited as RG 75, Haskell Series, Corr. Supt., NARA KC].

¹⁷ D’Arcy McNickle and Elizabeth Roe Cloud, “American Indian Development – A Project Sponsored by the National Congress of American Indians: First Annual Report,” 1952, Reel 54, John Collier Papers, 1922-1968 (microfilm), Ross-Blakely Law Library, Arizona State University, 3. See also Elizabeth Roe Cloud, “New Frontiers for the American Indian,” 1952, Box 68 – Roe Cloud, Elizabeth, National Congress of American Indians records, National Museum of the American Indian Archive Center, Smithsonian Institution [Hereafter cited as NCAI records, NMAI].

¹⁸ D’Arcy McNickle, “What Do the Old Men Say?” *Indians at Work* 9, no. 4 (December 1, 1941), 24-26; D’Arcy McNickle, “Toward Understanding,” *Indians at Work* 9, no. 9 (May-June, 1942), 4-7; D’Arcy

focused more explicitly on leadership through higher education, directing the Workshop on American Indian Affairs in Boulder, Colorado. The Workshop influenced many of the founders of the National Indian Youth Council (NIYC), who compiled research on American Indian education and supported a movement toward greater Native control in schooling.¹⁹ At the same time, prolific writer Jack Forbes (Powhatan-Renapé, Delaware-Lenape) emerged as one of the strongest voices in resurrecting the call for Native-run institutions of higher education, in order to build and maintain a body of intellectual leaders in the way that Henry Roe Cloud had envisioned.²⁰ To be clear, not all influential Native intellectuals bought into the movement for Native-driven schooling. Some, like outspoken writer Rupert Costo (Cahuilla), feared that it would effectively reintroduce “segregation” in schooling.²¹

Forbes, McNickle, and numerous others, however, viewed Native people’s appropriation of American institutions as a form of self-determination and empowerment within American society, not as exclusion or alienation from it. They continued to build a national conversation that was fueled by growing networks of Native leaders throughout

McNickle, “We Go On From Here,” *Indians at Work* 11, no. 4 (November-December, 1943), 14-21; D’Arcy McNickle, *They Came Here First: The Epic of the American Indian* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1949); McNickle and Roe Cloud, “American Indian Development.”

¹⁹ Gerald T. Wilkinson to John Carlson, April 5, 1971, MSS 703 BC, Box 3, folder 35, Records of the National Indian Youth Council, Center for Southwest Research, University Libraries, University of New Mexico, 4-5 [hereafter cited as Records of NIYC, CSWR]. Wilkinson, as NIYC’s Executive Director, relates that in the early years NIYC was “interested primarily in educational problems.”

²⁰ Dr. Jack D. Forbes, “A Proposal to Create an American Indian University,” 1961, in *Native American Higher Education: The Struggle for the Creation of D-Q University, 1960-1971*, by Jack D. Forbes, 1985, Box 228 – Native Higher Education and Colleges, Jack D. Forbes Collection, UC Davis, Special Collections [Hereafter cited as Forbes Collection, UC Davis].

²¹ Rupert Costo to Dr. Jack D. Forbes, October 22, 1964, Box 2 – Jack Forbes: Correspondence, Forbes Collection, UC Davis.

the country. This nationwide discourse formed an articulate critique of the status quo in American education for Native students, and culminated with tribal communities seizing opportunities for tangible, community-driven projects in the 1960s and 1970s, including the growth of the first tribal colleges and universities. Activists at the national and tribal level demonstrated clearly that Native control of higher education presented an exciting opportunity to boost students' success—both in the context of mainstream American education and economics as well as in the realm of Native cultural identification and tribally-centered notions of successful living.²²

While focusing intently on this vibrant intellectual discourse, this history will also illustrate how the argument for Native control in higher education was implemented on the ground level. Navajo Community College serves as my primary example in this effort, largely because of its relatively rich source base and its role as the first of the tribal colleges. Detailing the particular efforts of Navajo Community College to meet challenges in funding, curricular construction, and accreditation contributes to a greater understanding of the actual day to day work of tribal colleges, especially in the early years of the TCU movement. At the same time, supplementary sources from the other tribal colleges re-emphasize the broader implications of the movement for Native control in higher education on a national level.

With that national context in mind, I also examine the cases of Haskell Indian Junior College (now Haskell Indian Nations University) and Deganawidah-Quetzalcoatl

²² For discussion of this discourse and its concrete impacts from the postwar period to today, see for example John A. Goodwin, “‘How Can We Change Without Destroying Ourselves?’: Arguments for Self-Determination and Workforce Education Through Tribal Colleges and Universities,” in *American Indian Workforce Education: Trends and Issues*, edited by Carsten Schmidtke (New York: Routledge, 2016).

University (D-Q University or DQU) in Davis, California, as key off-reservation complements to the reservation-based tribal colleges. Focusing on the transition at Haskell from a secondary and vocational boarding school toward a junior college model in the early 1970s helps reveal the broad nature of a movement in higher education that impacted not only various tribes, but the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) as well. The Haskell case also raises difficult questions about the relationship between tribal colleges, the federal government, and American Indian self-determination. Specifically, what gains had been made for Native leadership at Haskell from the days of Henry Roe Cloud, and what bureaucratic challenges and restrictions still remained in the 1970s and beyond? How does the form of Native activism developed at a non-reservation, government-run college like Haskell engage with or exist apart from the self-determination and nation-building efforts at TCUs that serve particular reservations and tribal communities?

Jack Forbes, the founder of D-Q University and a vocal proponent of self-determination and de-colonization, began raising similar questions in the 1960s and 1970s.²³ Studying Forbes' own university project at DQU provides a glimpse into the potential that Native activists saw in transcending tribal and even national boundaries to link intellectual and professional training with grassroots Native activism. While the majority of this history studies the period up until full accreditation and permanent

²³ Jack D. Forbes, "American Tribal Higher Education," 1968, in *Native American Higher Education: The Struggle for the Creation of D-Q University, 1960-1971*, by Jack D. Forbes, 1985, Box 228 – Native Higher Education and Colleges, Forbes Collection, UC Davis; Jack D. Forbes, "The Development of a Native American Intelligentsia and the Creation of D-Q University," 1980, in Hartmut Lutz, ed. *D-Q University: Native American Self-Determination in Higher Education* (Davis, CA: Department of Applied Behavioral Sciences/ Native American Studies Tecumseh Center, 1980), 75-88.

funding of TCUs in the late 1970s, I also incorporate recent material to reflect on how the original intellectual underpinnings explicated here remain intact and relevant today.

In multiple stages throughout much of the twentieth century, individual Native activists, educators, students, and tribal leaders—as well as national American Indian organizations—wove a tapestry of intellectual discourse that recalled and reiterated Henry Roe Cloud’s central goals. They appropriated existing forums in person and in print to broadcast their goals, while also creating their own institutional platforms and sites of publication to enhance their rhetorical power. They built from a foundation of Native culture, history, and contemporary identity while also emphasizing intellectual and professional training that could meet and adapt to the particular challenges facing Native people in modern America. Despite the need to rework and reshape the presentation of these goals, the activists studied here carried them through with remarkable continuity. This continuity is evident in the mission statements that tribal colleges and universities developed in the 1960s, 1970s, and beyond. Many TCUs continue to espouse these same goals. They pursue the dual goals of preserving and protecting Native history and culture while enabling Native students to become more successful and impactful in arenas of mainstream American intellectual, professional, and political life. Despite clear challenges, the emergence of this approach in a philosophical discourse and eventually in practice at Native-driven institutions has made a significant impact on American Indian access to and control of higher education.

This overall effort from Roe Cloud to today has been a form of what I call “Native intellectual activism.” While the period covered in this history witnessed many forms of activism, I use the term “Native intellectual activism” to draw attention to the

particular combination of principles—higher learning and leadership “by and for” Native people—espoused by individuals from Roe Cloud to the present. I also employ this term because the thread of activism I study was and is still oriented toward the continual growth of Native intellectualism through both old and new forms of higher education. It involves action that is political but also specifically educational, and thus rests on the input of Native intellectuals on the national level but also on local educators, administrators, government officials, and students themselves. In this inclusive conception of Native activism, I borrow from historian Daniel Cobb, who states that “convening summer workshops for college students, organizing youth councils, giving testimony at congressional hearings, authoring books and editorials, and manipulating the system from within” should all be considered forms of activism.²⁴ Activism, in other words, is more than the use of flamboyant tactics aimed at garnering publicity.

My examination of this history is also influenced by scholars who have uncovered similar American stories—stories of marginalized actors seeking to carve out their own protected spaces and platforms in the dominant discourses shaping American life. Gail Bederman, for example, describes ideological concepts of civilization, race, and gender in nineteenth- and twentieth-century America as “coercive” and yet “internally contradictory.”²⁵ While the contradictions and fallacies of oppressive discourses “frequently give them a tenacious power,” they also present opportunities for action,

²⁴ Daniel M. Cobb, *Native Activism in Cold War America: The Struggle for Sovereignty* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2008), 2.

²⁵ Bederman, 10.

where oppressed individuals or groups can turn a seemingly dominant structure against itself for the benefit of the marginalized.²⁶

In *Citizen Indians*, Lucy Maddox borrows from Bederman and applies a similar framework to studying the influential members of the Society of American Indians—including Henry Roe Cloud.²⁷ Osage scholar Robert Warrior's *Tribal Secrets* also serves as an important model for approaching Native history with a focus on early, underappreciated intellectual figures and how they addressed American culture and power structures.²⁸

Maddox notes that some of the most successful Native intellectuals were those who deftly appropriated and manipulated the dominant white American discourses and rhetorical tools available to them. She highlights a certain performative aspect in the lives of Native public leaders that could become uncomfortable but also useful. This framework applies directly to Henry Roe Cloud, who utilized his stature as a Yale graduate and Christian minister to pitch ideas of Native-driven higher education and positive portrayals of Native culture to influential white audiences. The leaders and organizations that subsequently built on Roe Cloud's ideas necessarily employed similar tactics. They embraced government programs and funding when those resources addressed the needs of Native people, but often shifted their energies away from those

²⁶ Bederman, 24.

²⁷ Maddox.

²⁸ Robert Warrior, *Tribal Secrets: Recovering American Indian Intellectual Traditions* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995).

channels and sought to invent new ones when supportive momentum stalled.²⁹ By borrowing from Bederman, Maddox, and other scholars who work in a similar vein, I can indirectly utilize some of intellectual history's foundational theoretical writers like Michel Foucault, while remaining grounded in the historical context of modern America.

Regarding the particular individuals and historical topics I study, the secondary literature still lacks unifying works to bring Henry Roe Cloud and his contemporaries into a conversation on the founding of TCUs and the arguments on which they were built. Scholarship focusing exclusively on Roe Cloud is rather slim, despite his vital role in early-twentieth-century Native leadership. Maddox necessarily discusses Roe Cloud because of his presence in the SAI, but not the details of his educational mission. At least two published biographies examine Roe Cloud's life, but neither focuses on the connections between his educational ideals and the later manifestation of those ideals in Native-driven schools.³⁰ Jason Tetzloff's 1996 dissertation contains extensive discussions of Roe Cloud's motivations and his educational methods, and yet perhaps too readily describes Roe Cloud as "assimilationist" without considering how his efforts actually promoted the *persistence* of adaptable forms of Native identity and leadership.³¹ More recent work in a special joint issue of *Studies in American Indian Literatures* and *American Indian Quarterly* has explicitly addressed this complicated notion of

²⁹ In a broad sense, this line of thinking is also influenced by Donald L. Fixico, for example *Indian Resilience and Rebuilding: Indigenous Nations in the Modern American West* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2013).

³⁰ Joel Pfister, *The Yale Indian: The Education of Henry Roe Cloud* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009); David W. Messer, *Henry Roe Cloud: A Biography* (Lanham, MD: Hamilton Books, 2010).

³¹ Jason M. Tetzloff, "To Do Some Good Among the Indians: Henry Roe Cloud and Twentieth Century Native American Advocacy," (PhD diss., Purdue University, 1996).

assimilation and early-twentieth-century Native activism.³² Perhaps the most useful depiction of Roe Cloud for the purposes of this project is Steven Crum's "Henry Roe Cloud, A Winnebago Indian Reformer: His Quest for American Indian Higher Education."³³ Crum employs primary source material well, displaying Roe Cloud's complicated relationships with the SAI, with Commissioner of Indian Affairs John Collier, and with the notion of Native-controlled institutions of higher education. While Crum's work introduces Roe Cloud's educational ideals and particular efforts, the brief article does not focus on the long-term connections between the intellectual leader and the goals of later movements.

Next to Roe Cloud, D'Arcy McNickle is probably the most well-known individual in this history. Dorothy Parker's biography provides a detailed look at the relationship between McNickle's personal and professional lives, while Daniel Cobb's *Native Activism in Cold War America* holds McNickle as a central figure in postwar Native leadership.³⁴ Again, though, my work serves an important role in revealing and underscoring this individual's connections to a thread of intellectual activism that stretched before and after his own time.

Apart from studies of individuals, there does exist a significant body of literature on the education of American Indians in the United States. Boarding schools of the

³² Chadwick Allen and Beth Piatote, eds, "The Society of American Indians and its Legacies," special issue, *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 37, no. 3, and *American Indian Quarterly* 25, no. 2 (Summer 2013).

³³ Steven Crum, "Henry Roe Cloud, a Winnebago Indian Reformer: His Quest for American Indian Higher Education," *Kansas History* 11, no. 3 (Autumn 1988), 171-184.

³⁴ Dorothy R. Parker, *Singing an Indian Song: A Biography of D'Arcy McNickle* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992); Cobb.

nineteenth and early twentieth centuries occupy a large portion of that scholarship, and in the past few decades many authors have focused on the Native perspective of the schooling experience.³⁵ However, literature on Native students in higher education is sparser. Tribally-controlled institutions, in particular, represent one under-studied area.

For the most part, tribally-controlled institutions of education have appeared briefly in secondary literature as part of one of several contexts. First, many recent works have focused on overall Native nation-building and self-determination efforts in the mid-to-late twentieth century, where higher education of American Indians does play a role. However, this scholarship has generally focused on activist groups such as the American Indian Movement (AIM), or on the legal and legislative battles between tribes and the United States government. In this sense, tribally-controlled institutions of education serve as brief illustrations of a larger movement.³⁶ In a second context, Native control of education has appeared in longer histories of American Indian education from the point of Euro-American contact until the present. With a wide range temporally, authors can rarely devote in-depth analysis to any one segment of the history.³⁷ In a third context, tribal control is discussed but generally in terms of childhood education rather than higher education. The focus in this context often involves institutions such as Rough Rock Demonstration School, which opened on the Navajo reservation in the 1960s and

³⁵ Child; Lomawaima, *They Called It Prairie Light*.

³⁶ Charles Wilkinson, *Blood Struggle: The Rise of Modern Indian Nations* (New York: Norton, 2005); Bradley G. Shreve, *Red Power Rising: The National Indian Youth Council and the Origins of Native Activism* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2011).

³⁷ David H. DeJong, *Promises of the Past: A History of Indian Education in the United States* (Golden, CO: North American Press, 1993); Margaret Connell Szasz, *Education and the American Indian: The Road to Self-Determination Since 1913*, 3rd ed. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1999); Jon Reyhner and Jeanne Eder, *American Indian Education: A History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004).

employed innovative bilingual and culturally-rooted lessons for young children. Teresa McCarty provides perhaps the most in-depth illustration of Rough Rock's significance.³⁸

Finally, multiple dissertations and other recent works of Native American Studies have examined tribal colleges and universities, with at least two dissertations covering Diné College in particular.³⁹ However, these dissertations generally focus on the particular cultural goals of one people and less on the broader intellectual discourse on American Indian education throughout the country. Many recent works in Native American Studies explore TCUs as an important factor in contemporary American Indian self-determination and nation-building efforts, but rarely devote significant time connecting those efforts to the particular intellectual and historical roots of the schools.⁴⁰

I seek to demonstrate that the disparate threads of this scholarship must be tied together, from Roe Cloud to the birth of TCUs to contemporary models of Native-driven education as part of nation-building. In so doing, my project can address a gap in the literature and illustrate that the goals of tribal colleges and universities are part of a longer Native intellectual and activist tradition that remains relevant today.

³⁸ Teresa L. McCarty, *A Place to Be Navajo: Rough Rock and the Struggle for Self-Determination in Indigenous Schooling* (New York: Routledge, 2002).

³⁹ Lloyd L. House, "The Historical Development of Navajo Community College," (PhD diss., Arizona State University, 1974); Ferlin Clark, "In Becoming Sa'ah Naaghai Bik'eh Hozhoon: The Historical Challenges and Triumphs of Diné College," (PhD diss., University of Arizona, 2009).

⁴⁰ Vine Deloria Jr. and Daniel Wildcat, *Power and Place: Indian Education in America* (Golden, CO: Fulcrum, 2001); Miriam Jorgensen, ed., *Rebuilding Native Nations: Strategies for Governance and Development* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2007); Matthew Fletcher, *American Indian Education: Counternarratives in Racism, Struggle, and the Law* (New York: Routledge, 2008); Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development, *The State of the Native Nations: Conditions Under U.S. Policies of Self-Determination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008);

In my effort to stay grounded in this history, I seek to avoid the pitfall of becoming preoccupied by entangling discussions of terms and language at the expense of the intriguing story that my primary sources tell. Many of the leaders in this story were eager to have their ideas shared and debated by both Native and non-Native advocates throughout the country, and their rhetorical efforts and personal communications provide a rich source base. Henry Roe Cloud took care to share his thoughts on American Indian education with his students in school newspapers, but he went further by utilizing a variety of publications to broadcast his ideas throughout the country. He also engaged in extensive correspondence with Native and non-Native advocates of his work. D'Arcy McNickle and Elizabeth Roe Cloud utilized their positions within the Bureau of Indian Affairs and non-government organizations to embody Roe Cloud's vision of Native leadership and to maintain a visible activist presence after his departure from the educational spotlight. A later generation of Native educational leaders like Jack Forbes and the founders of the National Indian Youth Council worked with mainstream American educational and political systems while also carrying on their own discourse in Native-run settings. Harnessing and redirecting the power of newsletters, journals, books, and other rhetorical tools—often by creating their own publications and printing centers—became a hallmark of this intellectual activism, and helped preserve the Native voices that contributed to it.

Perhaps no one appreciated the power of these rhetorical tools more than Henry Roe Cloud himself. In September of 1933, as he began his first school year as Superintendent of Haskell Institute, Roe Cloud had already taken over as editor of *The Indian Leader*, the school's paper. He wasted no time in expressing with plain language

the significance of the white American audience in Native life—whether it came in the form of the federal government or the public at large. “The Indian race is on trial,” he asserted.⁴¹ “Those Indians who have been put in positions of responsibility here at Haskell Institute are on trial... [and] the student body is also on trial.”⁴² Rather than shrink from this scrutiny, however, Roe Cloud accepted the challenge and charged his Native students to do the same.

For those familiar with the struggles that Native individuals and communities still face in education, economics, and politics, Roe Cloud’s and some of the other voices I highlight in this history may appear overly optimistic. It is not my goal to argue that the implementation of Native-driven institutions of higher education has been universally successful. But it is one of my fundamental goals to capture this discourse’s Native voices in their own words, in their own time, and in doing so to reveal the enthusiastic, tenacious, and truly inventive nature of this vein of activism. When Henry Roe Cloud suggested that the “Indian race” was “on trial,” he did not expect that reality to disappear quickly or easily, but neither did he accept it as a reason for despair. Instead, he reimagined the “trial” metaphor as a chance to succeed on a visible platform. After all, he argued, “it is high time that [the] foremost men and women of the Indian race should be recognized and given an *opportunity* to bear responsibility and exercise authority,” and he was not about let that opportunity pass him by.⁴³

⁴¹ “Henry Roe Cloud New Superintendent of Haskell Institute,” *The Indian Leader* 37, no. 3 (September 8, 1933), 6.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*

I write a history of this activism knowing that many of its most ambitious visions have still never fully materialized, but also knowing that its central characteristics remain intact, and still possess potential. I write this history believing that the optimism that boils to the surface in the words of these Native activists does not come from naiveté or shortsightedness, but from a willingness to see opportunity within struggle, and from a deep appreciation of the motivating potential, the worthiness, and the lasting resilience of a shared idea for change.

CHAPTER ONE

“By and for Indians”: Henry Roe Cloud and His Early-20th-Century Activism for Native-Driven Higher Education

The past century has seen the development and implementation of an intellectual argument for greater Native access to and control of higher education in the United States. Tribal colleges and universities (TCUs) represent one of the clearest manifestations of that intellectual effort. These schools serve as tangible markers of a shift toward American Indian self-determination in the late twentieth century, and as continuations of a much older strategy by Native activists to harness American institutions of power for their own particular needs and goals.

Given that the first tribal college was not established until the late 1960s, it may at first seem a stretch to begin this history in 1915. And yet, by looking more closely at the life of Henry Roe Cloud and the work he pursued, we can see how he engaged the most powerful systems of American education and government, in an attempt to carve out a visible platform for his particular form of Native intellectual activism. His decades-long work in this vein would leave a significant and resilient core of intellectual inspiration for the later movement toward TCUs and other forms of Native-driven higher education in America.

Why Henry Roe Cloud?

In 1915, Henry Roe Cloud founded the Roe Indian Institute (later the American Indian Institute) with a vision for the school to act as a national center for intellectual

leadership training among Native students.¹ Roe Cloud at this time was just emerging from an outstanding academic career in his own right, and his school served as a center of higher education because of its vital role as a bridge to an academic life beyond the common vocational program offered to American Indian students at the time. Roe Cloud sought to expand American Indian opportunities in higher education by focusing on levels of academic study that translated to intellectual leadership, rather than purely vocational training that translated to a permanent working-class status.² Crucially, however, this notion of intellectual leadership was also grounded in Native culture, identity, and communities—including the study of tribal histories, languages, governments, and contemporary socioeconomic challenges.

While Roe Cloud was certainly not the first Native figure who sought greater opportunities for leadership through American schooling, there are several reasons he serves as a focal point of this history. First, this history is primarily concerned with the particular intellectual movements within American Indian higher education that eventually took tangible shape in the 1960s as tribal colleges and universities. Perhaps the clearest expression of TCUs' intellectual argument has been the affirmation that Native people in the United States deserved greater access to and control of their own pathways in higher education than had been available before the twentieth century. Henry Roe

¹ Henry Roe Cloud to E. C. Sage, April 24, 1918, Reel 2, Records of the American Indian Institute, 1908-1954 (microfilm), Record Group 301.8, United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. Board of National Missions Dept. of Health, Education and Welfare, [hereafter cited as Records of the AII]. For additional information on the purpose and vision for the American Indian Institute, see Henry Roe Cloud, "Education of the American Indian," *Quarterly Journal of the Society of American Indians*, 2, no. 3 (July-September, 1914), 203-209.

² Ibid.

Cloud, more than any other Native leader of his era, directed his efforts according to this same simple yet profound idea. Through his words and deeds at the American Indian Institute, Haskell Institute, and elsewhere from 1915 onward, Roe Cloud would demonstrate a vision for American Indian higher education and leadership that shows remarkable continuity with the goals and mission statements of TCUs to this day. Thus, while Roe Cloud has not been linked to the development of TCUs in other histories, his inclusion is crucial for a fuller long-term understanding of this topic.

Roe Cloud serves as a focal point not only because his educational ideals have translated to the work of tribal colleges, but also because these ideals made a vital impact in his own time. Even among notable Native reformers such as Charles Eastman (Dakota), Arthur C. Parker (Seneca), and Laura Cornelius Kellogg (Oneida) in the Society of American Indians (SAI), Roe Cloud stood out for his persistent dedication to reforming and restructuring American education in both the private and governmental arenas. Historian Hazel W. Hertzberg sees Roe Cloud as exceedingly influential even when compared with his illustrious peers. “Of all the old SAI leaders,” Hertzberg writes, “the man who most deeply affected the reformulation of Indian policy was probably Henry Roe Cloud.”³ Long before this posthumous praise, Commissioner of Indian Affairs John Collier very plainly referred to Roe Cloud as “the most important living Indian” in the early 1930s.⁴

³ Hazel W. Hertzberg, *The Search for an American Indian Identity: Modern Pan-Indian Movements* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1971), 204.

⁴ John Collier, as quoted in “Haskell Needed for Future Work: Commissioner Collier Silences Rumors,” *The Indian Leader* 38, no. 11-12 (Fiftieth Anniversary Number), November 23, 1934.

This recognition was built over a long career of unwavering activism. However, Roe Cloud was also uniquely positioned to carry out one of the first great attempts at re-shaping the landscape of American Indian higher education in the United States. He had experienced firsthand not only the boarding school system at Genoa Indian School in Nebraska, but had gone on to become the first American Indian graduate of Yale University.⁵ His training at the Auburn School of Theology further strengthened his intellectual credentials as well as his ability and willingness to articulate what he saw as the strengths of a Christian education. This dedication to a Christian moral outlook remained with him throughout his decades-long efforts to altogether change the meaning of higher education for American Indian people, and yet he never abandoned his belief in the importance of Native expressions of identity.⁶ Roe Cloud was thus well trained and well known intellectually throughout both white and American Indian circles of power, with a charismatic appeal and enough recognition to bridge that gap and accomplish what few other Native leaders of his era could have attempted.

At the American Indian Institute as well as during his work within the federal government's Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), Roe Cloud's efforts to re-shape education

⁵ David Martinez, ed., *The American Indian Intellectual Tradition: An Anthology of Writings from 1772 to 1972* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011), 192. For additional biographical information on Roe Cloud, see also Steven J. Crum, "Henry Roe Cloud, a Winnebago Indian Reformer: His Quest for American Indian Higher Education," *Kansas History* 11, no. 3 (Autumn 1988), 171-184; Jason M. Tetzloff, "To Do Some Good Among the Indians: Henry Roe Cloud and Twentieth Century Native American Advocacy," (PhD diss., Purdue University, 1996); and Joel Pfister, *The Yale Indian: The Education of Henry Roe Cloud* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009).

⁶ One area from which Roe Cloud's commitment to expressions of Native identity among students can be gleaned is the publications of the schools he headed. See *The Indian Outlook* (1923 onward) for the American Indian Institute, and *The Indian Leader* (1933-1935) for Haskell Institute.

for American Indians focused strongly on the concept of leadership.⁷ His particular expression of Native intellectual activism was dedicated to the expansion of a body of Native leaders beyond those very few who, like himself, had managed to gain access to the highest levels of American schooling. He worried about the relatively few Native students who reached that elite academic status, and sought to expand opportunities in higher education and engrain a process of education for leadership among Native people.⁸ Overall, he wanted to institutionalize a sense not only of Native *access* to greater levels of education and training, but Native *control* of that training through leadership positions in educational and community networks.

Roe Cloud approached this great labor with a balanced notion of the role of assimilation in the lives of American Indian people. He was wary of aggressive assimilationist tactics, and while he often spoke of the importance of Christian teachings in the shaping of strong students, he privileged the goal of Native leadership above that of a particular form of Christian indoctrination. In his work, he emphasized what he saw as basic principles of hard work, honesty, and dedication in a Christian framework while also consistently expressing his fears about overzealous assimilation and his pride in expressions of racial and tribal identity.⁹ He was decades ahead of his time in the way he

⁷ For examples see “What are the Aims of the American Indian Institute?” *The Indian Outlook* 1, no. 1 (November 1, 1923), 4; and “Henry Roe Cloud New Superintendent of Haskell Institute,” *The Indian Leader* 37, no. 1 (September 8, 1933), 6.

⁸ Henry Roe Cloud, “Education of the American Indian.”

⁹ For example of non-denominational, non-sectarian approach at the American Indian Institute, see Henry Roe Cloud to W. S. Lank, October 26, 1923, Reel 2, Records of the AII. For example of emphasis on hard work, self-discipline, and other similar virtues, see “Ten Commandments of Success,” *The Indian Outlook* 1, no. 1 (November 1, 1923), 4. For example of resisting outright assimilation into white American culture, see Henry Roe Cloud, “Foreword,” *The Indian Leader* 38, no. 1 (September 7, 1934), 1, 6.

encouraged students to strengthen their knowledge of tribal histories, languages, and cultures while simultaneously preparing for necessary adaptations to mainstream American educational, political, and economic systems.

Together, these characteristics convey that Roe Cloud was crucial in developing an early critique of the existing American system of education for Native people, as well as a dedicated effort to reform and reshape that system. He wanted to transform schooling for Native students from a trajectory limited by basic grade school and vocational education into one that truly opened up all of modern America's institutions of educational, political, and professional power to Native people and communities. His public recognition, along with his persuasive charisma and his tireless dedication to his cause, enabled him to garner enough support to demonstrate in some ways his vision for this changed landscape of American Indian higher education. While other influential Native activists coming from the Society of American Indians certainly gained comparable or even greater fame and status during this era, it was Roe Cloud who put in decades of hard work not only constructing a sustained critique of the American education system for Native students, but striving in the administrative grind to grapple with that system and its potential alternatives on a daily basis.

Over time, monetary and bureaucratic challenges left his efforts frustrated and stunted by the eve of World War II. And yet, Roe Cloud's ideals would eventually be resurrected and reshaped in the postwar period. Even as the intellectual backbone of the tribal college movement developed and gained support in the 1960s, 1970s, and beyond, it would show remarkable continuity with the early-twentieth-century work of Henry Roe Cloud.

Roe Cloud's Educational Influences and His Vision for Reform

In order to properly understand Roe Cloud's particular form of intellectual activism and his growth as a leading figure of American Indian educational reform, it is instructive to study his own experience with American schooling. That experience, which ranged from government boarding school to Ivy League university to theological seminary, provided him a wide range of intellectual instruction but also a range of inspirational ideas for his own efforts as an educator. By the time he laid out the key aspects of his vision for American Indian education in an essay titled "Education of the American Indian" in 1914, he had experienced firsthand the full range of schooling possible for Native students in the early twentieth century.¹⁰

Like so many Native children of his generation, Roe Cloud (then called *Wo-Na-Xi-Lay-Hunka*) left his reservation home at a young age to attend a government-run boarding school.¹¹ In his case, Genoa Indian School in Nebraska provided the initial destination. After several years at the school in the mid-1890s, Roe Cloud attended Santee Mission School, also in Nebraska, followed by a preparatory school in Mt. Harmon, Massachusetts, followed in turn by Yale University, and finally Auburn School of Theology in New York.¹² The Protestant Christian influence he embraced during his schooling made a tremendous impact on his life, and his willingness and ability to preach remained a strong part of his character throughout his adult life.¹³ Indeed, perhaps the

¹⁰ Henry Roe Cloud, "Education of the American Indian."

¹¹ Henry Roe Cloud, "From Wigwam to Pulpit," *The Missionary Review of the World* 38 (1915), 332.

¹² *Ibid.*, 329-339.

¹³ For example, see "Sunday Services," *The Indian Leader* 37, no. 23 (February 9, 1934), 5.

most important relationships he developed during his years as a student were with the Reverend Walter and Mary Roe, who ministered to Native Christians in Oklahoma and impressed Roe Cloud with their “overflowing life of service for the Indian race.”¹⁴ The Roes took a great supporting interest in Roe Cloud and his educational and activist efforts. The bond was so close that the Roes, who had lost a child of their own, eventually adopted Roe Cloud as their son, and young Henry Cloud folded their surname into his own.¹⁵ Even after Walter Roe’s death in 1913, Mary Roe and Henry Roe Cloud remained extremely close and shared a common purpose in Native education.¹⁶

In Roe Cloud’s progression from boarding school to Ivy League to Christian seminary, it is tempting to see a clear path of assimilation, from a childhood on the Winnebago reservation to eventual inclusion in the elite levels of mainstream American education. Roe Cloud, like many Native intellectual leaders of his time, even took on the appearance of a contemporary American professional. He wore suits and ties, kept his dark hair short, and sported a well-trimmed mustache and glasses. One of his earliest influential writings, “From Wigwam to Pulpit,” even seems to suggest a linear, assimilationist track in its title. Jason Tetzloff, in his 1996 dissertation on Roe Cloud’s career as an activist, buys heavily into this apparent progression and states rather brusquely that Roe Cloud “was committed to the goal of greater assimilation of the Indian into American society.”¹⁷ Tetzloff repeatedly stresses Roe Cloud’s Christian

¹⁴ Henry Roe Cloud, “From Wigwam to Pulpit,” 338.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ “Obituary: Walter C. Roe, of Oklahoma,” *Missionary Review of the World* 36 (1913), 395.

¹⁷ Tetzloff, 41.

education and his preaching efforts as part of that push for greater assimilation, and argues that Roe Cloud mirrored the sentiments of the rest of the Society of American Indians in this outlook.¹⁸ While Tetzloff does well in marshalling a variety of evidence on Roe Cloud's Christian beliefs and preaching activities, his rather simple conclusion that the activist used a "strong assimilationist" approach in his educational reform efforts detracts from a deeper understanding of Roe Cloud's particular intellectual approach to assimilation.¹⁹

The first reason Tetzloff's label precludes a fuller understanding relates to his treatment of Roe Cloud's relationship with the Society of American Indians. While Tetzloff admits that members of the SAI disagreed on some details of their approaches to American Indian issues, his painting of them as generally assimilationist glosses over the deep divisions among this group of leaders. The SAI was filled with strong individual personalities who were intensely passionate about a variety of topics and could disagree wholeheartedly on some very fundamental issues, such as the role of reservation lands, the possibility of American Indian citizenship, and the general concept of assimilation.²⁰ Roe Cloud himself became disgusted with the organization several years after its founding, writing that what had begun as a noble organization had been run "in the hole."²¹

¹⁸ Ibid., 41-56.

¹⁹ Ibid., 118.

²⁰ For a discussion of some of the Society of American Indians' most important personalities, see Lucy Maddox, *Citizen Indians: Native American Intellectuals, Race, and Reform* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005).

²¹ Henry Roe Cloud to Thomas Jesse Jones, September 18, 1923, Reel 1, Records of the AII.

Furthermore, the blanket label of the Society as “assimilationist” does not give proper weight to contextual factors impacting what that term could signify regarding Native people in particular.²² Nor does it account for the factors that leaders like Roe Cloud and the others had to contend with in order to remain connected to influential members of mainstream American society in the early twentieth century. As Gregory Smithers argues in his study of the SAI’s early publications, even the use of the term “assimilation” among SAI members could often mean simply bringing Native people and their communities into a more equitable and formal relationship with the dominant American culture and its systems of power, without compromising tribal and Native expressions of identity.²³ And as Lucy Maddox writes in her discussion of the SAI’s various intellectual approaches, prominent Native leaders who agreed among themselves still had to struggle with the dominant white American discourses on race and culture. As best they could, they “deliberately adopted, manipulated, and transformed the means already available to them for addressing white audiences.”²⁴ While this does not mean that leaders like Roe Cloud or the others necessarily compromised their personal beliefs for the sake of appealing to white audiences, they were undoubtedly aware that a certain

²² K. Tsianina Lomawaima, “The Mutuality of Citizenship and Sovereignty: The Society of American Indians and the Battle to Inherit America,” in “The Society of American Indians and its Legacies,” ed. Chadwick Allen and Beth H. Piatote, Special Issue, *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 37, no. 3, and *American Indian Quarterly* 25, no. 2 (Summer 2013), 333-351. Lomawaima discusses the idea of straightforward assimilation as essentially an illusion, especially as policies involving education, economics, and citizenship were repeatedly marshaled throughout the twentieth century with the very purpose of attaching to Native people identifiable differences as “Indian.”

²³ Gregory D. Smithers, “The Soul of Unity: The Quarterly Journal of the Society of American Indians, 1913-1915,” in Allen and Piatote, 277.

²⁴ Maddox, 16. This discussion of the role of racial and cultural discourses in the United States is also influenced by Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

level of performance played a necessary role in their lives as public intellectuals and activists.

Regarding Roe Cloud more specifically, the “assimilationist” label fails to provide any real insight, as it not only oversimplifies his personal experience as a student and an educator, but directly clashes with some of his own descriptions of his vision and goals for American Indian education. It is therefore more instructive to examine Roe Cloud’s experiences in American schooling and note the ways in which he chose to *deviate* from straightforward assimilationist tactics once he had the opportunity to do so. As he transitioned from standout student to charismatic educator and activist, he was able to use his leadership positions to construct a more nuanced approach to the era’s aggressive calls for assimilation as he sought to transform the relationship between Native students and American schooling.²⁵

As mentioned above, one key instance in which Roe Cloud expressed his ideas for reshaping that relationship occurred in 1914 when he published his essay “Education of the American Indian.” This piece was also delivered as a speech at the famous Lake Mohonk conference in 1914. Poised perfectly between his long career as a student and his future career as an educational reformer, Roe Cloud outlined the intellectual argument for what would become his American Indian Institute, the prep school for Native students that he would direct for over a decade. The essay directly addressed numerous influential “friends of the Indian” at Lake Mohonk, but was circulated more widely via the

²⁵ See Pfister, 156. Pfister diverts from Tetzloff’s “strong assimilationist” interpretation. Pfister suggests that, in his career as an educator, Roe Cloud became less focused on the prospect of individual Christian morality and conversion and instead concentrated on a general growth of Native leadership characterized by American Indian cultural and racial pride.

Quarterly Journal of the Society of American Indians.²⁶ By closely reading this text—as well as other documents related to the Institute’s founding—we can attain a clearer sense of how Roe Cloud’s schooling had impacted his understanding of Native students’ place in American education. We can also glean the key beliefs that guided his efforts to achieve greater American Indian access to and control of higher education and positions of leadership in the ensuing decades.

In his 1914 essay, Roe Cloud assessed the broad scope of American Indian education in the early twentieth century and discussed how the nature of that entire system impacted Native populations socially, politically, and economically. One of the strongest influences evident in Roe Cloud’s perspective was his own experience at the Genoa Indian School in Nebraska. Roe Cloud’s attendance at Genoa in the 1890s occurred at a time when powerful men in American Indian administration hailed assimilationist schooling as the quickest and most logical way to aid Native populations and bring individual students into the fold as productive members of the American republic.²⁷ Thomas J. Morgan, Commissioner of Indian Affairs from 1889-1893, stood out as somewhat of a progressive compared with his contemporaries in the sense that he considered higher education an important aspect of the needs of Native students. However, his authoritative voice on the consequences of Native tribal living reflected the deep racial and cultural biases of the era. Morgan praised the work of Captain Richard H. Pratt, whose military-style education for Native students at Carlisle Indian School

²⁶ Henry Roe Cloud, “Education of the American Indian.”

²⁷ Thomas J. Morgan, “Supplemental Report on Indian Education, December 1, 1889,” in *Documents of United States Indian Policy*, 3rd ed., ed. Francis Paul Prucha (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 176-179.

became a model of the boarding school era.²⁸ Speaking in the 1890s, Pratt remarked of education for the Native student, “all the Indian there is in the race should be dead. Kill the Indian in him, and save the man.”²⁹ Similarly, in his own vision for the ideal educational approach toward Native students, Commissioner Morgan wrote that schooling of American Indian children should occur as early in life as possible, not only for the more rapid “disintegration of the tribes” but so that “habits of industry and love of learning ... [could take] the place of indolence and indifference.”³⁰ Morgan optimistically concluded that “in a single generation,” the entire body of Native students could be “brought into intimate relationship with the highest type of American rural life.”³¹ Roe Cloud, however, understood how the concrete operation of a government boarding school could fall woefully short of the lofty ideals of a Commissioner of Indian Affairs.

He made this clear in “Education of the American Indian” when he wrote of the apparent disconnect between the ideals of boarding schools’ vocational training and the reality of the work that students performed. In schools like Genoa, students spent approximately half of their day in vocational training that was ostensibly directed toward the learning of a productive trade.³² But this system was also used to reduce the running

²⁸ Ibid., 178.

²⁹ Richard H. Pratt speech, 1892, reprinted in “The Advantages of Mingling Indians with Whites,” in *Americanizing the American Indians: Writings by the “Friends of the Indian,” 1880-1900*, ed. Francis Paul Prucha (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), 260-271.

³⁰ Morgan, 178.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Grace Stenberg Parsons Manuscripts, Nebraska State Historical Society, Lincoln. For additional information on day-to-day experiences of boarding school students in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, as well as how the boarding school era fits into a larger story of American Indian assimilation campaigns, see Frederick Hoxie, *A Final Promise: The Campaign to Assimilate the Indians, 1880-1920* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984); K. Tsianina Lomawaima, *They Called it Prairie Light: The Story of Chilocco Indian School* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994); David Wallace

costs of the schools, which often resulted in students performing repetitive and menial tasks rather than acquiring a true craft. As Roe Cloud expressed it, “I worked two years turning a washing machine ... [and] such work is not educative. It begets a hatred for work, especially where there is no pay for such labor.”³³ While Roe Cloud praised the value of truly instructive vocational training in preparing students for meeting the needs of modern American capitalism, he also worried about the “dangers” that the American economy posed for any unprepared worker.³⁴ Thus, what Commissioner Morgan saw as a boarding school system that produced “honorable, useful, happy citizens of a great republic, sharing on equal terms in all its blessings,” Roe Cloud instead understood as one that groomed students for a tedious life of labor as members of the underclass.³⁵

In Roe Cloud’s eyes, the failings of the American Indian boarding schools’ vocational programs were only exacerbated by the relatively low level of academic training these schools accomplished. Even in 1914, in a context awash with the rhetoric of rapid assimilation and the need for Americanism, Roe Cloud understood that American Indian identity would continue to endure, both on and off the reservation. Indeed, he spoke of reservation lands not as an antiquated system of the past but as a key component that should necessarily play into a Native student’s learning: “[the student]

Adams, *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995); Brenda Child, *Boarding School Seasons: American Indian Families, 1900-1940* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998); and Clifford E. Trafzer, Jean A. Keller, & Lorene Sisquoc, eds., *Boarding School Blues: Revisiting American Indian Educational Experiences* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006).

³³ Henry Roe Cloud, “Education of the American Indian,” 208.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 203.

³⁵ Morgan, 177.

must study the physical environment and topography of his particular reservation, for these in large measure control the fortunes of his people.”³⁶ The futures of American Indian communities, he reasoned, would depend heavily on leaders whose training prepared them to meet all the challenges that mainstream white Americans faced, *in addition to* the particular political and legal challenges that affected Native people. The Native leaders charged with meeting this “two-fold” dilemma needed to “be more than grammar-school men. They must be trained to grapple with these economic, educational, political, religious and social” dynamics as they overlapped in their lives.³⁷ In examining the challenges facing Native people—challenges both alike and different from those of other Americans—Roe Cloud diverged from the common course of the assimilationist voices. The most enthusiastic of these, such as Commissioner Morgan, attempted to sweep away the economic and legal problems of Native communities “in a single generation” of tribal disintegration, while Roe Cloud envisioned a more balanced line of “adaptation.”³⁸ The ability to *adapt* to dynamic challenges rather than simply *assimilate* to one vague notion of Americanism would remain a crucial distinction for Roe Cloud as he embarked on his career as an educator, and would in fact be carried on in renewed forms by later Native intellectual activists.

For Roe Cloud, the ability to adapt as a leader required a level of intellectual training that the boarding school system simply did not meet. Remarking on the level of schooling provided to most Native students, he argued that “if every person ... had only

³⁶ Henry Roe Cloud, “Education of the American Indian,” 206.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Morgan, 177; Henry Roe Cloud, “Education of the American Indian,” 206.

an eighth-grade education with which to wrestle with the problems of life and the Nation, this country would be in a bad way.”³⁹ Put simply, even if the government boarding school system *did* fully accomplish its goals of a grammar school education and a part-time vocational training, it would still fall short of providing the leadership training that Roe Cloud saw as necessary in twentieth-century America.

Rather than rest with a critique of the boarding school system or a vision of reforming it alone, Roe Cloud expanded his scope to assess how poor training early on prevented Native students from reaching higher levels of schooling that were ostensibly open to them. “This system,” he argued of the government’s schooling for Native students, “is resulting in an absolute block upon the entrance of our ablest young people into the schools and colleges of the land.”⁴⁰ As the first American Indian to graduate from Yale University, he acutely understood the dearth of Native students at the highest levels of American education. He flatly refuted the notion that any inherent intellectual failings were to blame, asserting that “the difficulty lies in the system rather than in the race.”⁴¹ Having already graduated from both Yale and the Auburn School of Theology, he knew that to white audience members and readers he might represent an obvious illustration of this point.

Building from his critique of the contemporary system of American Indian schooling, Roe Cloud concluded “Education of the American Indian” by briefly outlining his own vision for an institution that could succeed in places where that old system had

³⁹ Henry Roe Cloud, “Education of the American Indian,” 207.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

failed. By providing a rigorous training in academic as well as practical vocational pursuits, he optimistically hoped to bring about the growth of a new body of Native leaders who could address the particular needs of their tribal communities and of Native people throughout the United States. Rather than seek to re-invent the grammar school or children's boarding school, Roe Cloud attacked the evident gap between American Indian populations and higher education. His proposed school would act as a preparatory school for those students seeking higher learning and for those who wanted to gain enough training to become leaders within their reservation communities.⁴²

Roe Cloud stressed the importance of a Christian education at his proposed institution, but did so in ways that emphasized values held by a broad swath of the American people, regardless of religious affiliation. For instance, he repeatedly spoke of the role of "self-support" and "self-denial" as moral qualities that paid positive dividends in American economic and social structures, but did not mention specific religious teachings or denominational leanings.⁴³ Indeed, early documents related to Roe Cloud's proposed school explicitly spelled out the desire to maintain a nondenominational approach, "thus allowing a broad appeal to Christian and philanthropic interests."⁴⁴ In the early years of what would become the American Indian Institute, Roe Cloud's own Christian education and beliefs certainly impacted the way the school constructed its curriculum and activities. But the nondenominational approach allowed him to appeal to

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid., 208.

⁴⁴ Minutes of a Meeting of the Indian Committee of the Home Missions Council, 1912, Reel 2, Records of the AII.

a broad swath of supporters outside the Institute while always privileging his goals of leadership training and “the promotion of higher education among” his Native students.⁴⁵ And while he continued to relate a broad Christian worldview to commonly-held American economic and social values, Roe Cloud simultaneously emphasized the importance of leadership *as Native people*. In this way, he eschewed the simplistic forms of identity-erasing *assimilation* common to his era and instead preached a sense of *adaptability* that reserved room for Native languages, cultures, and identities. A variety of documents from Roe Cloud’s educational career demonstrate how he maintained this important distinction throughout his years as an intellectual activist, beginning with his first major efforts to advocate for greater Native access and control in American higher education.

The American Indian Institute as a New Form of Higher Education

In 1915, Henry Roe Cloud began to put his vision into action when he and his adoptive mother Mary Roe founded the American Indian Institute in Wichita, Kansas.⁴⁶ “Feeling that the United States government was unable for many reasons to more than partially care for” Native students’ needs, Roe Cloud sought to operate entirely free from government funding and oversight.⁴⁷ As indicated in “Education of the American Indian,” he saw a fundamental flaw in the government’s system of education as it related to Native students. American colleges and universities ostensibly stood open to these students, and yet hardly any attended because the Bureau of Indian Affairs’ program of

⁴⁵ “Proposed Constitution of the Roe Indian Institute,” ND, Reel 2, Records of the AII.

⁴⁶ “Organization and Purpose,” ND, Reel 2, Records of the AII.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

primary and vocational education did not properly prepare them. Roe Cloud thus directed his attention not at the American university *per se* but at the relationship between the American university and the country's American Indian population. He understood that the existing education system perpetuated a gap between Native students and positions of influence and leadership in American society. He sought to address that gap by creating a new form of higher education—a prep school designed by American Indian administrators to meet the particular needs of Native students and their communities. Overall, Roe Cloud's work at the American Indian Institute became a constant struggle to maintain the levels of energy and financial support necessary to run a fledgling academic institution. Yet that work brought about a lasting impact on the education system while demonstrating a commitment to both expanded access and expanded control for Native people in higher education.

Multiple contextual factors led Roe Cloud to address the void of American Indian preparatory schooling rather than to attempt an ambitious reinvention of the university model itself. First, his own experience in American higher education was undeniably successful. Not only was he able to excel in that model, but he did so while maintaining his Native language and his ability to operate easily within the confines of his reservation's cultural norms.⁴⁸ It is reasonable to assume that he envisioned similarly successful experiences for other Native students. Thus, Roe Cloud focused not on barriers or negative aspects *within* the university, but on the issue of access to that level. As he

⁴⁸ Tetzloff, 51-52.

wrote in “Education of the American Indian,” he observed “an absolute block upon the entrance” of students into colleges and universities in the first place.⁴⁹

Furthermore, even if Roe Cloud had envisioned the need for a university model to implement his idea of leadership training, he would have perceived the added difficulty of that route. Not only would accreditation have been more strenuous than at the prep school level, but support for a new university would have been difficult in the American educational climate of the era. As historian John Thelin has written of educational reform in the early twentieth century, Americans within academia had already begun to worry that higher education was becoming overextended.⁵⁰ Rather than support general higher educational efforts through new universities, academics and donors turned to “the vision that advanced scholarship in selected topics might best be promoted by establishing special institutes that would attract scholars from across the nation.”⁵¹ This description fit Roe Cloud’s school remarkably well, as the American Indian Institute dedicated itself to a particular kind of student with a particular set of educational needs, while seeking students from throughout the country.

Roe Cloud had in fact chosen Wichita, Kansas as a “strategic position” for his Institute largely because of its relative ease of access “from all parts of the United States,” and he soon drew students from as far away as Alaska.⁵² The American Indian

⁴⁹ Henry Roe Cloud, “Education of the American Indian,” 205.

⁵⁰ John R. Thelin, *A History of American Higher Education* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 145.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² Henry Roe Cloud to Sage, April 24, 1918, Reel 2, Records of the AII; Henry Roe Cloud to Mrs. J. F. Schermerhorn, March 7, 1923, Reel 2, Records of the AII; “Organization and Purpose,” ND, Reel 2, Records of the AII.

Institute thus arose according to the model that it did because of a particular need that Roe Cloud perceived, and it addressed that need in a way that fit the contemporary system of American higher education while seeking to fundamentally change how that system served the American Indian population.

A closer look at the context of early-twentieth-century American education reveals just how perceptive Roe Cloud was of the precarious position of Native students, and just how vital his Institute would be in addressing the United States' failure to provide those students with adequate routes to higher education. Regarding American Indians in particular, anything beyond an eighth grade boarding school education would require significant assistance, the maintenance of supportive relationships, and a bit of luck.⁵³ As Roe Cloud himself had experienced, this trajectory was not impossible but was indeed rare, and did not constitute a recognizable, institutionalized path to higher education. At the same time, a massive trend in American schooling threatened to further separate students in the mainstream education system from their American Indian counterparts. One clear illustration of this trend is that, just as the American Indian Institute began its work in 1915, the United States stood in the midst of a rapid boost in high school enrollment, with the percentage of 14-to-17-year-olds enrolled in high school more than doubling from 1910 to 1920.⁵⁴ While Roe Cloud never publicly cited these particular figures, he understood that this trend was largely bypassing Indian country, and he sought to use similar quantitative data to make the dire need of his school more

⁵³ Henry Roe Cloud, "Education of the American Indian;" Henry Roe Cloud, "From Wigwam to Pulpit."

⁵⁴ Harry G. Good and James D. Teller, *A History of American Education*, 3rd ed., (New York: Macmillan, 1973), 237.

evident to potential supporters.⁵⁵ In this context, we can see that Roe Cloud viewed his American Indian Institute not as one of many possible paths to higher education, but as perhaps the *only* sustainable, institutionalized path for Native students. In fact, he saw his Institute as filling such a profound void that it represented higher education in and of itself.⁵⁶

Roe Cloud's work represented not just a solution to improve Native access to higher education and positions of leadership, but a clear demonstration of the power of Native *control* in higher education. And while he relied on a wide range of individual and organizational donors to meet the costs of running his school and acquiring the necessary facilities, he kept a small staff and directly oversaw the Institute's curricular mission.⁵⁷ He wielded considerable control, but maintained a constant desire to strike a balance between the particular needs of Native students and the overall requirements of the American system of higher education. For instance, because few of his Native students could afford tuition, he structured the coursework in a way that allowed them to work for approximately two hours per day and receive compensation toward tuition and books, part of his emphasis on "self-help" training that he viewed as particularly useful for Native students.⁵⁸ By keeping this workload low and compensating students, however, he sought to offer a system that differed from the tedious government boarding school

⁵⁵ Henry Roe Cloud, "Education of the American Indian."

⁵⁶ Henry Roe Cloud and H. W. Darling to Mrs. William T. Whitney, April 15, 1922, Records of the AII.

⁵⁷ "Estimate of Administrative and Maintenance Expense for the School Year, 1916-1917," ND, Reel 2, Records of the AII.

⁵⁸ Henry Roe Cloud to Victor Gordon, August 9, 1917, Reel 2, Records of the AII.

experience and instead more closely approximated the experience of working part-time to pay for college tuition.⁵⁹ He also sought to maintain a set of courses that “correspond[ed] to the ... curriculum of academies and high schools and for which full credit is given as an entrance course in any up-to-date college or university.”⁶⁰ During the first several years of operation, the Institute rented classrooms at the nearby Fairmount College in Wichita.⁶¹ Courses included “Geometry; Botany; American History... English; Zoology... German, Latin, Church History, Algebra, Ancient History... and a course in Agriculture under one of the college professors.”⁶² In other words, Roe Cloud used his high level of control to directly address what he saw as particular needs for Native students, while maintaining an academic backbone that he knew would translate to mainstream American academic and economic systems.

In both the depth and breadth of this instruction, Roe Cloud signaled his ambitious goals for his students, and he viewed the initial results of his work with great satisfaction. While only six students enrolled full-time in the Institute’s first year, and while the first World War also hampered enrollment, Roe Cloud remained faithfully optimistic.⁶³ After the first several years, he wrote with pride that his “vision has been fruitful, and the four classes which have been graduated from this institution already have

⁵⁹ “Organization and Purpose,” ND, Reel 2, Records of the AII.

⁶⁰ Henry Roe Cloud to Gordon, August 9, 1917, Reel 2, Records of the AII.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid; “Organization and Purpose,” ND, Reel 2, Records of the AII.

provided twelve students in institutions of higher learning.”⁶⁴ In his updates to donors and potential supporters, he regularly celebrated not only the general advancement of graduates to colleges and universities but also a diverse range of individual students’ successes, from “traveling salesman” to “electrical engineer” to “medical missionaries to their own people.”⁶⁵ In these examples we see Roe Cloud’s understanding of American Indian leadership as a concept that involved a broad spectrum of abilities and vocations. He saw the Institute as a center for training Native students to acquire a high level of adaptability to meet the challenges of a wide range of callings.

In this effort to expand American Indian access to higher education and positions of leadership, Roe Cloud used his own influential position of leadership to explicitly advocate the perpetuation of Native culture and communities in multiple ways. As discussed above, Roe Cloud’s heavy emphasis on the importance of a Protestant Christian education seemed to pose a threat to Native culture and religion. Indeed, he utilized the American Indian Institute’s *Indian Outlook* to occasionally voice his concerns over the use of the hallucinogenic peyote in religious ceremonies and other “outworn social customs” that he viewed as harmful.⁶⁶ But to conclude that these concerns constituted a desire to rid his students of their Native identities would be a mistake. Like any outspoken leader, Roe Cloud viewed certain social and cultural norms as detrimental and others as positive. His own experience and his intense focus on leadership led him to

⁶⁴ “Organization and Purpose,” ND, Reel 2, Records of the AII.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Henry Roe Cloud, “The Need,” *The Indian Outlook* 1, no. 4 (February 10, 1924), 3; “Peyote,” *The Indian Outlook* 1, no. 4 (March 1924), 2. (Both the February and March issues of *The Indian Outlook* appear labeled as “No. 4”).

privilege principles of self-discipline, hard work both mentally and physically, and the avoidance of any influences that posed a threat to the pursuit of higher learning. For Roe Cloud, peyote represented such a detrimental influence in the same way that alcohol did. And though this particular stance on the use of peyote as part of a sacrament could have alienated some Native communities, Roe Cloud remained firm in part because of his desire to be rid of distractions in the pursuit of leadership.⁶⁷ In other words, peyote was primarily dangerous to his vision of leadership training because of its intoxicating nature, because it was commonly associated with “laziness,” and because it thus represented a dangerous block on students “be[ing] in a condition to work as they should.”⁶⁸

Roe Cloud’s criticism of certain American Indian customs of his era, then, should not blind us to his desire to cultivate racial and cultural pride and identification among his students. While he employed *The Indian Outlook* to print an article decrying peyote, for instance, he also printed pieces extolling American Indian “Morals, Characteristics, Art and Traditions” as “a permanent enrichment to [America’s] composite civilization.”⁶⁹ In his correspondence, as well, Roe Cloud stressed that part of the Institute’s mission involved enabling students to “preserve their Native arts.”⁷⁰ Roe Cloud’s attempts to emphasize racial and cultural pride relied on stories that emphasized both past and present Native identities and characteristics. While *The Indian Outlook* printed articles on

⁶⁷ For more on the context surrounding the use of peyote and debates among members of the Society of American Indians, see Thomas C. Maroukis, “The Peyote Controversy and the Demise of the Society of American Indians,” in Allen and Piatote, 158-180.

⁶⁸ Henry Roe Cloud, “The Need,” 3; “Peyote,” 2.

⁶⁹ Mrs. S. Thornton Hollinshead, “The American Indian, Life, Morals, Characteristics, Art and Traditions, Why We Should Conserve and Preserve Them,” *The Indian Outlook* 1, no. 4 (February 10, 1924), 6.

⁷⁰ Henry Roe Cloud to Schermerhorn, March 7, 1923, Reel 2, Records of the AII.

American Indians' historical contributions to areas as diverse as agriculture and music, Roe Cloud also ran a reprint of a series on "Some Indian Leaders, Past and Present."⁷¹

One of the featured "present" leaders, Robert Paul Chaat, was a graduate of the American Indian Institute in his own right, and went on to embody one form of the kind of adaptable Native leadership that Roe Cloud hoped to cultivate. Through the eyes of Chaat's grandson, Comanche author Paul Chaat Smith, we see how quickly the dominant cultural understandings of "Indian" and "white" identity could become obscured or upended. Smith observes that, according to one common portrayal of the Native American experience, "Grandpa Chaat should have [become] a self-hating, colonized oppressor" because of his experience—like Roe Cloud—with aggressively assimilationist education early in his life and because of his Christian training.⁷² But—again like Roe Cloud—he instead became a recognized authority in Native communities—as both a Christian and an Indian.⁷³ "He carried out the duties of a spiritual leader ... [and] offered unconditional love" without apparent conflicts of identity or affiliation.⁷⁴ Smith concludes simply but insightfully, "Grandpa Chaat was a Christian, but he led a church full of Comanches who sang Comanche hymns."⁷⁵ In navigating the personal and

⁷¹ "Indians Played Alto Flutes Long Before Inventions by Whites," *The Indian Outlook* 2, no. 1 (September-October, 1924), 6; "Indians Give Corn to the Western Hemisphere," *The Indian Outlook* 2, no. 5 (January 1925), 4; Rev. Richard H. Harper, "Some Indian Leaders, Past and Present," *The Indian Outlook* 3, no. 2 (October-November, 1925), 1, 3.

⁷² Paul Chaat Smith, *Everything You Know about Indians Is Wrong* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 2-5, 166.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 166.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

collective difficulties posed by these apparent contradictions and acting as a Native leader, Chaat thus became an important example of what Roe Cloud envisioned for graduates of the American Indian Institute.

The focus on adaptable Native leadership in Roe Cloud's writing and editing also touched on concrete realities facing the infrastructures and economies of American Indian communities. For example, Roe Cloud hoped that a dramatic rethinking of the relationship between farming and education could inspire young Native students to become leading agricultural experts on their reservations. Rather than "schools where their best education only teaches Indians to do things by rote ... or spend their time waiting for instructions," Roe Cloud envisioned a more comprehensive education system for Native students that blended higher academic training and comprehensive agricultural education.⁷⁶ He thus saw the reservation economy not as an afterthought but as a complex system that held obvious challenges but also potential for great improvement. In this particular discussion, Roe Cloud characteristically employed the key word "*adapt*"—a subtle but important distinction from "*assimilate*," and one that he would continue to make throughout his career.⁷⁷

His correspondence, together with *The Indian Outlook*, reveal in one sense a strong Christian mindset and a distinct intolerance for vices and flaws that posed a threat to the Protestant work ethic. And yet these writings also reveal a desire within Roe Cloud to provide his students with positive examples not just of leadership but of *Native*

⁷⁶ "Editor's Column," *The Indian Outlook* 3, no. 2 (October-November 1925), 2-3.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 2. See also Henry Roe Cloud, "Foreword," *The Indian Leader* 38, no. 1 (September 7, 1934), 1, 6.

leadership in particular. He presented these ideas to students not simply as a way of preserving a memory of the past while assimilating to American society. Instead, these ideas were part of a call to build on a sense of cultural and racial pride, to *adapt* to the challenges presented by modern American life, and to address the contemporary and future needs of American Indian people and their communities.

While he viewed positively the Institute's qualitative success, Roe Cloud was eager to expand, take on more students, and make a more substantial quantitative impact. He repeatedly printed "The Plan for the Future" and the "Budget of Immediate Needs" in *The Indian Outlook*, brief write-ups that outlined the goal of expansion to 125 students and the necessary building and maintenance funds to meet current and projected needs.⁷⁸ In correspondence with potential backers, he eventually appeared to have solidified plans for as many as 200 students.⁷⁹ With these goals in mind from the outset, he directed much of his energy toward the ever-present task of fundraising. Mary Roe remained a constant supporter in this effort, helping Roe Cloud attain by 1921 a consistent source of support in the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR).⁸⁰ For much of the school's history, Roe Cloud would continue to piece together donations that trickled in from various chapters of the DAR across the country.⁸¹ Still, some of these donations amounted to as little as five dollars, and while Roe Cloud took care to

⁷⁸ *The Indian Outlook* 3, no. 2 (October-November 1925); *The Indian Outlook* 3, no. 3 (December 1925).

⁷⁹ Mary A. Steer to Henry Roe Cloud, March 20, 1928, Reel 1, Records of the AII.

⁸⁰ Mary W. Roe, "The Daughters of the American Revolution in Indian Education," *The Indian Outlook* 1, no. 4 (February 10, 1924), 4.

⁸¹ For examples see Henry Roe Cloud to Jennie Loomis, April 15, 1924, Reel 2, Records of the AII; Henry Roe Cloud to Mildred C. Ennis, February 8, 1929, Reel 2, Records of the AII; Henry Roe Cloud to Mrs. E. A. Lammers, May 18, 1931, Reel 2, Records of the AII.

acknowledge and respond to each gift, he clearly felt frustration at the gap between the moral support and the financial support that his efforts garnered.⁸² With the school running on a budget of roughly \$1500 per month by the 1922-1923 academic year, the small gifts of voluntary organizations could come as a blessing but were also unreliable.⁸³ The American Indian Institute was therefore constantly in perilous financial straits and repeatedly forced to rely on the generosity of individual members of the school's Board of Trustees and those who knew Roe Cloud and his work intimately.⁸⁴ In these conditions, large-scale expansion proved impossible. The Institute maintained a maximum enrollment of approximately forty students for the majority of its existence.⁸⁵

By the late 1920s, Roe Cloud remained as convinced as ever of the positive impact of his work, but sought to leave behind the draining task of traveling the country, grasping for fragmentary donations.⁸⁶ He managed to negotiate an arrangement for the Presbyterian Board of National Missions to gradually take over ownership and funding of the American Indian Institute.⁸⁷ He viewed this as perhaps the most important step in the school's history, as it finally established the sense of permanence and security that he viewed as both a sign of vindication for his work and a necessity for any future

⁸² Henry Roe Cloud to Mary S. E. Baker, April 17, 1923, Reel 2, Records of the AII.

⁸³ Henry Roe Cloud to E. E. Olcott, January 10, 1923, Reel 1, Records of the AII.

⁸⁴ "Estimate of Administration and Maintenance Expense for the School Year, 1916-1917," Reel 2, Records of the AII; E. E. Olcott to Henry Roe Cloud, July 29, 1924, Reel 1, Records of the AII.

⁸⁵ Henry Roe Cloud to Schermerhorn, March 7, 1923, Reel 2, Records of the AII; Henry Roe Cloud to Mrs. J. F. Larkin, December 8, 1927, Reel 2, Records of the AII; Office Secretary to Mrs. O. R. Dunlap, May 11, 1931, Reel 2, Records of the AII.

⁸⁶ Henry Roe Cloud to Mrs. Walter C. Roe, November 5, 1927, Reel 1, Records of the AII.

⁸⁷ Henry Roe Cloud to E. E. Olcott, October 24, 1927, Reel 1, Records of the AII; Henry Roe Cloud to William Hill, October 24, 1927, Reel 1, Records of the AII.

expansion.⁸⁸ His excitement was palpable in his letters to his closest colleagues on the Board of Trustees and to Mary Roe. “For the first time in my life,” he wrote, “I shall be able to throw my life and personality into the administration of this Institution, its teaching and its influence.... I shall not be harassed day and night with money problems, big bills to pay and no money in sight. What a joy and a relief it will be!”⁸⁹

Unfortunately, Roe Cloud’s joy was short-lived. The arrangement eventually agreed upon didn’t fully transfer financial responsibility to the Presbyterian Board until the summer of 1930, meaning Roe Cloud was forced to continue his “most strenuous endeavors” until then.⁹⁰

As it turned out, Roe Cloud’s remaining time at the American Indian Institute was brief. By the end of 1931, he had accepted a position within the Bureau of Indian Affairs, hoping to expand his particular form of Native intellectual activism to a broader platform. In his absence, Roe Cloud’s wife, Elizabeth Bender Roe Cloud, took over many of the responsibilities involving the administration and budget of the Institute.⁹¹ This arrangement had in fact become a frequent solution during Henry’s many speaking and fundraising tours, and it displayed his trust in Elizabeth’s leadership.⁹² Years later, one of the Roe Clouds’ daughters, Anne Woeha, would recall that her parents had preached the

⁸⁸ Henry Roe Cloud to Mary Roe, November 5, 1927, Reel 1, Records of the AII; Steer to Henry Roe Cloud, March 20, 1928, Reel 1, Records of the AII.

⁸⁹ Henry Roe Cloud to Mary Roe, November 5, 1927, Reel 1, Records of the AII.

⁹⁰ Henry Roe Cloud to William Bancroft Hill, November 1, 1929, Reel 1, Records of the AII.

⁹¹ Mrs. Henry Roe Cloud to Miss Edna R. Voss, March 8, 1932, Reel 2, Records of the AII; Edna R. Voss to Mrs. Henry Roe Cloud, May 2, 1932, Reel 2, Records of the AII; Henry P. Douglas to Mrs. Henry Roe Cloud, June 27, 1933, Reel 2, Records of the AII.

⁹² See for example Henry Roe Cloud to Mrs. Walter C. Roe, March 25, 1927, Reel 1, Records of the AII.

imperative of embracing higher education and active leadership, regardless of gender.⁹³ Despite Elizabeth's experience and familiarity with the Institute's mission—and the trust of its founder—it was Mr. Henry P. Douglas who took over as Superintendent following Henry Roe Cloud's departure.⁹⁴ In the years following this change in leadership, the American Indian Institute began to lose its unique place in Native higher education, gradually shifting by the mid-1930s to a boarding house for American Indian students who attended local high schools and colleges in Wichita.⁹⁵

Ironically, it was partially Henry Roe Cloud's own influence that had contributed to the Institute's slide into obsolescence.⁹⁶ By the 1930s, the Bureau of Indian Affairs had begun to more seriously address the failings of its education system, which Roe Cloud had so notably worked to overcome since 1915. It made sense for a reform-minded BIA to seek out the activist's expertise and energetic leadership, and it also made sense for Roe Cloud himself to seize an opportunity where he might finally be able to carry out his vision on an expanded scale.

As he prepared to leave the American Indian Institute in 1931, Roe Cloud had experienced a full decade and a half of the excitement, hope, and frustration that came with his ambitious undertaking. Though the school had never managed to expand its numbers as he had hoped, and while the Great Depression battered Americans of all

⁹³ Crum, 177.

⁹⁴ Henry P. Douglas to Mrs. P. J. Skilton, March 25, 1932, Reel 2, Records of the AII; Anna M. Scott to Mr. Henry P. Douglas, March 29, 1933, Reel 2, Records of the AII.

⁹⁵ Henry P. Douglas to Mrs. F. H. Dickinson, September 10, 1936, Reel 2, Records of the AII.

⁹⁶ Crum, 178-179.

colors, he maintained his optimism and his determination. He referred to the academic year in 1931 as “one of the best years we have ever had,” and went on to praise a young Cherokee teacher for his leadership at the school.⁹⁷ Ever the advocate for Native leadership, Roe Cloud was undoubtedly proud that his school demonstrated this leadership at the administrative, faculty, and student level. With the American Indian Institute, he had successfully expanded Native access to higher education while simultaneously demonstrating the potential for Native control of that effort. He molded an institution that reflected his desire to address the needs of Native students and their communities in ways that government schools had failed to do, while also aligning the academic curriculum with the standards of mainstream American higher education. In these efforts, he employed a strong Protestant Christian framework to strictly jettison any social and cultural influences that threatened the pursuit of higher knowledge and training. Yet his writings reflected his desire to convey a sense of pride in Native identity and a sense of responsibility to tribal communities. His idea of leadership at the American Indian Institute was thus not a mold into which students must assimilate but a set of principles and skills through which they could attain a level of adaptability necessary for meeting the challenges of modern American Indian life in the United States.

Expanding the Message through a Government Platform

Well before he joined the Bureau of Indian Affairs in 1931, Henry Roe Cloud had already been working to reform its education policy. Clearly, his work at the American

⁹⁷ Henry Roe Cloud to Mrs. A. E. Williams, March 7, 1931, Reel 2, Records of the AII.

Indian Institute from 1915 onward represented one strategy for addressing what he saw as the government's failures regarding Native students. He had explicitly argued just as much in his "Education of the American Indian."⁹⁸ But in the late 1920s he took advantage of another opportunity to more directly influence the BIA's programs. In 1926 and 1927, Roe Cloud served as the only American Indian member on the survey team for the monumental investigation of federal Indian policy that became known as the Meriam Report.⁹⁹ Because of the Report's influence on government policy, and because of the vital nature of his personal contribution to it, the project helped cement Roe Cloud's position as a leading expert on American Indian education.

From this key moment onward, Roe Cloud briefly stood out as the most influential voice on the problems of the government's relationship with Native individuals and communities. Just a few years after the release of the Meriam Report, Roe Cloud became the first American Indian superintendent of the BIA's most prized educational center—Haskell Institute in Lawrence, Kansas. Whereas before, he had operated entirely outside of the governmental system in his attempts to address the BIA's educational shortcomings, he now worked within that very system to expand the impact of his vision. His time in government service was fraught with challenges just as significant as those he had faced in the private arena. Still, as the most notable voice in American Indian education, he explicitly maintained his dedication to the expansion of Native access to and control of higher education and leadership training. If only for a

⁹⁸ Henry Roe Cloud, "Education of the American Indian."

⁹⁹ Henry Roe Cloud to Mary Roe, March 25, 1927, Reel 1, Records of the AII; Lewis Meriam, (Technical Director), *The Problem of Indian Administration* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1928), 59.

brief time, he successfully broadcast that vision on the largest platform available to him. Furthermore, he maintained that Native students, when equipped with the proper tools, would become leaders adaptable enough to meet not only the challenges common to all members of twentieth century American society, but also the challenges facing Native people in particular.

For Roe Cloud, working on the Meriam Report represented a major opportunity to maintain his position at the American Indian Institute while also advancing his goals of educational reform in a way that would make a direct influence in the governmental arena. In its published form as *The Problem of Indian Administration*, the Meriam Report was a massive document that, over the course of over 800 pages, addressed nearly all aspects of American Indians' relationship with the United States government, including "educational, industrial, social and medical activities ... property rights and general economic conditions."¹⁰⁰ Roe Cloud's position on the ten-person survey team was listed as "Indian adviser," but his contribution went far beyond that of a passive adviser. In no area was this clearer than in the survey of the federal government's schooling for Native students, where education professor Will Carson Ryan Jr. served as the specialist.¹⁰¹ For, while Ryan had gained vast experience carrying out educational surveys and making recommendations for improvement, Roe Cloud was the only survey team member with experience not only as a student in the BIA's program but as an administrator and

¹⁰⁰ Meriam, 58.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

educator in an American Indian school.¹⁰² Throughout the course of the survey team's investigations and in the writing the Meriam Report itself, Roe Cloud's title did not accurately convey the level of hands-on work he contributed. Not only did he make as many visits to BIA agencies as any other member, but he also took up residence in Washington D.C. for the summer of 1927 in order to remain intimately involved in crafting the Report's message and recommendations.¹⁰³

The Meriam Report's section on government-run American Indian schools highlighted many of the same frustrations that Roe Cloud had identified over a decade earlier in "Education of the American Indian." As that essay had done, the Meriam Report focused heavily on the shortcomings of the BIA's industrial and vocational education. For instance, the Report concluded that "an institutional scheme which stresses production rather than genuine vocational training, an almost complete absence of qualified teachers, and a lack of the necessary guidance, placement, and follow-up machinery, make the vocational program of the boarding schools relatively ineffective."¹⁰⁴ Specifically, the survey team doubted that the training received in government-run schools went "far enough to enable the student to become a skilled workman even after a reasonable period of experience. This is one of the gravest faults of the system."¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² Margaret Connell Szasz, *Education and the American Indian: The Road to Self-Determination Since 1928*, 3rd ed. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1999), 16-17.

¹⁰³ Meriam, 64; Henry Roe Cloud to Mrs. Walter C. Roe, June 26, 1927, Reel 1, Records of the AII. For more information on Roe Cloud's unique contributions to the Meriam Report, see Tetzloff, 70-74.

¹⁰⁴ Meriam, 526.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 527.

The Report repeatedly stressed the needs for greater funding and higher teaching standards in order to employ more qualified instructors in the BIA's system, and in no area was this of greater concern than in the effort to improve access to higher education. As the writers of the Report pointed out, "the first requisite for an 'accredited' high school ... is that the teachers shall be graduates of standard four-year colleges with some professional preparation in education courses. So far as can be ascertained, no government Indian school meets this minimum requirement."¹⁰⁶ In these circumstances, the leap to higher education remained daunting because colleges would simply not accept students without adequate preparation in an accredited secondary school. Roe Cloud's personal voice became especially clear in this passage, as the Report went on in the same paragraph to list the American Indian Institute as one school successfully addressing the problem of access to higher education for Native students. Elsewhere, Roe Cloud again relied on his experience to include specific examples of how the American Indian Institute helped prove that, with the proper resources and training, Native students quickly rose in higher education and positions of leadership. For instance, he provided the Report with the illustration that "graduates of the American Indian Institute ... representing fifteen tribes ... have in the past four years done successful work in higher institutions of learning in eight states."¹⁰⁷

As seen through these passages, Roe Cloud's experience working on the Meriam Report not only confirmed his earlier views of the BIA's education system, but

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 420.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 353.

strengthened his resolve to maintain and expand his own work. He expressed frustration at the apparent lack of success in many of the government's efforts, but remained as committed as ever to the goal of increasing Native access to higher education and positions of leadership. "I have just completed a survey of the general conditions of the Indian race all over the United States," he wrote in early 1928, "and I have come back with the positive conviction that a great deal of ... work must yet be done."¹⁰⁸ While the American Indian Institute represented a key piece of that work, Roe Cloud also expressed the opinion that a "half century" or more would pass before the fundamental conditions hampering American Indians' educational and economic pursuits could be ameliorated.

This long-term outlook, combined with the reality that the BIA still represented the most massive instrument of dialogue between Native communities and the mainstream systems of American society, may have convinced Roe Cloud that operating solely in the private arena was not enough. After all, the common criticism in the Meriam Report had not been the BIA's motives but that the Bureau stood in need of more qualified, capable leaders.¹⁰⁹ Roe Cloud, dedicated as he was to the pursuit of higher learning, undoubtedly saw himself as one such leader. Thus, by the early 1930s, as the American Indian Institute proved unable to expand beyond its usual forty students, Roe Cloud sought to take advantage of the BIA's resources and institutional structure to make a more extensive impact. When he was offered a position within the Bureau as a field representative in the fall of 1931, he accepted.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ Henry Roe Cloud to Mrs. David H. Doremus, January 3, 1928, Reel 2, Records of the AII.

¹⁰⁹ For examples in education specifically, see Meriam, 32-33, 381-382, 406, 526.

¹¹⁰ Tetzloff, 126; Crum, 179.

In his position as field representative from 1931-1933, Roe Cloud traveled widely, investigating problematic relations between the BIA and reservation communities. Because the work varied depending on the particular job, it is difficult to pick out a clear expression of his developing thoughts on education in particular. However, one of his most important tasks required an investigation of potential fraud involving Haskell Institute's athletics program. Founded in 1884, Haskell had become the most influential BIA school—with nation-wide name recognition and over 900 students—by the time Roe Cloud visited as part of the Meriam Report team in the late-1920s.¹¹¹ The school had begun working as a potential bridge to address the gap that Roe Cloud had identified between Native students and higher education, and yet it had also become known for questionable academic and fundraising practices related to its football program.¹¹² Roe Cloud's investigation as a field representative convinced him that a change in leadership would be necessary if the school was to truly serve its evolving purpose as an extension to higher education rather than as a thinly-veiled powerhouse enrolling "athletes of the most dubious kind."¹¹³ He got his wish for a change in leadership when newly-appointed Commissioner of Indian Affairs John Collier quickly sent Roe Cloud back to Haskell as Superintendent in 1933.

As he did so often in his career, Roe Cloud approached his work at Haskell Institute with optimism and energy. The importance of his new post was partially reflected in the numerous letters that flooded his desk in the opening months of the 1933-

¹¹¹ Meriam, 64.

¹¹² Ibid., 345, 419.

¹¹³ Quote is from Meriam, 345. For more on Roe Cloud's investigation of Haskell, see Tetzloff, 140-141.

1934 school year.¹¹⁴ News of his appointment had spread across the country, and people in a wide variety of positions and circumstances wrote to wish him the best. One Native educator expressed his conviction that Roe Cloud would guide students to greater “higher educational opportunities” and continue to inspire strong leadership to “Indians all over the United States.”¹¹⁵ Such praise illustrated to Roe Cloud how closely aligned others could be in his particular dedication to building up and expanding an impactful body of Native leaders. As his work at Haskell began, Roe Cloud was generally quite modest in his replies, but did write that he could “truthfully say that the student body and faculty members are showing a great spirit of cooperation.”¹¹⁶ While his praise for the students’ work ethic continued thereafter, his optimism regarding the school’s overall future was held in check by the impact of distressing forces outside his control.

In the midst of the Great Depression and the massive administrative shakeup that ensued, the Bureau of Indian Affairs had by the time of Roe Cloud’s arrival at Haskell already begun the process of shuttering several off-reservation boarding schools. In the summer of 1933, Commissioner Collier wrote that the BIA was “practically forced to

¹¹⁴ For examples see Ralph W. Allen to Henry Roe Cloud, August 16, 1933, Box 135 – Personal Correspondence Aug-Nov 1933, Haskell Series: Correspondence of the Superintendents, 1890-1942 (ARC ID 2143367), Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Record Group 75, National Archives and Records Administration—Central Plains Region (Kansas City) [Hereafter cited as RG 75, Haskell Series, Corr. Supt., NARA KC]; and Henry Roe Cloud to Dr. Rudolf Hertz, September 21, 1933, Box 20 – Henry Roe Cloud, Superintendent, Haskell Series: Subject Correspondence Files, 1904-1941 (ARC ID 600574), Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Record Group 75, National Archives and Records Administration—Central Plains Region (Kansas City) [Hereafter cited as RG 75, Haskell Series, Sub. Corr., NARA KC].

¹¹⁵ John W. Tippeconnic to Henry Roe Cloud, August 20, 1933, Box 135 – Personal Correspondence Aug-Nov 1933, RG 75, Haskell Series, Corr. Supt., NARA KC.

¹¹⁶ Henry Roe Cloud to Ralph W. Allen, September 1, 1933, Box 135 – Personal Correspondence Aug-Nov 1933, RG 75, Haskell Series, Corr. Supt., NARA KC.

shut down no less than ten boarding schools, and in every case, without exception, the resistance is intense.”¹¹⁷ One of the first moves regarding Haskell was to cut the school’s enrollment from 900 to 600 students, and to cut the faculty accordingly.¹¹⁸ Furthermore, the Bureau sought to reconfigure the school’s entire curriculum and mission. “Haskell’s future, to be justified at all,” wrote Collier, “must be as a specifically vocational institution reaching into the advanced grades.”¹¹⁹ The reductions to the student body, the faculty, and the budget—not to mention the hardline directives regarding the curriculum—represented immediate hindrances on Roe Cloud’s ambitions. These events were set in motion before he arrived to take up his new post in Lawrence, leaving him somewhat hamstrung and with the feeling of simply “keeping [his] head above water.”¹²⁰

Despite these immediate challenges, Roe Cloud soon regained his usual resilient voice and felt compelled to argue for the virtue of the school’s very existence, just as he had been forced to do at the American Indian Institute. As early as the fall of 1933, Roe Cloud began writing Collier to convey what he saw as the precarious nature of the school’s future. On the one hand, he expressed his confidence in the students and in the institutional groundwork at Haskell, painting a picture of great potential that needed only

¹¹⁷ John Collier to Rev. Magr. William Hughes, June 15, 1933, Reel 18, John Collier Papers, 1922-1968 (microfilm), Ross-Blakely Law Library, Arizona State University [hereafter cited as Collier Papers].

¹¹⁸ Henry Roe Cloud to Gladys Skye, September 13, 1933, Box 135 – Personal Correspondence Aug-Nov 1933, RG 75, Haskell Series, Corr. Supt., NARA KC.

¹¹⁹ John Collier to Eugene Lorton, July 21, 1933, Reel 18, Collier Papers. For further discussion of this issue at other schools, see K. Tsianina Lomawaima and Teresa L. McCarty, *“To Remain an Indian:” Lessons in Democracy from a Century of Native American Education* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2006), 66-68.

¹²⁰ Henry Roe Cloud to Ralph H. Case, September 13, 1933, Box 135 – Personal Correspondence Aug-Nov 1933, RG 75, Haskell Series, Corr. Supt., NARA KC.

to be nurtured and inspired.¹²¹ At the same time, he argued, the school could grow stronger and maximize that potential only with the full and continuing support of the BIA.¹²² At times, Roe Cloud sensed that support was lacking. For instance, he attempted to arrange multiple visits to educational conferences and meetings with college officials in order to raise awareness of Haskell while gleaning knowledge from other educators. But as these trips fell through because of a lack of funding, his frustration became clear.¹²³

By the summer of 1934, he took a more direct approach in laying out his case to Collier and other officials. Budget cuts and the curtailment of enrollment, he argued, left Haskell unable “to do a creditable educational work,” much less excel as a national center of Native leadership and higher learning.¹²⁴ Roe Cloud plainly expressed the opinion that, if the school was destined to shut down completely, it would do better to carry out its last few years on a full budget rather than limp along with restrictions that “penalized” faculty and administrators so heavily that “we cannot ourselves maintain our own self-respect.”¹²⁵ In a separate letter to W. Carson Ryan, his one-time colleague on the Meriam

¹²¹ Henry Roe Cloud to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, September 1, 1933, Box 135 – Personal Correspondence Aug-Nov 1933, RG 75, Haskell Series, Corr. Supt., NARA KC. See also Henry Roe Cloud to Robert D. Baldwin, November 23, 1933, Box 135 – Personal Correspondence Sept-Nov 1933, RG 75, Haskell Series, Corr. Supt., NARA KC.

¹²² Henry Roe Cloud to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, September 29, 1933, Box 135 – Personal Correspondence Sept-Nov 1933, RG 75, Haskell Series, Corr. Supt., NARA KC.

¹²³ Henry Roe Cloud to W. J. Hutchins, November 20, 1933, Box 135 – Personal Correspondence Sept-Nov 1933, RG 75, Haskell Series, Corr. Supt., NARA KC. Henry Roe Cloud to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, December 4, 1933, Box 5 – Conferences 1929-1935, RG 75, Haskell Series, Sub. Corr., NARA KC.

¹²⁴ Henry Roe Cloud to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, August 7, 1934, Box 135 – Personal Correspondence July 1934-Feb 1935, RG 75, Haskell Series, Corr. Supt., NARA KC.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

Report, Roe Cloud challenged Ryan to use all his influence in the BIA's Educational Division to make Haskell an exception to the policy of closing federal boarding schools.¹²⁶ Roe Cloud argued that Haskell could “do a most outstanding and creditable piece of work for our Indians” by “getting out a Native and national leadership,” but only if given proper support from the BIA.¹²⁷ He referenced a statement Ryan had previously made about the future of Haskell depending heavily on the work of its superintendent. Obviously feeling he had done everything he could to lead the school through difficult circumstances, Roe Cloud closed by appealing to Ryan's personal character and asking him to return the favor: “I believe in you and I believe that you are a man of your word... I am counting on your word to be good.”¹²⁸

Within a few months, Roe Cloud finally received a sign of support. As Haskell celebrated its 50-year anniversary in November of 1934, Commissioner Collier paid a personal visit to the school. Delivering a speech to some three thousand students and visitors, Collier emphasized the unique position of Haskell in the BIA's plans, stating that “the only reason our department sent so valuable a man as Dr. Henry Roe Cloud... here as head of the school recently was because we do emphatically believe that Haskell has a future.”¹²⁹ Beyond the individual praise for Roe Cloud—“the most important living Indian”—Collier outlined his thinking on the overall and long-term goals for Haskell.¹³⁰

¹²⁶ Henry Roe Cloud to Dr. Will Carson Ryan Jr., August 7, 1934, Box 135 – Personal Correspondence July 1934-Feb 1935, RG 75, Haskell Series, Corr., Supt., NARA KC.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ “Haskell Needed for Future Work,” 17-18.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 18.

“For many years to come,” he argued, “we will continue to need institutions where young Indians can be given intensive training for leadership,” with ample room for “self-expression [and] the retention of [one’s] own culture and spiritual life.”¹³¹ Roe Cloud had finally received the clear assurance of bureaucratic support that he had so desired, and he immediately wrote Collier to express his profound personal gratitude for the reaffirming visit.¹³² But Collier’s words had done more than simply address the rumors swirling around the school’s future. His particular understanding of Haskell’s mission clearly struck a chord with Roe Cloud’s own educational vision. He described a vision of academic and leadership training that translated to the dominant trends in American society as well as to particular Native contexts—a vision that resonated directly with the work Roe Cloud had pursued for nearly twenty years.

The year-long narrative of uncertainty surrounding Haskell’s future occupied a great deal of Roe Cloud’s attention. At times, he truly felt that the school’s existence stood in jeopardy, and his frustration at the restrictions he faced mounted throughout his first year as superintendent.¹³³ Capped as it was by the Commissioner’s address in front of three thousand onlookers at the school’s 50th anniversary celebration, this narrative clearly carried a high level of drama. At the same time, the truly crucial element of Roe Cloud’s first year was the everyday work that he undertook to instill his vision for Haskell as a national center of Native leadership training. This work began as soon as he

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹³² Henry Roe Cloud to John Collier, November 14, 1934, Box 135 – Personal Correspondence July 1934-Feb 1935, RG 75, Haskell Series, Corr. Supt., NARA KC.

¹³³ Henry Roe Cloud to Commissioner, August 7, 1934, RG 75, Haskell Series, Corr., Supt., NARA KC; Henry Roe Cloud to Ryan, August 7, 1934, RG 75, Haskell Series, Corr., Supt., NARA KC.

arrived, and continued with his characteristic level of energy and involvement regardless of any of the challenges that preoccupied his mind and his correspondence.

Nowhere did Roe Cloud's vision come through more clearly than in the pages of *The Indian Leader*, Haskell's school newspaper. He immediately took over as the paper's editor, not only soliciting articles from readers across the country, but also publishing his own editorial pieces.¹³⁴ In his first issue of the *Leader*, Roe Cloud included a biographical write up of himself and employed quotes from a previous speech in which he had implored students to take their cues from the tangible examples of Native leadership before them. "We who are Indians on the faculty [and] staff," he wrote, "have made up our minds that we will not disappoint the Washington Office in this great trust which they have reposed in us. I believe that you, the student body, are going to see to it that you also will not disappoint."¹³⁵

Roe Cloud soon expanded on his central theme by reprinting a running series simply titled "Indian Leadership." While this series was credited to a journalist from Iowa, it hammered home many of the key arguments that had been part of Roe Cloud's educational program for two decades. One key aspect of this series was that, as it illustrated useful work habits and advice for future Native leaders, it also encompassed a wide range of positive characteristics. In one part of the twelve-part series, the author emphasized "the first requirement of Indian leadership: To plan, to build, to achieve the glory, nobility, and the individual satisfaction of leadership, one must develop a pride in

¹³⁴ *The Indian Leader* 37, no. 1 (September 8, 1933).

¹³⁵ "Henry Roe Cloud New Superintendent of Haskell Institute," *The Indian Leader* 37, no. 1 (September 8, 1933), 6.

one's own race."¹³⁶ American Indian identity was thus held up not as merely a positive embellishment to one's personality but as the very bedrock of a Native leader's character. Subsequent articles in the "Indian Leadership" series suggested the maintenance of tribal music, dance, and art as methods for discovering the personal joy of one's culture and history.¹³⁷ The series as a whole, however, did not portray Native identity as a hobby or something to be acquired simply by studying past histories. Indeed, the articles frequently stressed the importance of building positive relationships with and learning from contemporary Native leaders among one's own tribe and on a national scale.¹³⁸

Beyond this particular series, Roe Cloud further illustrated his vision of Native leadership by working to ensure that the school's paper portrayed a variety of tribal and American Indian identities. Like the "Indian Leadership" series, Roe Cloud employed examples relating to both historical and contemporary circumstances. He frequently reprinted articles focusing on a number of "beautiful" creation stories and other aspects of tribal histories, and printed a speech of his in which he supported the preservation of these histories "as a means of instilling in the young Indian a pride in his race."¹³⁹ In another instance, Roe Cloud emphasized the importance of tribes expressing their own interpretations of their histories by reprinting an article on a new museum where

¹³⁶ Annette M. Lingelbach, "Indian Leadership: Reading Past History," *The Indian Leader* 37, no. 11 (November 17, 1933), 9.

¹³⁷ Annette M. Lingelbach, "Indian Leadership: Dancing from the Long Ago," *The Indian Leader* 37, no. 15 (December 15, 1933), 6-7; Annette M. Lingelbach, "Indian Leadership: Indian Music," *The Indian Leader* 37, no. 16 (December 22, 1933), 5-6.

¹³⁸ Lingelbach, "Indian Leadership: Dancing from the Long Ago," 6; Annette M. Lingelbach, "Indian Leadership: Personal Contacts," *The Indian Leader* 37, no. 21 (January 26, 1934), 5.

¹³⁹ Quote is from "Value of Mythology to a Race of People," *The Indian Leader* 37, no. 26 (March 2, 1934), 1. See also "Indian Lore and Legends," *The Indian Leader* 37, no. 7 (October 20, 1933), 1.

administration was held “in the hands of Indians.”¹⁴⁰ This example combined the importance of both historical and contemporary issues, and in other ways Roe Cloud’s guidance at Haskell suggested that both were key aspects of the identity of a Native leader. As part of the focus on current issues, he repeatedly included brief write-ups of the activities of former students, pointing out that many had contributed during the Depression by supervising relief efforts within Native communities.¹⁴¹ And while the curriculum at Haskell entered a general shift toward more vocational training, Roe Cloud still ensured that students were made aware of developing opportunities for higher education in colleges and universities.¹⁴²

In his direction of *The Indian Leader*, then, Roe Cloud constantly employed a variety of portrayals of Native leadership in order to advocate and inspire greater access for his students both to higher learning and to positions of power in tribal communities and nationwide organizations. The newspaper became a valuable rhetorical tool, and served as a recognizable Native platform for Roe Cloud to broadcast his ideas. This effort in many ways was a continuation of what he had begun at his American Indian Institute in 1915. Only after years of work, and with the established infrastructure of the *Leader*, however, did Roe Cloud’s complete vision of American Indian higher education and leadership become clear. Native leadership, he informed his readers, began with racial

¹⁴⁰ Lewis J. Korn, “An Indian Museum in Indian Hands,” *The Indian Leader* 37, no. 10 (November 10, 1933), 3.

¹⁴¹ For examples see “News of Former Students,” *The Indian Leader* 37, no. 38 (May 25, 1934), 4; “Commercial Graduates on the Job,” *The Indian Leader* 38, no. 2 (September 14, 1934), 4.

¹⁴² See for example “Opportunities for Indian Youth in Higher Educational Institutions,” *The Indian Leader* 37, no. 29-30 (March 30, 1934), 8.

and cultural pride. This pride was built through a personal knowledge of creation stories and histories of past leaders, as well as the maintenance of tribal dances, music, and art. It was strengthened by pursuing a high level of education and training, by learning from modern day Native leaders, and by serving tribal communities and national organizations. Through all these steps, students and burgeoning leaders might attain a level of adaptability that was “distinguished from assimilation.”¹⁴³ Twentieth-century Native leadership for Roe Cloud thus began with a strong sense of American Indian identity and was fulfilled through a dedication to addressing the particular set of circumstances facing Native communities and individuals.

Roe Cloud’s Exit from the Educational Spotlight

As it turned out, Roe Cloud’s tenure as Haskell Superintendent ended after just two school years. When Haskell conducted graduation ceremonies in June of 1935, his influence was already noticeably absent. The commencement issue of the *Leader*, for example, included a “Message to Graduates” from Assistant Superintendent Russell M. Kelley but nothing from Roe Cloud himself.¹⁴⁴

While Commissioner of Indian Affairs John Collier had expressed his great confidence in Roe Cloud’s leadership abilities, he sought to direct those abilities elsewhere. Collier had long relied on Roe Cloud’s rapport among Native communities and his charismatic speaking ability to rally support for the Wheeler-Howard Bill (later

¹⁴³ Henry Roe Cloud, “Foreword,” *The Indian Leader* 38, no. 1 (September 7, 1934), 1.

¹⁴⁴ *The Indian Leader* 38, no. 37-38 (May 24, 1935).

known as the Indian Reorganization Act).¹⁴⁵ The Indian Reorganization Act (IRA) sought to support tribal self-government and development, and to formalize the relationship between those governments and the United States. After the passage of the Act, Collier again summoned Roe Cloud to ensure that as many tribes as possible embraced the implementation of his “Indian New Deal.”¹⁴⁶

Supporting the IRA came easily for Roe Cloud, who had expressed his willingness to “stand shoulder to shoulder to fight” for it along with its allies.¹⁴⁷ While he was disappointed in the final version’s modest provisions for Native students’ higher education, he praised its goal of greater access for Native people to positions of leadership and self-government in reservation communities, and he encouraged a greater understanding of the legislation through articles in the *Leader*.¹⁴⁸ And, while Roe Cloud admitted that he had entertained the thought of one day becoming Commissioner of Indian Affairs, he stood by Collier’s program—“a program that transcends that of all other separate organizations working on behalf of the Indians.”¹⁴⁹ While Roe Cloud had his obvious frustrations with the BIA, his commitment to Collier’s program led him to

¹⁴⁵ “Notes of Interest,” *The Indian Leader* 37, no. 33 (April 20, 1934), 4; “A New Deal for the American Indian,” *The Indian Leader* 37, no. 32 (April 13, 1934), 1-3.

¹⁴⁶ “Letter to Highly Valued Superintendent,” *The Indian Leader* 38, no. 35 (May 3, 1935), 1.

¹⁴⁷ Henry Roe Cloud to Frank O. Jones, March 31, 1934, Box 135 – Personal Correspondence Dec 1933-Mar 1934, RG 75, Haskell Series, NARA KC.

¹⁴⁸ Henry Roe Cloud, “Haskell and Her New Frontiers,” *The Indian Leader* 37, no. 40 (June 8, 1934), 14-17. For more on Roe Cloud’s work for greater educational provisions in the Act, see Crum, 180-181. For examples of dialogue on the legislation, see “The Indian Reorganization Act,” *The Indian Leader* 38, no. 5 (October 5, 1934), 1-5.

¹⁴⁹ Quote is from Henry Roe Cloud to Mary Louise Mark, May 8, 1934, Box 135 – Personal Correspondence Feb-June 1934, RG 75, Haskell Series, NARA KC. For Roe Cloud’s discussion of possible role as Commissioner of Indian Affairs, see Henry Roe Cloud to A. M. Venne, May 14, 1934, Box 135 – Personal Correspondence Feb-June 1934, RG 75, Haskell Series, NARA KC.

accept the move away from Haskell and spend several years encouraging the Indian Reorganization Act's implementation on reservations.

After he left the spotlight at Haskell, Roe Cloud's thoughts on the educational mission he had worked so long to enact became more difficult to uncover. For a man who had once realistically considered the possibility of acting as Commissioner of Indian Affairs, it must have been disappointing to see himself eventually relegated by 1940 to a BIA position in Oregon that stood thousands of miles from Washington D.C. and held little visibility on the national scale. Indeed, by 1945 he had become more willing to express criticism of Collier and frustration with his actions during their working relationship.¹⁵⁰ Still, in accepting and carrying out the duties of his position in Oregon until his death in 1950, he maintained his sense of responsibility to Native people and their communities.¹⁵¹

While Roe Cloud might have felt that his national impact in the last fifteen years of his life could have been much larger, that does not detract from what he did accomplish in the previous twenty. His work at the American Indian Institute from 1915 onward addressed a devastating disconnect between the espoused belief that colleges and universities stood open to Native students and the reality created by an inadequate BIA school system. Though small in size, the American Indian Institute addressed a clear need by expanding Native access to higher education, while also demonstrating Native control within the school's administration and faculty. As the school's founder and director, Roe

¹⁵⁰ Pfister, 143.

¹⁵¹ Crum, 181.

Cloud also made clear his belief that while Native students must prepare to meet the demands of modern American society, that should not mean straightforward assimilation or the erasure of Native culture. He sought to cultivate and strengthen Native identity rather than pulverize it—a fundamental departure from the assimilationists of the early twentieth century. Subsequently, in his contributions to the influential Meriam Report and his service as Superintendent of Haskell Institute, Roe Cloud expanded his ideas to a larger platform and sought to more directly appropriate the platforms and resources of the Bureau of Indian Affairs for the better. He argued strenuously for the future of Haskell as a national center of American Indian education, and even while the curriculum shifted toward vocational training, he was able to refine his intellectual conception of Native education into one that focused sharply on the concept of leadership. At Haskell, he laid out his blueprint, visible not only to his students on campus but to readers across the country. This blueprint for Native leadership relied on a solid base of racial and cultural pride, grounded in tribal histories but also developed through an understanding of the contemporary challenges common to all American Indian people. When Roe Cloud was pulled away from Haskell to back the Indian Reorganization Act, he took the opportunity to demonstrate his own ideal of leadership by advocating for American Indian people, supporting the idea of increased Native control in BIA leadership and in tribal administration. Even at the end of his career, Roe Cloud's commitment to reservation administration in Oregon lived up to his own educational blueprint, which had always included service to Native communities.

The general momentum of the intellectual arguments behind Roe Cloud's work would eventually be stunted by the preoccupations of World War II and challenged by

the intense implementation of Indian Termination policies thereafter. However, his particular thread of Native intellectual activism remained. By the time the tribal college movement began materializing in the 1960s and beyond, Roe Cloud's seemingly dormant educational vision was nearly seamlessly resurrected and reinvigorated. The argument for attacking contemporary American Indian issues from a strong base of Native identity echoed his own voice, as did the more general call to expand Native access to and control of higher education.

It seems fitting, then, to conclude the discussion of Roe Cloud's impact with an example of how his voice carried on long after his work and even his life. Whether intentionally or not, leaders of the tribal college movement in the 1960s and 1970s made a habit of employing the phrase "by and for"—as in, education "by and for" American Indians, or publications "by and for" Navajos.¹⁵² Not only did Roe Cloud's overall educational mission support this phrase—he helped bring it into its common usage. With Roe Cloud at the helm of *The Indian Leader*, the paper advertised itself as a publication "by and for Indians."¹⁵³ While this simple phrase itself may seem inconsequential, it represented a fundamental worldview for people like Roe Cloud. Its deeper meaning and the decades-long activist effort that he dedicated to that meaning were crucial contributions in his own era, and have clearly remained relevant to Native people ever since.

¹⁵² See for example Ruth Roessel, ed., *Navajo Studies at Navajo Community College* (Many Farms, AZ: Navajo Community College Press, 1971).

¹⁵³ *The Indian Leader* 38, no. 37-38 (May 24, 1935). The phrase "by Indians and for Indians" also appeared in early documents of the Society of American Indians, of which Roe Cloud was a key member. See for example Allen and Piatote, 3.

CHAPTER TWO

“A New Spirit of Leadership”: Carrying the Threads of Roe Cloud’s Vision

As Henry Roe Cloud’s prominence in the national discourse on American Indian affairs waned in the 1940s, the nature of that discourse shifted. John Collier, as Commissioner of Indian Affairs from 1933-1945, pushed hard to carry out as completely as possible the provisions of the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 (IRA).¹ Collier’s fascination with communal societies and his belief in the positive elements of American Indian culture had informed his support for the legislation. He and other advocates of the IRA sought to increase the level of community control and self-government exerted by American Indian tribes. However, the Act had fallen short of Roe Cloud’s ambitions when it came to higher education for Native students. While the IRA provided opportunities for student loans, Roe Cloud considered loans a half-hearted substitute for the more direct and impactful scholarship aid that he had envisioned.² Thus, whereas Roe Cloud had hoped the IRA could be a major catalyst for his goal of reforming the entire relationship between Native students and the American higher education system, addressing tribal government remained the Act’s primary focus in the end.

Furthermore, Collier’s vision for expanding Native community control under the Indian New Deal did not receive lasting support. In the immediate postwar era, as Republican Congressmen began to attack much of the government infrastructure of President Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal, a handful of Senators from western states

¹ “Indian Reorganization Act of 1934,” Public Law 73-383, *U.S. Statutes at Large* 48 (1934), 984-988.

² Joel Pfister, *The Yale Indian: The Education of Henry Roe Cloud* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009), 155-156.

began a renewed push for the termination of American Indians' unique trust status.³ In this context, Roe Cloud's particular focus on higher education became overshadowed among Native activists by more immediate concerns about the very nature of Native peoples' status in America.

Still, a new generation of Native intellectuals made Roe Cloud's essential argument for increased American Indian leadership and empowerment a centerpiece of their activist mission to defeat terminationist policies. Some of the people responsible for carrying out these efforts worked on paths that overlapped with Roe Cloud's only briefly. D'Arcy McNickle, for example, rose as a key Native leader in the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) just as Roe Cloud's influence diminished. Others, especially his wife Elizabeth Bender Roe Cloud, obviously held deep personal and professional connections to Roe Cloud and his work but advanced forms of activism that necessarily addressed the broader context of the IRA and Termination.

Over time, McNickle and Elizabeth Roe Cloud did return their focus to higher education as a centerpiece of the effort to promote Native intellectual leadership in both local and national contexts. Their determination to navigate Termination with much of their original goals and influences intact sheds light on the resiliency and impact of the intellectual tradition that Henry Roe Cloud sought to develop and disseminate.

Eventually, the efforts of McNickle and Elizabeth Roe Cloud were supplemented by a separate activist trajectory, embodied most strongly by Jack Forbes. Forbes did not share

³ For a complete discussion of federal Indian Termination policy in the postwar period, see Donald L. Fixico, *Termination and Relocation: Federal Indian Policy, 1945-1960* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1986).

the same immediate link to Roe Cloud, but his mission to inspire a national body of young Native leaders through a particular form of higher education borrowed from Roe Cloud's approach and echoed with remarkable continuity his work at the American Indian Institute and at Haskell Institute. Thus, even as new generations of Native leaders like Forbes lacked personal connections to Roe Cloud, they were able to access the deeper tradition of intellectual activism exemplified by his work, build on its ideas, and adapt them to new circumstances. As D'Arcy McNickle once remarked, "ideas ... have a way of living, whatever forces may be ranged against them. An idea cannot be crushed like an eggshell."⁴

Transitions and Continuities beyond Roe Cloud's Decline in Prominence

Even as Henry Roe Cloud and Commissioner of Indian Affairs John Collier worked in the prime of their careers to support the passage and implementation of the Indian Reorganization Act in the 1930s, they perceived the potential threat of Termination. Roe Cloud, Collier, and other reformers were always aware that, at any time, a significant number of influential people within the U.S. government viewed the trust status of American Indian tribes as impractical, and would seek to eliminate that unique relationship. Changes in this aspect of federal Indian policy in U.S. history have often been described as a "pendulum," swinging back and forth between the protection of Native sovereignty and, as with Termination, the erosion of that special status.⁵ While

⁴ D'Arcy McNickle, "The Role of the National Congress of American Indians," 15th Anniversary Booklet of the National Congress of American Indians, 1959, as quoted in Frederick E. Hoxie, *This Indian Country: American Indian Political Activists and the Place They Made* (New York: Penguin, 2012), 335.

⁵ For an example of the acceptance of the pendulum metaphor and its contemporary prevalence, see *Encyclopedia of Politics in the American West*, ed. Steven L. Danver (Los Angeles: Sage Reference, 2013), s.v. "sovereignty, Native American," 615-617. For a more nuanced discussion of the topic and the alternatives to the pendulum metaphor, see K. Tsianina Lomawaima and Teresa L. McCarty, *To Remain*

this metaphor may provide a useful introduction to the topic, it is hardly instructive for a sustained historical examination. Rather, like many key political or philosophical debates, the struggle over the status of Native people and their tribal entities in the United States has been a constant battle. America's New Deal era was no exception. Indeed, as early as 1935, with the Indian Reorganization Act having passed just months before, Collier warned that segments of Congress would soon regroup in an effort to officially "abandon" the Reorganization effort.⁶ In 1938, when D'Arcy McNickle wrote for the BIA publication *Indians at Work*, he praised the early results of Indian Reorganization but again lamented "a tendency in Congress" to use those same positive results as an argument for accelerating the IRA's demise and withdrawing federal support.⁷ At every turn, he hinted, forces in Congress would push for the termination of the U.S. government's responsibility to provide services to tribes and Native people.

Deeply concerned about these persistent terminationist tendencies, Collier exerted a heavy personal influence over the effort to protect his Indian New Deal. A key piece of his strategy was an increase in the number of Native individuals working within the BIA and advocating for the IRA. As other historians have previously discussed, Collier, in his attempt to sell the IRA to reservation communities, began seeking pliable young Native voices in favor of the nationally-renowned and outspoken Henry Roe Cloud.⁸ However,

an Indian": *Lessons in Democracy from a Century of Native American Education* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2006).

⁶ John Collier, "A Periodic Drive Renewed," *The Indian Leader* 38, no. 33 (April 19, 1935), 1-2.

⁷ D'Arcy McNickle, "Four Years of Indian Reorganization," *Indians at Work* 5, no. 11 (July 1, 1938), 11.

⁸ Jason M. Tetzloff, "To Do Some Good Among the Indians: Henry Roe Cloud and Twentieth Century Native American Advocacy," (PhD diss., Purdue University, 1996), 168-170; Hoxie, *This Indian Country*, 310.

this new group of leaders would share much of Roe Cloud's activist spirit and individual initiative.

Historian Frederick Hoxie has argued that the influence of the IRA was an unmistakable victory for many ambitious Native activists of the time, although this victory did not always materialize in ways that Collier or other government officials had envisioned.⁹ Robert Yellowtail (Crow), who became Superintendent of the Crow Agency in 1934, represents a clear example of this generation of activists who owed at least some of their growing influence to Collier's efforts, and yet were unafraid to pursue Native-driven goals that may not have directly aligned with the commissioner's vision. Like Henry Roe Cloud, Yellowtail understood activist approaches to American Indian policy as necessarily complex and contradictory. As Superintendent, he campaigned for the IRA, but did not allow his tribe's failure to approve the legislation to detract from his outspoken attempts to garner federal support for his agency and for the rights of his tribal members. He, like Roe Cloud, simultaneously advocated for greater federal commitment to aiding tribes as well as greater tribal autonomy in terms of governance and community leadership.¹⁰ With or without the implementation of the Indian Reorganization Act, Yellowtail understood treaty rights as a basic piece of tribal autonomy and authority, and would eventually become a staunch opponent of Termination in the postwar period.¹¹

⁹ Hoxie, *This Indian Country*, 277-280.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 285-286.

¹¹ Fixico, *Termination and Relocation*, 64; Hoxie, *This Indian Country*, 321-322, 326, 328-329. Similarly, the Navajo Tribe did not vote to pass the Indian Reorganization Act, but remained one of the tribes most interested in pursuing community control over their own programs, including in education. See for example Donald L. Parman, *The Navajos and the New Deal* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1976).

While Yellowtail's years of work fighting for greater tribal autonomy and leadership made him a local embodiment of the era's Native activism, it was D'Arcy McNickle who quickly gained greater influence in John Collier's BIA. Yellowtail's efforts were often entrenched in divisive reservation politics.¹² By contrast, McNickle's more eclectic background and experience—not to mention his well-known writing ability—were desirable traits for Collier's pushing of the IRA to a nationwide audience.¹³ McNickle also embodied the look of a government man of twentieth-century America. Like Roe Cloud, he wore glasses and a well-trimmed mustache, and was often seen in a full suit and tie. His serious countenance, however, was also complemented by a charismatic sense of humor and a wry smile. Despite fitting the model of what Collier wanted in a BIA man, McNickle—again like Roe Cloud—was also willing and able to broadcast his own form of Native intellectual activism, regardless of whether that occurred within the context of the BIA's official Reorganization program.

McNickle rose to prominence in the national discourse on American Indian affairs in the mid-to-late 1930s as a writer and a BIA official, and this rise occurred just as John Collier ushered Henry Roe Cloud to the outer margins of influence in the Bureau.¹⁴ As one of Collier's most trusted advocates within the Bureau, McNickle's work addressed the entire spectrum of federal Indian policy. This initially could have prevented him from

¹² Hoxie, *This Indian Country*, 310.

¹³ Almost immediately after starting his BIA position, McNickle began publishing a variety of articles on different facets of American Indian policy. See for example D'Arcy McNickle, "Alaska—Getting Acquainted," *Indians at Work* 4, no. 7 (November 15, 1936), 5-7.

¹⁴ Dorothy R. Parker, "D'Arcy McNickle: An Annotated Bibliography of His Published Articles and Book Reviews in a Biographical Context," in *The Legacy of D'Arcy McNickle: Writer, Historian, Activist*, ed. John Lloyd Purdy (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996), 3.

focusing on a single issue in the way that Roe Cloud had done at the American Indian Institute. And yet, McNickle's prolific work as a writer and a leader of various national organizations helps us understand that his form of activism shared and built on some of the most important foundations of Roe Cloud's effort to develop greater Native access to and control of leadership positions in the dominant systems of American education, politics, and economics.

McNickle was partially shaped by many of the same experiences that other Native activists of the twentieth century had faced. He attended federal boarding school as well as a mission school, and went on to experience life at one of the most prestigious institutions in Western education.¹⁵ While Henry Roe Cloud became the first American Indian to graduate from Yale University, however, McNickle's brief time at Oxford University was intensely frustrating and did not leave him with the same influential network that Roe Cloud's education had.¹⁶ And while Roe Cloud drew on his theological training throughout his career as a Christian educator, McNickle was more likely to draw criticism for his assessments of the role of missionaries in Native life.¹⁷ Despite these differences in how they emerged from Euro-American higher education and training, McNickle and Roe Cloud shared much in common in how they approached the most crucial questions regarding Native peoples' status in the United States. By the time

¹⁵ Dorothy R. Parker, *Singing an Indian Song: A Biography of D'Arcy McNickle* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), 17-19, 27-29.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 27-29.

¹⁷ D'Arcy McNickle, "The Straddle Between Cultures," *Indians at Work* 5, no. 4 (December 1, 1937), 29-30. For a discussion of how McNickle's statements on Christianity affected his position as a federal employee, see Parker, *Singing an Indian Song*, 78-80.

McNickle began asserting his influence in John Collier's BIA, it was clear that he shared many of the basic pillars of Roe Cloud's approach to Native intellectual activism and leadership.

Perhaps the most crucial characteristic the two shared was their outlook on the topic of assimilation. Roe Cloud's work has been somewhat misunderstood in this regard because, on the surface, his Christian preaching and his emphasis on institutional schooling may seem assimilationist.¹⁸ Upon closer examination, however, we understand through Roe Cloud's own words and actions that he advocated a type of "adaptation" for individual Native leaders as well as "opportunities [for] organized effort" for Native people collectively.¹⁹ The path to American Indian leadership for Roe Cloud was rooted in Native cultural traditions, concerned with the empowerment of individual Native professionals as well as reservation communities, and was explicitly "distinguished from assimilation."²⁰

In a similar way, McNickle's writings from the very outset of his career express a concern over a simplistic, assimilationist approach to the American Indian "problem." In a 1937 piece for the BIA publication *Indians at Work*, McNickle laid out his frustrations with the persistence of presumptuous assimilationist rhetoric that permeated literature about Native people. He argued that the central problem of this rhetoric stemmed from pervasive ethnocentrism, "thinking of Indians as emerging from savagery and being

¹⁸ Tetzloff.

¹⁹ Henry Roe Cloud, "Foreword," *The Indian Leader* 38, no. 1 (September 7, 1934), 1.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

hastened on the road to salvation.”²¹ In separate pieces over the span of the next several years, McNickle reiterated his harsh criticism of straightforward assimilationist policy.²² The proper alternative, he asserted, was an approach that acknowledged the strength of Native cultural practices in the face of a long history of attacks, that supported Native languages alongside the practical use of English, and that gave American Indians the power to make “adaptations” to the challenges of modern life in the United States—“as they found agreeable.”²³ In these writings, we see remarkable continuity in terms of how McNickle and Roe Cloud understood the very fundamental issues regarding Native people and their communities as well as the basic principles on which they hoped to support the growth of Native leadership nationwide.

While Roe Cloud’s focus on leadership centered most intensely on reshaping the relationship between American higher education and Native students, McNickle’s early work was more directly tied to the context of the Indian New Deal sought by John Collier’s BIA. Because of the ambitious nature of Reorganization and its focus on multiple aspects of tribal organization, McNickle considered leadership in the broad context of self-government, imagining education as one of the many aspects therein. Still, as McNickle studied and wrote on the impact of the IRA, he repeatedly stressed the

²¹ McNickle, “The Straddle Between Cultures,” 30.

²² McNickle, “Four Years of Indian Reorganization;” D’Arcy McNickle, “What Do the Old Men Say?” *Indians at Work* 9, no. 4 (December 1, 1941), 24-26; D’Arcy McNickle, “Toward Understanding,” *Indians at Work* 9, no. 9 (May-June, 1942), 4-7; D’Arcy McNickle, “We Go On From Here,” *Indians at Work* 11, no. 4 (November-December, 1943), 14-21; D’Arcy McNickle, *They Came Here First: The Epic of the American Indian* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1949).

²³ Quote is from McNickle, *They Came Here First*, 300. See also McNickle, “What Do the Old Men Say?”; Donald L. Fixico, *Indian Resilience and Rebuilding: Indigenous Nations in the Modern American West* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2013).

importance of developing Native leadership through education and training in a variety of fields.

As McNickle saw it, the importance of the Indian Reorganization Act was not the initiative that the federal government showed in passing the legislation, but the initiative that the law would allow to flourish within Native communities. “It isn’t enough to have a law on the statute books,” he wrote.²⁴ “The law must operate in the lives of men and women before it begins to have meaning.”²⁵ That meaning—the law’s impact as seen in “an array of human facts,” as McNickle put it—was just “coming into being” in the late 1930s. The need to support it fully—both within the federal government and within the communities it impacted—would remain critical for years.

As Roe Cloud had sought to cultivate highly adaptable students who worked from strengths in both Native and non-Native forms of leadership training, so McNickle saw the future of Native self-government as necessarily relying on multiple skill sets and bodies of knowledge. As early as 1941 he wrote of his concern regarding the possible loss of Native languages.²⁶ He understood the value of elders’ local leadership in many Native communities, and called on both the BIA and those communities themselves to support the proper training of younger generations in their Native tongues. He saw language as an important part of identity but also a practical and necessary tool for accessing all segments of community leadership. In his analysis of the issue, McNickle characteristically pointed to the need for the BIA to contribute as much as possible to a

²⁴ McNickle, “Four Years of Indian Reorganization,” 8.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ McNickle, “What Do the Old Men Say?”

solution while also insisting that Native people themselves seize an opportunity to better train their own emerging leaders. Unfortunately, this piece appeared just days before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, which pulled the United States—including tens of thousands of American Indians—into World War II. Beyond this particular issue, however, McNickle continued to articulate a similar stance on myriad types of leadership training, consistently arguing for significant and prolonged support from the BIA while also conveying the importance of Native communities employing their own initiative in the effort to self-govern.²⁷

The common outlook that Roe Cloud and McNickle shared regarding the damaging impact of forced assimilation—as well as the value of a Native leadership that was built on a wide range of identities and skill sets—led them both to support the initial push for the Indian Reorganization Act in the 1930s. They understood John Collier’s program as a crucial step toward halting the eroding effects that policies like the 1887 General Allotment Act had had on tribes’ land bases, socioeconomic wellbeing, and political power.²⁸ Still, both men were confident in their own abilities and their own visions for cultivating greater Native leadership both locally and nationally. As Collier’s efforts enhanced the breathing space for these visions, Roe Cloud and McNickle seized the opportunity, but showed they were unwilling to simply act as mouthpieces for the BIA.

²⁷ McNickle, “Four Years of Indian Reorganization.”; McNickle, *They Came Here First*, 280-283.

²⁸ “A New Deal for the American Indian,” *The Indian Leader* 37, no. 32 (April 13, 1934), 1-3; “Notes of Interest,” *The Indian Leader* 37, no. 33 (April 20, 1934), 4; McNickle, “Four Years of Indian Reorganization.” For McNickle’s assessment of the General Allotment Act and the allotment policy, see McNickle, *They Came Here First*, 271-280.

Roe Cloud had clearly sought an explicit separation from the government's American Indian boarding school system in his establishment of the American Indian Institute, but his willingness to speak his mind regarding his frustrations with the direction of the BIA carried over to his service under Collier as well. In his rhetorical fight for continuing Haskell Institute's mission of training adaptable young Native leaders, Roe Cloud had stated bluntly that he trusted his own conception of American Indian education and his own "procedure" in carrying out his mission. "It does not matter so much to me whether I am in the government service or out of it," he wrote.²⁹ "I am not laboring for the perpetuity of my own job," but rather for the sake of the educational vision that Haskell represented.³⁰ Clearly Roe Cloud considered his primary goal the development of a national body of Native intellectual leaders, regardless of how directly the federal government supported that goal.

McNickle, at least under Collier, was less likely to so definitively separate his own perspective from the mission of the BIA. And yet, in how he chose to write on American Indian issues for the Bureau, he did show his willingness to go beyond a simple and straightforward endorsement of the Indian Reorganization Act. In one of his earliest pieces for the BIA periodical *Indians at Work*, McNickle chose not to address the IRA or any specific federal policy by name.³¹ Rather, he spoke of the historical roots of

²⁹ Henry Roe Cloud to James Arentson, August 3, 1934, Box 12 – Indian Education 1934-35, Haskell Series: Subject Correspondence Files, 1904-1941 (ARC ID 600574), Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Record Group 75, National Archives and Records Administration—Central Plains Region (Kansas City) [Hereafter cited as RG 75, Haskell Series, Sub. Corr., NARA KC].

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ D'Arcy McNickle, "Hill 57," *Indians at Work* 4, no. 12 (February 1, 1937), 19-21.

American Indian landlessness and poverty, and the general responsibility of the federal government to address those issues. Taking it a step further, he singled out a group of Native people on the U.S.-Canadian border near Great Falls, Montana—a group that lacked official tribal recognition from either the United States or Canada. By choosing to focus on a group of people without federal recognition, McNickle revealed his desire to advocate for a greater federal commitment to the basic concerns of Native people, regardless of the official terms of Reorganization.

McNickle's understanding of the fundamental issues facing American Indians in twentieth-century America, as well as his commitment to address those issues through an expansion of Native intellectual leadership, aligned him in many ways with the perspective of Henry Roe Cloud. So, too, did his willingness to adhere to his understanding of the issues' principles rather than to the limits of a particular policy or regime. Indeed, while he recognized the value of the "promise" provided by the New Deal and the Indian Reorganization Act, he eventually came to view it in the same way that Roe Cloud had, as a "compromise measure" that did not go far enough in giving tribes "a degree of control" vis-à-vis "the federal employees assigned to their reservations as administrators."³² By the 1940s, if not from the very beginning of his career, he was explicitly asserting tribes' rights to self-govern regardless of whether they had endorsed the IRA.³³

³² McNickle, *They Came Here First*, 293.

³³ *Ibid.*, 283.

This commitment to principle would push McNickle to steadily distance himself from the federal government in the postwar period, a time when the Bureau began to support the interests of those Congressmen who most aggressively pushed for Indian Termination and rapid assimilation. Eventually, that separation from the Bureau of Indian Affairs would allow McNickle to take greater personal control over implementing his own vision for the development of a generation of Native intellectual leaders who could impact policy in local reservation communities as well as on a national scale.

Separation between Native Intellectual Activism and the Federal Government

The postwar era brought a steady separation between the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the leading Native activists in the United States. John Collier left his position as Commissioner of Indian Affairs in 1945, World War II came to an end, and in the ensuing years many Congressmen began to rally against the bulked-up government bureaucracy that President Roosevelt's New Deal had constructed. In this atmosphere, a handful of vocal Congressmen—led by Senator Arthur Watkins from Utah—drew particular attention to the unique status of American Indian tribes, seeking to dismantle the government structures and services that supported that status.³⁴ D'Arcy McNickle, while he spent several years attempting to combat this pressure from his position within the BIA, was simultaneously at the forefront of an effort to organize apart from it. The National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) became perhaps the strongest example of this effort.

³⁴ Fixico, *Termination and Relocation*, 91-94; Hoxie, *This Indian Country*, 319.

In 1944, McNickle and other prominent Native activists both within and outside the BIA began seriously considering the need for establishing a national organization that could voice concerns about federal Indian policy and present a unified front in defense of American Indians' rights.³⁵ Perhaps sensing the end of his own era amid a political push away from the New Deal, John Collier encouraged these early exploratory meetings involving some of the employees under his direction.³⁶ Collier's powerful influence in his twelve years as Commissioner had no doubt allowed a greater sense of responsibility and freedom of expression among these Native leaders.

McNickle and the other founders of the NCAI did, however, recognize the importance of keeping the organization a true representation of American Indian interests and thus free from Bureau control. Soon after its founding, the group passed resolutions that prevented active Bureau employees from holding positions as officers within the NCAI.³⁷ These actions showed a firm dedication to making the NCAI a representation of the eclectic interests among Native people. The organization's members included a wide variety of both men and women from dozens of tribes, some of whom, like Robert Yellowtail, remained deeply involved in local reservation government. Others, like Arthur C. Parker, had advocated and participated in nationwide Native activism for decades. Parker was elected as one of the original NCAI officers in 1944 and represented

³⁵ Thomas W. Cowger, *The National Congress of American Indians: The Founding Years* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 30-31; Hoxie, *This Indian Country*, 317-318.

³⁶ Cowger, 30-31; Hoxie, *This Indian Country*, 317-319.

³⁷ Parker, *Singing an Indian Song*, 108.

a link between the NCAI and the older intellectual activism of the Society of American Indians.³⁸

Despite its eclectic makeup, the new organization sought to succeed where the SAI had failed in terms of arriving at a unified understanding of its purpose. At their first convention in 1944, the original NCAI members adopted a constitution that addressed American Indian empowerment in a broad sense. The organization's central goals were to "secure the rights and benefits to which [American Indians] are entitled under the laws of the United States ... to enlighten the public toward a better understanding of the Indian race; to preserve cultural values ... to preserve rights under Indian treaties ... and to otherwise promote the common welfare" of Native people.³⁹ This broad scope was part of the constitution's strength, because it conveyed the interconnectedness between cultural, political, and socioeconomic welfare. It also transcended the limits of immediate political battles concerning the role of the BIA or the implementation of any particular policy by stressing historical treaties as the basis for the contemporary rights of Native people. These arguments may seem simple, but it is important to note how quickly Native activists organized on a national scale to capitalize on the breathing space that the Indian New Deal had provided. While the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 was properly hailed as a landmark policy for its repudiation of allotment and its support of reservation governments, within ten years the activists organizing the NCAI were already attempting

³⁸ National Congress of American Indians, "Charter Members at the Constitutional Convention," http://www.ncai.org/about-ncai/mission-history/Founders_1944_Photo_Captions.pdf (accessed January 2, 2016).

³⁹ National Congress of American Indians, "The Founding Meeting of NCAI," <http://www.ncai.org/about-ncai/mission-history/the-founding-meeting-of-ncai> (accessed January 2, 2016).

to transcend the constraints of the IRA and preparing to defend Native rights even more broadly in the face of Termination.

While he continued working actively within the Bureau of Indian Affairs until 1952, D'Arcy McNickle's leadership in the NCAI was evident from the beginning.⁴⁰ When he met with President Truman's Committee on Civil Rights in 1947, he spoke as a representative of the NCAI rather than as a BIA worker.⁴¹ Throughout his statements to the Committee, McNickle employed this subtle distinction in order to clearly define a Native position on federal policy and to explain the role of the NCAI as the preeminent Native-driven attempt to defend American Indians' rights. It was important to McNickle to point out the perspective of the NCAI as an "organization made up entirely of persons of Indian blood."⁴²

In speaking from that perspective, McNickle generally de-emphasized the role of the BIA and instead underscored some harmful misunderstandings in the relationship between American Indian tribes and the entire federal government. He saw Native people under attack on two fronts. First, he characterized terminationist momentum as emanating from a misguided effort to "emancipate" Native people from tribal life, arguing that abolishing reservations would in fact be "emancipating the Indian away from [what] little

⁴⁰ McNickle effectively ended his work with the BIA with a leave of absence in 1952, although his resignation was not officially complete until 1954. See Parker, *Singing an Indian Song*, 132-136, 176.

⁴¹ "Statement of D'Arcy McNickle," ND (c. 1947), Box 66 – McNickle, D'Arcy 1943-1954, National Congress of American Indians records, National Museum of the American Indian Archive Center, Smithsonian Institution [Hereafter cited as NCAI records, NMAI]. While this source does not contain an exact date, the context of the document reveals that it is McNickle's testimony for the President's Committee on Civil Rights, which met several times in 1947. See William E. Juhnke, ed., *President Truman's Committee on Civil Rights* (Frederick MD: University Publications of America), 1984.

⁴² "Statement of D'Arcy McNickle," NCAI records, NMAI, 426.

property he has left.”⁴³ On the other hand, he also illustrated that Native people’s tribal identification was often held against them as justification for denying voting rights, veteran’s benefits, or other civil services.⁴⁴ In the face of such fundamental erosions of American Indian rights on multiple fronts, McNickle saw the BIA as overwhelmed. By downplaying the BIA and instead speaking as an NCAI leader, he strove for an impact that reached well beyond the scope of the Bureau, hoping to influence the President and his entire administration as directly as possible. “We believe,” he stated, “that the President could give Indians a great deal of help merely by informing his [cabinet] of the legal status of Indians, why they have [that] status ... and what ought to be the attitude of the Federal Government with respect to their status and their rights.”⁴⁵

McNickle may have been ahead of his time in seeking such a concrete defense of American Indians’ rights from the President in 1947. Even the President’s Committee on Civil Rights was hesitant on the question of whether it was their duty to address systemic violations of Native people’s unique legal status, as opposed to everyday violations of their civil rights based solely on racial discrimination.⁴⁶ Still, McNickle’s willingness to argue for Native people as an NCAI leader in a way that transcended his role in the BIA was an early sign of developments to come.

By 1950, with the introduction of Dillon S. Myer as Commissioner of Indian Affairs, the BIA’s alignment with the Congressional push toward Termination appeared

⁴³ Ibid., 427

⁴⁴ Ibid., 427-428, 431-432.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 427-428.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 433-435.

firm.⁴⁷ Myer's most significant previous experience had occurred during the Japanese internment effort as part of the War Relocation Authority, where he gained little knowledge of American Indian policy but showed hints of his general belief in the benefits of cultural assimilation.⁴⁸ As for his administrative style, he had no intentions of becoming the figurehead of a bold policy in the way that John Collier had. Instead, he sought to organize the BIA as an efficient tool for carrying out the policy that Congress set forth. By 1953, that policy was explicitly laid out in House Concurrent Resolution 108 and Public Law 280, which respectively advocated the elimination of the federal government's responsibility to uphold tribes' special trust status, and the implementation of state jurisdiction over tribes.⁴⁹

During this period, McNickle took on an active role in the NCAI that allowed him to bring about the types of Native community action that he had advocated in vain during his long tenure with the Bureau. Over time, his efforts to cultivate and maintain Native intellectual leadership on a local and national level would begin to embody the educational vision that Henry Roe Cloud had laid out decades earlier.

⁴⁷ Parker, *Singing an Indian Song*, 127-129, 132-136.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 129. For a more extensive study of Myer and his views of cultural assimilation, see also Fixico, *Termination and Relocation*; and Richard Drinnon, *Keeper of Concentration Camps* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).

⁴⁹ House Concurrent Resolution 108, *U.S. Statutes at Large* 67 (1953): B132; Public Law 83-280, *U.S. Statutes at Large* 67 (1953): 587.

Elizabeth Roe Cloud, D'Arcy McNickle, and the Impact of American Indian Development (AID)

While McNickle's work in the Bureau of Indian Affairs had allowed him to address in a broad sense the fundamental issues impacting American Indian people throughout the country, it had also left him frustrated by the apparent lack of commitment to building significant programs to aid reservation communities. He had never witnessed what he had hoped would be the BIA's sustained impact in terms of developing and empowering tribal leadership and supporting economic development.⁵⁰ By the early 1950s, the "promise" of the Indian New Deal was not only incomplete but in acute danger. In this context, McNickle moved beyond his attempt to institute change within and through the government and instead sought to inspire it among Native people more directly, through both local and nationwide organization.

The vehicle for this direct impact became an action-oriented wing of the NCAI called American Indian Development (AID). In 1950 and 1951, McNickle developed AID and became its director, hoping to raise money for non-government programs that could inspire American Indians to "to build up their communities through their own efforts" and attain "real control over their destinies."⁵¹ Within the first year of full operation, AID was administering three separate information-gathering and educational

⁵⁰ McNickle, "Four Years of Indian Reorganization;" McNickle, *They Came Here First*, 293-300.

⁵¹ Quotes are from D'Arcy McNickle and Elizabeth Roe Cloud, "American Indian Development – A Project Sponsored by the National Congress of American Indians: First Annual Report," 1952, Reel 54, John Collier Papers, 1922-1968 (microfilm), Ross-Blakely Law Library, Arizona State University, 3 [hereafter cited as Collier Papers]. See also Elizabeth Roe Cloud, "New Frontiers for the American Indian," 1952, Box 68 – Roe Cloud, Elizabeth, NCAI records, NMAI. According to these sources, the first official projects of AID began in 1951. See also Parker, *Singing an Indian Song*, 138; and Cowger, 123 for more background on the early organization of AID.

programs in Utah, Oklahoma, and Arizona.⁵² While McNickle and his staff members relied on their valuable experiences to assist tribes in organizing to address their perceived needs, special emphasis was placed on developing locally-grown activism and leadership.⁵³

From the outset, Elizabeth Roe Cloud joined forces with McNickle as Assistant Director of AID.⁵⁴ After Henry's death in 1950, Elizabeth had begun taking on a more public leadership role of her own. In addition to her role with AID, she acted as Chairman of the Indian Affairs Division of the General Federation of Women's Clubs.⁵⁵ This position allowed her to share with a wide audience her perspective on American Indian issues and connect with a broad supportive network in the private sector—similar to the network her husband had relied on when seeking funding for the American Indian Institute. While these leadership roles came to her rather late in life, her abilities had been apparent much earlier. During Henry's periodic absences from the American Indian Institute, she had shown her willingness to take over the administrative and financial duties and bear "the brunt of the work" for extended periods.⁵⁶ Now, years later, she seized on the ambition and energy of McNickle's AID program and infused it with an articulate dedication to the type of education and training for Native intellectual

⁵² Elizabeth Roe Cloud, "New Frontiers," NCAI records, NMAI; McNickle and Roe Cloud, "American Indian Development," Reel 54, Collier Papers.

⁵³ McNickle and Roe Cloud, "American Indian Development," Reel 54, Collier Papers, 3-4.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Elizabeth Roe Cloud, "New Frontiers," NCAI records, NMAI.

⁵⁶ Quote is from Henry Roe Cloud to Mary W. Roe, March 25, 1927, Reel 1, Records of the AII. See also Henry P. Douglas to Mrs. Henry Roe Cloud, June 27, 1933, Reel 2, Records of the AII.

leadership that her late husband had always pursued. Her abilities as a writer and organizational leader seemed to match her appearance. Even in her sixties, her strength was projected in her broad shoulders and sturdy facial features, but these were paired with a warm and appealing smile.⁵⁷

Elizabeth's writing deftly handled the powerful public rhetoric in favor of "Indian assimilation" and Termination while consistently reiterating themes related to Native-driven leadership.⁵⁸ While in official reports for AID she and McNickle openly lamented that Termination placed Native people in "the unhappy position of possibly being held liable for the sins of their benefactors," she was able to subtly modify the delivery of that message for different rhetorical platforms.⁵⁹

When Elizabeth addressed a predominantly non-Indian audience through the publications of the General Federation of Women's Clubs, she chose a more cautious approach. For example, she admitted that the dominant discourse on American Indian assimilation may have stemmed from the "sincere efforts" of non-Native people, but emphasized that "Native leadership is convinced that the American Indian must accomplish his own self-determination and growth on a new frontier of development. Indians must themselves through their own efforts chart the course of their future."⁶⁰ As she continued, she chose not to criticize the notion of assimilation directly. Rather than

⁵⁷ See for example "Elizabeth Bender Roe Cloud," Elderviews Web site, https://elderviews.wordpress.com/2012/11/18/ahoogashinawega-brilliant-wings-the-roe-cloud-freeds/576920_3282061323370_1020267849_n/ (accessed March 1, 2017).

⁵⁸ Elizabeth Roe Cloud, "New Frontiers," NCAI records, NMAI, 3.

⁵⁹ McNickle and Roe Cloud, "American Indian Development," Reel 54, Collier Papers, 7.

⁶⁰ Elizabeth Roe Cloud, "New Frontiers," NCAI records, NMAI, 1.

emphasize negative aspects of forced assimilation, she laid out a positive vision of the future as one in which American Indian individuals and their communities persisted, with “Indian leadership directed to the end of self-support and self-government” in Native communities.⁶¹ That leadership, she insisted, must be spurred on by funding for the types of programs that AID was enacting, as well as for broader “scholarship aid for ambitious boys and girls who are now ready for higher educational training, but who have not the extra funds” to take on the tuition.⁶²

In this way, Elizabeth Roe Cloud displayed her understanding of the powerful discourse surrounding Indian Termination and assimilation, while still attempting to push that power in a direction that she saw as beneficial to Native people. She sought to appeal to the “sincere efforts” of a non-Native audience and direct that positive energy toward a practical end that could empower Native people “for social, political, economic, and citizenship responsibilities” in their own communities.⁶³

The first manifestation of this effort through AID was a series of local workshops near reservation communities, which began in 1951 and developed throughout the decade. While the long-term material impact of these workshops was difficult to measure, Elizabeth early on noted that “a new spirit of leadership [was] awakening.”⁶⁴ For the directors of AID in the first years of the workshops, the most crucial impact was a

⁶¹ Ibid., 3.

⁶² Elizabeth Roe Cloud, “Indian Affairs Newsletter,” July 1952, Box 68 – Roe Cloud, Elizabeth; NCAI records, NMAI, 2.

⁶³ Elizabeth Roe Cloud, “New Frontiers,” NCAI records, NMAI, 3.

⁶⁴ Elizabeth Roe Cloud, “Indian Affairs Newsletter,” NCAI records, NMAI, 4.

momentous shift away from bureaucratic dictation and toward an approach to the concerns and needs of Native communities that grew from the inside out. “The solving of Indian problems,” McNickle and Roe Cloud wrote, “is a question of starting with people, at the place where they are.”⁶⁵ They repeatedly stressed the desire of AID to distance itself from the paternalistic stance that had for so long characterized the federal government, and instead to encourage communities to assess their own needs and establish their own goals. Ultimately, the strategy from AID was “to counsel and advise, but ... not attempt to manage the affairs of a community.”⁶⁶ This must have been a difficult exercise in patience for AID’s directors and staff, who clearly felt a sense of urgency in the face of Termination.

Still, the experiences of both D’Arcy McNickle and Elizabeth Roe Cloud had led them to believe that the particular brand of Native leadership they were cultivating was perfectly suited for addressing the challenges of their time. At the American Indian Institute and later in her own activism, Elizabeth had participated in an effort that acknowledged the power of modern American systems of education, economics, and politics, but simultaneously promoted Native leaders’ use of those systems *as Native people* who could in turn advocate *for Native people* in particular.⁶⁷ In his own right, McNickle’s career by the 1950s had long displayed a sense of continuity with this theme. Just as Henry and Elizabeth Roe Cloud had, McNickle advocated the maintenance of Native cultures, languages, and lands, as well as a high level of “adaptation” to the

⁶⁵ McNickle and Roe Cloud, “American Indian Development,” Reel 54, Collier Papers, 7.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁶⁷ Elizabeth Roe Cloud, “New Frontiers,” NCAI records, NMAI.

powerful modern forces of American law and politics.⁶⁸ And by the late 1950s and early 1960s, McNickle became deeply involved in a new effort that even more closely aligned with the Roe Clouds' original vision of intellectual activism through higher education.

Beginning in the late 1950s, McNickle became interested in an opportunity to reach students in a way that promised to go beyond individual communities and to promote the growth of a nationwide body of Native intellectual activists. Known simply as the Workshop on American Indian Affairs, this program brought together American Indian college students from around the country for six-week summer seminars to educate students on the intersections between American Indian history and contemporary Native issues.⁶⁹ The Workshop began in 1956 at Colorado College, and was originally run by University of Chicago anthropologists, including Sol Tax, Rosalie Wax, and Robert K. "Bob" Thomas (Cherokee). It soon found a home at the University of Colorado in Boulder, where McNickle had lived since the formation of AID.⁷⁰ In the first years, he acted as a guest speaker and close observer of the Workshop, and by 1960 he was intimately involved in its planning and execution.⁷¹

McNickle gave the Workshop greater stability and continuity by ensuring in 1960 that it became a centerpiece of AID's program, administered directly by that organization

⁶⁸ McNickle, "What Do the Old Men Say?" Quote is from McNickle, *They Came Here First*, 300.

⁶⁹ Rosalie H. Wax, "A Brief History and Analysis of the Workshops on American Indian Affairs Conducted for American Indian College Students, 1956-1960, Together With a Study of Current Attitudes and Activities of Those Students," October 1961, NCAI records, NMAI.

⁷⁰ Parker, *Singing an Indian Song*, 176.

⁷¹ Rosalie Wax, "A Brief History," NCAI records, NMAI, 16.

rather than through a more temporary and sporadic ad hoc committee.⁷² The mission of the Workshop remained consistent throughout: to “help Indian students find meaning and purpose in college work,” and to promote among them a better understanding of “subject matter that touches their lives and has meaning.”⁷³

McNickle and the other directors noted that many Native students experienced unique difficulties in American higher education, and they hoped to confront those difficulties as directly as possible. Native students, they observed, often felt marginalized not only because of the pressures of cultural stereotypes in the education system, but because of prejudices that the students themselves had come to harbor as well.⁷⁴ Cherokee instructor Bob Thomas was perhaps the most influential force on the early Workshop, eliciting intense and sometimes emotional responses from the students because of his steadfast defense of Native cultures in the face of assimilationist arguments.⁷⁵ Rosalie Wax, who acted as an instructor and director and wrote an extensive report on the early years, noted that many students were confused and frustrated by Thomas’ perspective, possibly because they had encountered in American schools the view that rapid assimilation was the only positive course for American Indians.⁷⁶ In the end, this energy—even when born out of confusion or frustration—became a centerpiece

⁷² *Ibid.*, 3-4.

⁷³ American Indian Development, Inc. (AID), “Education for Leadership: The Indian People See the Future in Their Children,” 1961, MSS 703 BC, Box 1, Folder 12, Records of the National Indian Youth Council, Center for Southwest Research, University Libraries, University of New Mexico [hereafter cited as Records of the NIYC, CSWR], 4.

⁷⁴ Rosalie Wax, “A Brief History,” NCAI records, NMAI, 1-2, 8-20.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 8

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 8-9.

of the Workshop and was viewed as an essential aspect of the intense program. Not only were students gaining a better knowledge of “Indian legislation; tribal histories; reservation planning; [and] the administration of law and order in Indian communities,” but they were undergoing a self-examination in terms of their identities as Native people and as activists in a challenging modern world.⁷⁷

In these tense but enlightening seminars, Thomas, McNickle, and the other directors hoped to inspire young Native students to garner the benefits of mainstream American higher education in order to work toward not only Native-driven socioeconomic goals but also a fundamentally “better view of themselves, of their abilities, of their place in the future.”⁷⁸ By the onset of the 1960s, the Workshop was doing just that. Several former students would go on to become the leaders and founders of the regional and National Indian Youth Councils (NIYC), organizations that would prove crucial to expanding a national discourse on American Indian self-determination and on the theme of Native control in education.⁷⁹ As the 1960s progressed, the philosophical underpinnings and goals of the Workshop would also resonate in the founding missions of tribal colleges and universities.

McNickle and the other promoters of the Workshop at the dawn of the 1960s sensed the growing impact of their endeavor, viewing it as a pivotal “new idea in Indian education.”⁸⁰ The program’s influence on emerging young leaders was unmistakable. But

⁷⁷ AID, “Education for Leadership,” 4.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ Cowger, 141.

⁸⁰ AID, “Education for Leadership,” 4.

in their enthusiastic focus on the future, the directors' claims of a "new idea" in education may have overlooked just how closely they worked toward the same fundamental mission of an activist effort begun years before. Indeed, Henry Roe Cloud had labored for two decades to bring together promising students from across the country, to improve the relationship between American higher education and those Native students, to give their education greater meaning, and to demonstrate and further inspire "a Native and national leadership."⁸¹ Whereas Roe Cloud had felt compelled to address a serious deficiency in the relationship between Native students and the American education system, the organizers of the summer Workshop in Boulder were able to build on the momentum generated by the fact that, in the late 1950s, young Native students began entering higher education with greater regularity. Rather than see it stall, McNickle and the Workshop organizers sought to direct that momentum into a burgeoning movement. But they were not alone, even in their own time. In the late 1950s, another Native activist had begun developing his own vision for American Indian higher education that even more directly drew on the example of Roe Cloud's approach to Native intellectual activism.

Renewed Activism for a National Center of Native-Driven Higher Education

There was not one model of Native activism in the twentieth century. Even within the particular vein of activism studied here—which concerned itself primarily with the control of and access to education and Native leadership development—the styles and backgrounds of the individuals involved varied. Activists sometimes served as

⁸¹ Henry Roe Cloud to Dr. Will Carson Ryan Jr., August 7, 1934, Box 135 – Personal Correspondence July 1934-Feb 1935, Haskell Series: Correspondence of the Superintendents, 1890-1942 (ARC ID 2143367), Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Record Group 75, National Archives and Records Administration—Central Plains Region (Kansas City) [Hereafter cited as RG 75, Haskell Series, Corr., Supt., NARA KC].

community leaders on the reservation level, and at other times worked toward broad inter-tribal organization. As the examples of the Roe Clouds and McNickle have shown, these areas of focus could overlap. Still, certain shared characteristics have stood out. One key trait shared by the individual activists studied here was an ability to understand and utilize the power of racial and cultural discourses of the time. Henry and Elizabeth Roe Cloud, as well as D’Arcy McNickle, all displayed in their writings the ability to address the concerns of both Native people and non-Native advocates of their work. They drew on their experiences with the dominant systems of Euro-American education and politics while attempting to move and reshape those systems in ways they saw as more beneficial for Native people with Native identities. They maintained a balanced perspective that viewed leadership as the product of multiple sources of learning, and as something concerned with both local action and broader organization.

Jack Forbes shared these traits. Born in 1934, he was certainly of a different generation than the other individuals highlighted here.⁸² When Elizabeth Roe Cloud and D’Arcy McNickle first outlined their frustrations with Termination and their ambitions to develop Native leadership programs through AID, Forbes was just a teenager.⁸³ But this context did not escape him, and he would soon become one of its central voices and actors. As a young adult, pictures of his clean-cut face, soft eyes, and faint smile belied his sharp wit and powerful rhetorical voice. He advanced quickly through the American higher education system, earning his Master’s Degree at age twenty-two and a PhD in

⁸² “Jack D. Forbes,” ND, Box 2 – Jack Forbes: Correspondence, Jack D. Forbes Collection, University of California – Davis, Special Collections [Hereafter cited as Forbes Collection, UC Davis].

⁸³ McNickle and Roe Cloud, “American Indian Development,” Reel 54, Collier Papers.

History and Anthropology at twenty-five.⁸⁴ He was also clearly perceptive of cultural and racial discrimination from an early age, not only in its details but in how it operated on a grand scale. He wrote in his journal as a teenager about his personal observations of and misgivings regarding racial segregation in the South, but also contextualized those personal experiences as part of a systemic problem.⁸⁵

Before he completed his education, Forbes was already displaying his activist spirit. In 1957, he wrote directly to the Secretary of the Interior to express his concerns regarding the direction of postwar federal Indian policy.⁸⁶ Though he wrote prolifically throughout his life, this one letter captures much of what motivated Forbes as a Native activist. In it, he railed against the postwar policy of Indian Relocation, which sought to accelerate American Indian movement away from reservations and toward jobs and homes in urban areas. Forbes, who observed the impact of this program in Los Angeles, argued that it did little other than push Native people into “sub-standard or slum sections” of major cities.⁸⁷ He targeted the Relocation program specifically, but understood it as just one piece in a long and deliberate policy of breaking down tribal identities. He referred to the Indian New Deal of the 1930s as the one notable exception in a general effort “to white-wash the Indian, destroy his religion and force him to become a copy of

⁸⁴ “Jack D. Forbes,” Forbes Collection, UC Davis. See also Sarah Cunnane, “Jack D. Forbes, 1934-2011,” March 17, 2011, *Times Higher Education*, <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/people/obituaries/jack-forbes-1934-2011/415484.article?storycode=415484> (accessed January 20, 2016).

⁸⁵ Jack Forbes, “5100 Miles by Rail,” ND, Box 231 – Jack Forbes: Early Writings, Forbes Collection, UC Davis.

⁸⁶ Jack D. Forbes to Secretary of the Interior, June 28, 1957, Box 2 – Jack Forbes: Correspondence, Forbes Collection, UC Davis.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 1.

the European-American.”⁸⁸ Despite his clear anger and frustration, Forbes showed his ability to carefully delineate the multiple levels of his argument. American Indians, he asserted, were under attack not only in terms of their basic right to practice their cultures, religions, and languages, but in terms of their particular legal rights to their homes and lands that were anchored in the treaty process.⁸⁹

Forbes made this type of direct activist action a decided strategy. In 1960, with the election of John F. Kennedy to the White House, Forbes attempted to utilize the administrative turnover as an opening for inspiring a turn away from Termination and forced assimilation, with education as a primary focus. He aggressively pursued a variety of strategies for influencing policy makers, regularly sending letters and proposals to Congressmen and eventually corresponding directly with members of the Cabinet—including Vice President Lyndon Johnson.⁹⁰ Like McNickle, Forbes showed in his activist efforts an interest in how the long course of American Indian history intersected with contemporary Native political and legal issues, and he expressed a willingness to throw himself into the effort to “re-construct” the entire approach to how those issues were taught.⁹¹ As this effort developed, though, it quickly became a more articulate

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ See for example “American Indian University Brochures,” ND, Box 2 – Jack Forbes: Correspondence, Forbes Collection, UC Davis; Jack D. Forbes, “Suggestions for Improving Our Indian Program,” 1960, Box 2 – Jack Forbes: Correspondence, Forbes Collection, UC Davis; and Lyndon B. Johnson to Dr. Jack D. Forbes, May 28, 1962, Box 2 – Jack Forbes: Correspondence, Forbes Collection, UC Davis.

⁹¹ Jack Forbes, “Professional Goals,” 1956. Box 2 – Jack Forbes: Correspondence, Forbes Collection, UC Davis.

creative mission that aligned closely with the work of Henry Roe Cloud in the early twentieth century.

Much like Roe Cloud, Forbes was an educator who viewed the promise of a growing Native intellectual activism as a movement that required a fundamental change in how American Indian students experienced the mainstream system of education.⁹² He also understandably saw education as interwoven with all other aspects of social and economic wellbeing. In what was becoming a frustrated refrain for Native activists by 1960, Forbes viewed the essential perspective of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the schools they provided as one that “obsessed [over] the idea of ‘Anglo-izing’ the Indian.”⁹³ In one of his first communications with the Kennedy administration, Forbes outlined in detail his assessment of the problems stemming from this assimilationist stance, as well as potential alternatives. He understood the obsession with assimilation as a “tragic failure” that only exacerbated the social and economic problems of Native communities by replacing any positive sense of self with a makeshift copy of American working-class identity.⁹⁴ In schools motivated by assimilationist goals, Forbes argued, Native students were soaked in a worldview of American exceptionalism that not only degraded Native cultural practices but excluded their entire perspective from the “historic community.”⁹⁵ In other words, students felt the need either to assimilate or to identify

⁹² Barbara Risling, “Lifetime Achievement: Jack D. Forbes,” Box 1 – Jack Forbes: Chronology and Biography, Forbes Collection, UC Davis; Forbes, “Suggestions for Improving Our Indian Program,” Forbes Collection, UC Davis.

⁹³ Forbes, “Suggestions for Improving Our Indian Program,” Forbes Collection, UC Davis, 1.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

with a “lost people.”⁹⁶ In this problematic position, he argued, they struggled to become leaders “for their own people [or] for society in general.”⁹⁷

Forbes focused on alternatives that began not with the ostensible practicality of basic vocational training or “modernization,” but with an acknowledgment of the contributions of Native cultures to American society. As Roe Cloud had done in publications such as *The Indian Leader* decades before, Forbes described positive endorsements of Native culture and identity as the *foundation of*—rather than simply an adornment to—a student’s growth and success.⁹⁸ In a letter to a colleague in 1961, Forbes suggested that “a pride in, and knowledge of, the Native American heritage” would not only “improve the social-psychological attitudes of Indian students [but of] Indian people in general.”⁹⁹ He did not settle, though, for making suggestions and appealing to various members of the academic and political power structures. These appeals were only one part of his strategy. Like Roe Cloud, Forbes began to focus on higher education and Native leadership, organizing his own effort to directly cultivate the change he sought. In 1960 and 1961, this effort grew into an extensive proposal for an American Indian University.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid. This discussion is also influenced by Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994).

⁹⁸ For examples from Henry Roe Cloud at Haskell, see Annette M. Lingelbach, “Indian Leadership: Reading Past History,” *The Indian Leader* 37, no. 11 (November 17, 1933), 9; and “Value of Mythology to a Race of People,” *The Indian Leader* 37, no. 26 (March 2, 1934), 1.

⁹⁹ Jack D. Forbes to Drew Pearson, April 8, 1961, Box 228 – Native Higher Education and Colleges, Forbes Collection, UC Davis.

¹⁰⁰ Forbes, “Suggestions for Improving Our Indian Program,” Forbes Collection, UC Davis.

The relationship between Native students and American higher education had already changed significantly between the founding of Roe Cloud's American Indian Institute in 1915 and the development of Forbes' proposal in the early 1960s. In a broad sense, the American infrastructure of colleges and universities had swollen considerably, with a higher percentage of the general population attending and graduating from these institutions.¹⁰¹

For American Indian people in particular, the change had been even more profound. The direct efforts of Roe Cloud and other educators had begun to expose and address the disconnect between Native students and higher education in America, and had better prepared students to successfully bridge that gap. By the 1950s, as McNickle and the directors of the Workshop on American Indian Affairs had noted, the nature of the problem had shifted but it had not disappeared. While there no longer existed the same "absolute block upon the entrance of [the] ablest young [Native] people into the schools and colleges of the land" that Roe Cloud had observed, there remained a cultural barrier between educational institutions and American Indian students and their communities.¹⁰²

This cultural barrier, Forbes perceived, represented not simply an inconvenient aspect of a prejudiced system but a powerful and concrete obstacle between Native students and meaningful success in higher education and the related positions of power

¹⁰¹ John R. Thelin, *A History of American Higher Education* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004).

¹⁰² Quote is from Henry Roe Cloud, "Education of the American Indian," *Quarterly Journal of the Society of American Indians*, 2, no. 3 (July-September, 1914), 207. For more information on the perceptions of the directors of the Boulder Workshop, see Rosalie Wax, "A Brief History," NCAI records, NMAI, 1-2, 8-20.

and leadership.¹⁰³ Facing this reality, his proposal for an American Indian University laid out a vision that aligned remarkably well with the work that Henry Roe Cloud had pursued in his two decades at the American Indian Institute and at Haskell.

Forbes began his proposal with a simple premise. “One of the greatest problems facing the American Indian today,” he wrote, “is the lack of trained leadership.”¹⁰⁴ Native leadership for him represented a broad concept that depended in part on particular professional skills in everything from “medicine [and] law ... [to] economics and agriculture,” and in part on a more subjective “sense of inner pride and security” that came from positive endorsements of American Indian identity.¹⁰⁵ As he progressed through his ambitious proposal, Forbes articulated a host of tangible strategies for a simultaneous approach to both of these aspects of Native leadership.

He began with teacher training, endorsing an explicit commitment to training “as many teachers of Indian ancestry as possible.”¹⁰⁶ This step, he argued, would not simply increase the number of American Indian professionals but cultivate a more positive sense of identity for an entire generation of students. American Indian teachers would simultaneously address several problems, in Forbes’ eyes. For one, they could begin to counteract generations of “an Anglo-interpreted version of history, culture, [and] values” by teaching from a perspective that genuinely sympathized with that of Native students

¹⁰³ Forbes to Pearson, April 8, 1961, Forbes Collection, UC Davis.

¹⁰⁴ Dr. Jack D. Forbes, “A Proposal to Create an American Indian University,” 1961, in *Native American Higher Education: The Struggle for the Creation of D-Q University, 1960-1971*, by Jack D. Forbes, 1985, Box 228 – Native Higher Education and Colleges, Forbes Collection, UC Davis, 25.

¹⁰⁵ Forbes, “A Proposal,” Forbes Collection, UC Davis, 25, 27.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 25.

and their communities.¹⁰⁷ At the same time, however, the teachers would stand as tangible embodiments of adaptable leadership by drawing on Native and non-Native teaching techniques and languages. With this vision of teacher training as his number one priority, Forbes hoped to lay the groundwork for a more positive sense of identity among an entire generation of Native students who, in turn, might contribute to a growing body of Native leaders throughout the country.

Throughout his proposal, Forbes continued to illustrate how his American Indian University could impact a host of Native individuals and their communities. He supplemented his endorsement of bilingual education by proposing that his university might organize research to help tribes develop written versions of their languages, if they did not already have them. “Once a person is literate in his native language,” he argued, “it is much easier for him to become literate in an unfamiliar tongue.”¹⁰⁸ He went further by suggesting that the university “would attempt to make the whole nation its campus” by creating a variety of media in both English and Native languages, broadcasting “new ways for solving problems, how to develop tribal enterprises, what other Indians are doing, and a multitude of other things.”¹⁰⁹ Here again, Forbes focused on the development of practical skill by drawing on both Native and non-Native knowledge bases. Students would earn university degrees and credentials while actively engaging Native communities and their particular needs. Not only that, they would host conferences and lectures to bring together tribal officials and organizers from across the

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 29.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 28.

country.¹¹⁰ In this way, Forbes envisioned his university as a vital hub in what he hoped would be a growing movement of Native intellectual activism.

As he formalized his proposal for an American Indian University in 1961, Forbes viewed the relationship between Native people, the mainstream education system, and positions of leadership and power in American society much as Roe Cloud had nearly five decades earlier. Forbes observed that the American education system did not properly serve Native students, especially in the realm of higher education. This problem, he argued, stemmed largely from an assimilationist mindset that continued to dominate government schooling—including and especially within the Bureau of Indian Affairs.¹¹¹ While the Workshop on American Indian Affairs in Boulder had become a testament to the growing number of Native students entering college, Forbes was as keen as the Workshop directors in noting that those students still faced serious identity challenges in American schools, contributing to lagging rates of graduation and professional success.¹¹² In Forbes' mind, a national center of higher education designed by and for Native people could help address that problem. At the same time, such a center would encourage its students and educators alike to approach a second and broader issue—the desire for a growing body of highly adaptable Native leaders to act on behalf of their local communities and defend the rights and status of American Indian people in general.¹¹³

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Forbes, "Suggestions for Improving Our Indian Program," Forbes Collection, UC Davis.

¹¹² Forbes to Pearson, April 8, 1961, Forbes Collection, UC Davis; Forbes, "Suggestions for Improving Our Indian Program," Forbes Collection, UC Davis.

¹¹³ Forbes to Pearson, April 8, 1961, Forbes Collection UC Davis.

In his assessment of the challenges facing Native people in modern America, as well as in his efforts to approach those challenges through a particular type of education and leadership training, Forbes seemingly resurrected and reapplied Roe Cloud's vision to "train into efficient leadership ... young Indians from every tribe."¹¹⁴ It is difficult to know whether he crafted his American Indian University proposal after Roe Cloud's vision for the American Indian Institute, but the possibility certainly exists. Forbes was a voracious researcher on numerous aspects of Indigenous history, and among the thousands of pages of documents in his research materials are photocopies of some of Roe Cloud's writings in the *Quarterly Journal of the Society of American Indians*, the same platform where Roe Cloud printed his proposal for the American Indian Institute.¹¹⁵ Regardless of whether Forbes consciously imitated Roe Cloud in 1960 and 1961, it seems clear that he was accessing and promoting a form of Native intellectual activism that Roe Cloud had helped to develop and disseminate.

Forbes' envisioned American Indian University, like the American Indian Institute, would prize a balanced ideal of leadership—built on a foundation of Native identity and a knowledge of American Indian history and culture, but also highly adaptable to and conversant in the aspects of mainstream American education, economics, and politics that impacted contemporary Native communities. In delineating the subjects he considered vital, Forbes was of an open mind in the same way that Roe Cloud had been. Students at the American Indian Institute in 1917 encountered

¹¹⁴ Henry Roe Cloud to E.C. Sage, April 24, 1918, Reel 2, Records of the AII.

¹¹⁵ Photocopies of Henry Roe Cloud's writing are found in Box 72 – Native Americans: General Topics and U.S. Tribes, Forbes Collection, UC Davis.

everything from geometry to American history to coursework on agriculture, as Roe Cloud strove for an eclectic sense of leadership that was simultaneously rooted in the practical and the intellectual.¹¹⁶ In the same vein, Forbes sought to address the renewed pressures on Native identity in his own time by “train[ing] Indian students for professional work of all kinds,” but with an explicit desire to cultivate “a dynamic synthesis” of multiple ways of thinking and multiple bodies of knowledge.¹¹⁷ “The American Indian University,” he wrote, “should above all, be an Indian-controlled institution ... an expression of the Indian community.”¹¹⁸

Linking Eras of Native Intellectual Activism

A key purpose of this history is to link together eras and threads of Native intellectual activism that have previously been studied separately. A more nuanced understanding of the era of federal Termination for American Indians is a crucial part of that effort. The pendulum metaphor, though intended to offer an explanation of how federal Indian policy has developed, has also encouraged an oversimplified understanding of the presence of Native activism. The metaphor suggests that in one era, Native activism grew through the work of individuals like Henry Roe Cloud and groups like the Society of American Indians, and through federal support in John Collier’s Indian New Deal. In the next era, the narrative holds, a powerful swing of the pendulum toward Termination wiped away those gains and the momentum of Native activism.

¹¹⁶ Henry Roe Cloud to Victor Gordon, August 9, 1917, Reel 2, Records of the AII.

¹¹⁶ “Organization and Purpose,” ND, Reel 2, Records of the AII.

¹¹⁷ Forbes, “A Proposal,” Forbes Collection, UC Davis, 27-28.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 33.

By focusing on the persistence of certain philosophical underpinnings of a line of Native intellectual activism represented by Henry Roe Cloud, the history uncovered here offers a different interpretation of the Termination era. Certainly, this era saw direct threats to the tribal status of Native people, and renewed pressures for rapid cultural assimilation. But it also witnessed the persistence of the fundamental principles of Henry Roe Cloud's intellectual activism, and the bridging of one generation of Native leaders to another by key individuals like Elizabeth Roe Cloud and D'Arcy McNickle. Jack Forbes represented one of the new generation. He adapted Roe Cloud's principles and methods to the contemporary context of the Termination era, while also working in ways that spoke to the potential opportunities of the 1960s and beyond. In other words, the tradition of Native intellectual activism that Henry Roe Cloud and others of his era built and developed was not wiped away in one generation but was carried through a challenging period, adapted to changing circumstances, and reinvigorated by a new generation of activists.

While he operated in line with Henry Roe Cloud's older intellectual tradition, Jack Forbes also stood at the cutting edge of a powerful movement that had not yet fully developed. Much changed in the days between when Forbes outlined his proposal to a colleague in the spring of 1961, and when he distributed its more formalized version to dozens of government officials and interested Native activists that fall. Sol Tax and D'Arcy McNickle had organized the American Indian Chicago Conference that summer, bringing together hundreds of Native attendees from dozens of tribes throughout the country. Out of that conference sprang the National Indian Youth Council, which supported research into new tribal educational programs and fought for the protection of

a wide range of other Native rights. That same summer, the *Journal of American Indian Education (JAIE)* printed its first issues at Arizona State University, helping to link together the work of a broad array of researchers and activists, and becoming a key platform for the support of education *by* and *for* Native people.

The summer of 1961 thus represented a key moment in a burgeoning national discourse on American Indian issues, and Native control of and access to institutions of higher education became a vital piece of that conversation. Forbes acted as a key voice in this growing national conversation, corresponding with Tax, McNickle, the leaders of NIYC, and tribal officials, while also having pieces of his work published in the *JAIE* and other emerging Native-driven publications. His vision of an American Indian University took years of persistent work to develop, but its basic sentiment—a center of education and leadership training created *by* and *for* Native people—stood as a central point of emphasis for many Native educators and their advocates throughout the 1960s. As they shared information, supported and published each other’s research, and in general linked together an emerging national discourse, they also began formalizing the fundamental arguments for the creation of tribal colleges and universities as tangible new sites of Native intellectual activism.

CHAPTER THREE

“Indian-Controlled and Indian-Centered”: Driving Home the Argument for Tribally-Controlled Higher Education

I have only one further point I wish to make. I realize the fact that there are people who talk about integration, assimilation, acculturation, first class citizenship, etc. But you know the American Indians have something different that was bestowed upon them by the grace of God, such as our songs, tribal dances, arts and crafts, our religion, games and stories. Some of these are fast disappearing and my question is: are we going to continue to lose these precious gifts through this process of education or becoming white men? Or should we continue to identify ourselves as Indians, which to me is no disgrace.

- Clarence Wesley, Chairman of the San Carlos Apache Tribe, 1961

This statement from San Carlos Apache Chairman Clarence Wesley appeared in the first article of the inaugural edition of the *Journal of American Indian Education* (*JAIE*), in June 1961.¹ The brief passage sums up much of what mattered most to Wesley, as well as what tied him to a deep vein of intellectual activism laid out by the likes of Henry and Elizabeth Roe Cloud, D’Arcy McNickle, and Jack Forbes. Like the others, Wesley sought to engage with and utilize the dominant systems of American education and politics while attempting to reshape those systems in ways he saw as beneficial for Native people with Native identities. He characterized these identities not as relics of the past but as foundations for living in the modern American world. He repudiated straightforward assimilation, maintaining a balanced perspective that viewed Native leadership as an adaptable product of multiple sources of knowledge, concerned with

¹ Clarence Wesley, “Indian Education,” *Journal of American Indian Education* [hereafter cited as *JAIE*] 1, vol. 1 (June 1961), 4-7. From its inception, the *JAIE* was a diverse collection of original articles and reprints of research pieces by tribal officials and other Native leaders, as well as non-Native educators and researchers.

both local action and broader organization. His opening article for the *JAIE* thus built on a line of intellectual thought that had been forming within and between Native individuals and communities for generations. Yet the context of the early 1960s did present burgeoning opportunities that were unlike those of previous eras. During this era, students and educators throughout the country began demanding that American higher education better serve the needs of ethnic and racial minorities.² And Chairman Wesley, while a charismatic leader, represented just one of many voices in a growing national discourse on the particular relationship between Native students and the American education system.

In that same month of June 1961, Wesley would be one of over 500 Native leaders from over 90 tribes to assemble for the American Indian Chicago Conference, organized by University of Chicago anthropologist Sol Tax, along with D'Arcy McNickle and the organizers of the Workshop on American Indian Affairs.³ Out of this conference came the Declaration of Indian Purpose, a statement presented to President John F. Kennedy in 1962 that asserted Native peoples' right to "retain spiritual and cultural values" as well as the more proactive "right to choose our way of life."⁴ The Declaration's simple but assertive statements of Native rights held the key intellectual principles of the fight for American Indian self-determination. This movement sought not

² See for example John R. Thelin, *A History of American Higher Education* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 303-310.

³ Joan Ablon, "The American Indian Chicago Conference," *JAIE* 1, no. 2 (January 1962), 17-23; Daniel M. Cobb, *Native Activism in Cold War America: The Struggle for Sovereignty* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2008).

⁴ "Declaration of Indian Purpose," 1961, MSS 703 BC, Box 1, folder 8, Records of the National Indian Youth Council, Center for Southwest Research, University Libraries, University of New Mexico [hereafter cited as Records of the NIYC, CSWR], 4-5.

only to halt the momentum of the Termination policies, but to empower each tribe to “act as an emerging nation which buys and uses technical assistance from outsiders but retains control over all [its] programs.”⁵ The document and the powerful collection of Native voices behind it fit into a larger context of increasingly forceful racial and ethnic activism in America, but they also underscored the unique status and concerns of American Indian people. Little federal action resulted directly from the Declaration, but its presentation to the Kennedy administration became symbolic of the era’s potential for Native-driven leadership.

While the meetings of the Chicago conference often failed to produce a unified vision “of what Indians want for their future,” they created a lively forum for information sharing.⁶ The high-profile gathering alerted both Native and non-Native people to issues of American Indian policy throughout the country, and though it revealed some intense differences of opinion, it was seen by many as a momentous starting point for further organization and activism. As one Native woman who helped plan the conference related, “when I came here, I thought only of my people and our problems, and now I think of *all the Indian people and all their problems.*”⁷

Beyond the forum it created for experienced tribal officials from across the country, the 1961 conference also played a key role in spurring the intellectual activism of young Native leaders. D’Arcy McNickle and his staff chose to hold that summer’s

⁵ Ned Hatathli, “Position Paper,” 1970, in Lloyd Lynn House, “The Historical Development of Navajo Community College,” (PhD diss., Arizona State University, 1974), 112-116. Hatathli served as one of the early presidents of Navajo Community College, the first tribally-controlled college in the United States.

⁶ Ablon, 17.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 22.

Workshop on American Indian Affairs in conjunction with the Chicago conference, rather than in Boulder. The Workshop's students gained resolve through their sometimes frustrating interactions with the older generation of leaders in Chicago, and within weeks they formed the National Indian Youth Council (NIYC). This body built upon the organizational network of previous regional councils. Originally founded in Gallup, New Mexico, the group quickly pulled in many of the brightest young Native intellectuals from across the country, and aggressively pursued improvements in American Indian healthcare, economic opportunities, and especially education.⁸

The inaugural issue of the *Journal of American Indian Education*, the Chicago conference, and the founding of the National Indian Youth Council marked the summer of 1961 as a watershed moment for a burgeoning national discourse on American Indian issues. Though much scholarship has been devoted to the public profile of Native activism in the form of “Red Power”—which would not reach its full heights until the formation of the militant American Indian Movement (AIM) in the late 1960s and early 1970s—the developments of the summer of 1961 indicate that an intellectual activist infrastructure was indeed developing much earlier.⁹ Chairman Wesley's ponderings on Native identity in the inaugural issue of the *JAIE* represented just a small but insightful

⁸ “National Indian Youth Council Tentative Charter Membership,” 1961, Box 1, Folder 11, Records of the NIYC, CSWR; Charles E. Minton, “The Place of the Indian Youth Council in Higher Education,” *JAIE* 1, no. 1 (June 1961), 29-32. See also Bradley G. Shreve, *Red Power Rising: The National Indian Youth Council and the Origins of Native Activism*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2011), for example 14, 43, 47, 52, 54, 70, 187-91; and “National Indian Youth Council, Inc.,” <http://www.niyc-alb.org> (accessed December 16, 2012). For a sustained investigation of this type of activism in a long-term, local context, see Myla Vicenti Carpio, *Indigenous Albuquerque* (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 2011).

⁹ See for example Cobb. Cobb persuasively argues that much of the scholarly focus on twentieth-century Native activism focuses on the high-profile tactics of groups like the American Indian Movement (AIM) in the 1970s, missing the earlier work of less-militant activists in the 1950s and 1960s.

whisper in a conversation that would explode into life in the ensuing years. The vital balance espoused by the likes of the Roe Clouds, McNickle, and now Wesley—seeking to protect expressions of American Indian identity while promoting an adaptable form of Native leadership—would not only influence the eclectic new generation of Native scholars and activists such as the National Indian Youth Council, but also directly inform the mission statements and educational goals of the first tribal colleges and universities (TCUs) in the 1960s and 1970s. These schools would stand as some of the earliest tangible expressions of American Indian self-determination, for while new federal economic support helped jumpstart these institutions, they were Native-driven projects in philosophy and practice.¹⁰

Tribal colleges and universities also represented a vital extension of a type of Native intellectual activism that simultaneously endorsed national organization and local action. As historian Donald Fixico has suggested in the context of urban Native experiences, it would be a mistake to assume that the sense of Pan-Indianism rising in postwar America would necessitate the erosion of particular tribal identities. Indeed, unifying as “Indian” through workshops or activist organizations could also bring an energizing opportunity to reaffirm “tribal identities with pride during the drastic changes” of the era.¹¹

¹⁰ For a cultural history of the first TCU (Navajo Community College), its guiding principles, and its role in Native sovereignty, see Ferlin Clark, “In Becoming Sa’ah Naaghai Bik’eh Hozhoon: The Historical Challenges and Triumphs of Diné College,” (PhD diss., University of Arizona, 2009).

¹¹ Donald L. Fixico, *The Urban Indian Experience in America*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2000), 124. See also K. Tsianina Lomawaima, *They Called It Prairie Light: The Story of Chilocco Indian School*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), which reveals that, even among young children in the boarding school era, tribal identities were often strengthened in the face of efforts to erode them.

This concept had informed Henry Roe Cloud in his work at the American Indian Institute, where he had hoped to foster Native leadership on a national scale but also urged his students to better understand the needs and goals of their local communities.¹² It had been a hallmark of the work done by Elizabeth Roe Cloud and D’Arcy McNickle with the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) and American Indian Development (AID) in the 1950s, and would now become a vital characteristic of the National Indian Youth Council and the tribal college movement.¹³ Advocates of TCUs organized to share broad organizational strategies and lobby for support through accreditation and federal legislation, but also oriented curricula with particular tribal and community goals. As the argument for tribally-controlled higher education gained strength in the 1960s and 1970s, the documents produced in this discourse underscored a two-pronged characteristic of the Native voice in this era. In a collective sense this voice was growing stronger and louder through an increasing use of publications and other rhetorical tools, while at the same time commitments to particular tribal projects and particular tribal visions of the educational landscape remained equally significant.

Developing a Critique of the Status Quo in American Indian Education

Despite the exciting signs of a growing conversation on American ethnic and racial issues in the early 1960s, tangible change in terms of how these issues were addressed would require years of persistent work. For Native people who sought to assert

¹² For example, see “Editor’s Column,” *The Indian Outlook* 3, no. 2 (October-November 1925), 2-3.

¹³ David E. Wilkins, ed., *The Hank Adams Reader: An Exemplary Native Activist and the Unleashing of Indigenous Sovereignty* (Golden, CO: Fulcrum, 2011). Wilkins’ Introduction and the collected documents show Hank Adams (Assiniboine) as a key force in addressing issues of Native rights in the 1960s and beyond through both national organization—as in the National Congress of American Indians and the National Indian Youth Council—and local action.

their unique tribal status and identity, this was especially true. Because the direction of American Indian policy had for so long depended on the stance of the federal government, movement toward Native-driven programs could not occur without a powerful and articulate critique of that status quo.

In the development of this critique, Native and non-Native advocates of reform held education as a focal point for potential change. Tribal leaders, United States politicians, and even Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) workers consistently drew connecting lines between the quality of education and the overall condition of Native people and their communities.¹⁴ The reasons for this focus on education are numerous but not difficult to understand. Like most Americans, after all, Native people had carefully built their educational traditions through generations of practice. One Navajo educator wrote that “according to our forefathers, if we lose our own education, we would lose our true image. We cannot achieve our full potential unless we use our own ... right to education which makes us unique people.”¹⁵ This reliance on tradition did not prevent efforts at reform. As early as the 1950s, Navajos called explicitly for greater access to higher education as a means to “supplant” non-Native professionals as lawyers, land

¹⁴ The most prolific collection of the varied perspectives on American Indian education is the *Journal of American Indian Education* itself, which has run from 1961 until the present. The *JAIE* includes articles from Native and non-Native educators and BIA officials, and contains excerpts from and commentary on legislation and political speeches involving Native people. Before the 1960s, however, tribal councils consistently debated the proper roles and methods of education for their communities. See for example Clark, 119-120, 124-125. Another example of a collection of these debates is Peter Iverson, *For Our Navajo People: Diné Letters, Speeches, & Petitions* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2002).

¹⁵ Wilson Aronilth Jr., *Foundation of Navajo Culture* (Tsaile AZ: Navajo Community College, 1991), ii-iii.

managers, doctors, and nurses within their community, and as a way to improve economic conditions on the reservation.¹⁶

While debates surrounding the methods and goals of education had always occurred in Native communities across the country, the discourse available for American Indian people from the summer of 1961 onward was unique—in its scale as well as its particular message. In their correspondence and numerous publications, outspoken Native activists and their advocates in the 1960s began to focus on American Indian education as a nationwide issue with systemic problems, relying on particular examples but connecting them in ways that displayed a need for widespread reform. Throughout the decade, research spurred by these activists demonstrated a broken relationship between Native people and American schools, and paved the way for increasing the level of Native control over the goals and methods of schooling for American Indian students.

As indicated above, the *Journal of American Indian Education* became a key platform for laying out these arguments. From its first pages, the *JAIE* announced the presence of vibrant voices in a debate over the problems, needs, and future directions of American Indian education. Clarence Wesley set the stage by explaining the conditions of his San Carlos Apache community before broadening his viewpoint to the national scope. “Too few of our Apache children are finishing high school. Too few of those who do... are going on to college or into some other professional training. When they do... too many fail to make the grade there.”¹⁷ In these few simple statements, Wesley spoke

¹⁶ Iverson, 108.

¹⁷ Wesley, 4.

for his community but soon went on to invoke the situation of Native people around the country, pointing out troubling trends that impacted a wide range of students as well as their larger social and economic settings. In public schools, he asserted, “there is no close relationship between the Indian parent and the school beyond that of a passive” one.¹⁸ Wesley’s assessments did not address one specific element of American Indian education, but viewed the entire system as a whole. He deftly utilized the opening piece in the *JAIE* as a platform for starting a national conversation—painting a picture of the contemporary state of American Indian education, addressing a broad audience of interested Native and non-Native observers, and rhetorically asking *where can we go from here?*

In answering this question, identification and clarification of the problems appeared as the first step. While the *JAIE* would provide a key platform for broadcasting the conversation, practical work had to be carried out in order to provide concrete, evidence-based illustrations of the problems in American Indian education.

Though still in its infancy, the National Indian Youth Council served as a catalyst for pursuing that end by conducting original research projects, collecting the work of others, and publishing the results throughout the country. As many of the NIYC’s founding members built on their experiences in the Workshop on American Indian Affairs, they ambitiously sought to embody and “promote fellowship among Indian youth of different tribes ... [and to] promote creative leadership among [Native] youth.”¹⁹ The

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁹ “Proposed Articles of the National Indian Youth Council,” *Aborigine* 1, no. 1 (1962), 21.

Workshop influences of leaders like D’Arcy McNickle were clear, as the founders of NIYC utilized their training in the mainstream systems of American higher education but also pledged to respect “traditional ways of living” and “the leadership of Indian elders.”²⁰ Additionally, like Jack Forbes, they readily called out the terminationist policies of the BIA as misguided, or, worse, as intentionally destructive to Native cultural practices.²¹

What might have been less clear even to the NIYC founders is how the type of leadership they sought to embody also tapped into an older vision laid out by Henry Roe Cloud in the early twentieth century. Much like Roe Cloud, they hoped to influence American Indian policy and Native community wellbeing on a grand scale, by drawing together and inspiring a diverse body of young Native intellectual activists who believed that “the highest principles of citizenship” and the “strength of the American Indian heritage” were not mutually exclusive.²² In fact, they argued, “the development of greater leadership [among] Indian youth” in modern America *depended on* “a sense of security” in Native identity and the “values and beliefs of [Native] ancestors.”²³ This philosophical underpinning would guide NIYC’s members as they approached a wide range of American Indian issues—from economic development, to the protection of citizenship

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Jack D. Forbes, “Suggestions for Improving Our Indian Program,” 1960, Box 2 – Jack Forbes: Correspondence, Jack D. Forbes Collection, University of California – Davis, Special Collections [Hereafter cited as Forbes Collection, UC Davis]; Mel Thom, “For a Greater Indian America,” *Americans Before Columbus* [hereafter cited as *ABC*] 2, no. 1 (March 1964), 1-2.

²² “Proposed Articles of the National Indian Youth Council,” 18.

²³ Melvin D. Thom, “Statement of the National Indian Youth Council,” *Aborigine* 1, no. 1 (1962), 1.

rights like voting, to the assertion of treaty-based rights as well.²⁴ But it would remain especially relevant in their frequent efforts to bring about a fundamental change in the relationship between Native students and American institutions of education.²⁵

In its early years, the NIYC distributed many newsletters but also produced two larger publications to carry its voice to thousands of readers.²⁶ The journal *Aborigine* laid out the NIYC's organizational structure, mission statement, and much of the seminal correspondence of its founding members, while by 1963 *Americans Before Columbus* (*ABC*) began publishing research-based articles.²⁷ These journals and correspondence reveal that the NIYC was, like Clarence Wesley, interested in viewing the educational landscape in a broad sense, with core issues that needed to be addressed at all levels from early childhood to adult and higher education.

This ambitious outlook produced a two-pronged effect that addressed the topic of Native intellectual leadership in both the short term and the long term. For example, the NIYC founders continued to dedicate themselves to building on the momentum of their own activist spirit by reaching out to fellow college-aged Native students—imploring them to “support tribal leadership” and “develop common goals,” but also to “conduct [their] own research,” and “build alternate solutions.”²⁸ These words were more than

²⁴ Wilkins, 5-7.

²⁵ Gerald T. Wilkinson to John Carlson, April 5, 1971, MSS 703 BC, Box 3, folder 35, Records of the NIYC, CSWR. Wilkinson, as NIYC's Executive Director, relates that in the early years NIYC was “interested primarily in educational problems.”

²⁶ Shreve, 49-55, 108-114.

²⁷ For example, see *Aborigine* 1, no. 1 (1962); and *ABC* 1, no. 1 (October 1963).

²⁸ “National Indian Youth Council,” (pamphlet), ND, MSS 703 BC, Box 3, folder 27, Records of the NIYC, CSWR.

simple rhetoric. The NIYC soon brought in hundreds of members and eventually became a sponsor of the United Scholarship Service, an organization that by 1964 dispersed over \$100,000 in aid and counseling services to American Indian and Hispanic college and secondary students.²⁹

The NIYC's members also maintained connections with the Workshop on American Indian Affairs, whose mission had become increasingly clarified. Under D'Arcy McNickle and AID, the Workshop sharpened its focus on the relationship between young Native leaders, their American Indian communities, and the larger American society in a way that harmonized with a long-developing intellectual movement. The Workshop's recruiting materials utilized language that called to mind not only the writings of McNickle but those of Henry Roe Cloud before him—repeatedly stressing the specific concept of “adaptation” as opposed to assimilation, in an effort “to develop skills for using the social, political, legal and other resources” of American society, but in ways that maintained “an appreciation of [Native] culture” and “the values and aspirations of the Indian people.”³⁰ The Workshop was thus a crucial influence that connected the young members of the NIYC to a mature Native intellectual activism that had developed over the course of several decades.

While they encouraged their members and advocates to support greater Native leadership in higher education, the NIYC's leaders also approached the long-term relationship between American Indian education and leadership by proactively

²⁹ “National Indian Youth Council Named New Sponsor of United Scholarship Service,” *ABC* 2, no. 5 (June 1965), 4; Shreve, 108-114.

³⁰ “The Indian Progress: Newsletter of the Workshop on American Indian Affairs Boulder, Colorado,” March 30, 1962, MSS 703 BC, Box 3, folder 27, Records of the NIYC, CSWR.

researching programs for younger Native students.³¹ One of the most prominent figures in these efforts was Robert V. Dumont Jr. (Assiniboine). Dumont served as one of the NIYC's early vice presidents and sat on the selection committee for the United Scholarship Service.³² Just as important were his efforts to study schooling for American Indian youth and to develop programs designed to improve the relationship between reservation communities and the administrators and teachers in their schools. Like Roe Cloud, Dumont utilized his Ivy League training and influence to lead Native activist efforts on a national scale while also attempting to directly impact local Native communities.

By 1963 and 1964, Robert Dumont's research became a key part of the NIYC's efforts to pinpoint problems in American Indian education and highlight potential areas for dramatic, positive change. The journal *ABC* became instrumental for collecting studies by NIYC members as well as non-Native social scientists. The publication of these research efforts helped piece together an argument that illustrated the failures of the status quo in schooling for American Indian students. These studies and their commentary in *ABC* described conditions for Native schoolchildren as inadequate for fostering success both in terms of qualitative observations of students' confidence and in measurable standards of achievement. For example, an Emory University study of Oglala Sioux youth in South Dakota schools detected "an appalling and frightening separation and lack of communication between teachers and students, school and community,

³¹ See for example "Projects Planned," *ABC* 2, 4 (December 1964), 2.

³² See for example *ABC* 2, no. 4 (December 1964); and "Selections Committee Considers Applications for Aid," *ABC* 2, no. 5 (June 1965), 5.

administrators and teachers, and parents and the school.”³³ Surveyors went further by concluding that “teachers had only a superficial knowledge that their students were from a culture radically different from theirs.”³⁴ In a separate study, Dumont arrived at similar conclusions. He argued that within the average reservation community, “education is synonymous with school,” meaning a strong aversion by students because “school” connoted a rigid, foreign institution “totally unrelated to what happens in the home or the community where [they] grow up.”³⁵

Throughout the country, these kinds of observations struck a chord with many who studied schooling for American Indian students. Nelson Lose, Governor of the Gila River Pima-Maricopa Tribes in 1962, noticed a disconnect between schools’ authority figures on one side of a perceived line and students on the other, which “left the Indian [student] with a feeling that all the old is bad. It has also left him unconvinced that the new is good; therefore, he operates without [any] strong value system.”³⁶ Through the *Journal of American Indian Education*, the publications of the NIYC, and other Native-produced sources, these types of comments displayed a widespread belief that BIA and public schools had largely failed to rid themselves of assimilationist approaches that left Native students feeling alienated and reservation communities powerless. They showed the belief that American Indian students everywhere experienced a lack of adequate support as they attempted to achieve success according to the norms of the American

³³ “Oglala Sioux Educational Survey,” *ABC* 1, no. 1 (October 1963), 9.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Robert V. Dumont Jr., “Education and the Community,” *ABC* 2, no. 3 (July 1964), 3.

³⁶ Nelson Lose, “Why We Need Our Education,” *JAIE* 1, no. 3 (May 1962), 24.

education system. And, just as importantly, they revealed the perception that those schools hindered the development of success on tribal terms as well.

That these feelings existed at all is important, especially because of their widespread expression throughout a nationwide discourse. But they also meant that American Indian students struggled in very concrete ways—ways that translated to their eventual economic prospects and, in turn, to the everyday conditions of their communities. Research of New Mexico public schools in the early 1960s published in the *JAIE* made this exceptionally clear. Among 11th and 12th graders tested, American Indian students were approximately five grade levels behind average in reading.³⁷ These numbers undoubtedly spoke to a language divide that could not be completely blamed on public schools or their teachers. Yet, in an environment with a high percentage of Native students, the schools showed a general lack of innovation in meeting the problems experienced by these students. Most teachers (80 percent) had no professional training in the teaching of reading skills, and this dearth of appropriate attention in the eyes of Native students and their families became another sign of “public schools fail[ing] to function equally well for all students.”³⁸

The Bureau of Indian Affairs, too, struggled with discouraging results in its schools. For many years, BIA schools had stood as strong symbols of cultural assimilation and the erasure of tribal identities. This was due in large part to the legacy of the off-reservation boarding schools, which bore characteristics of their military influence

³⁷ Irving D. Townsend, “Reading Achievement of Eleventh and Twelfth Grade Indian Students,” *JAIE* 3, no. 1 (October 1963), 9-10.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.

well into the twentieth century—in their uniforms, their strict daily schedules, and their frequent reliance on the menial labor of students.³⁹ While the BIA in the 1960s tried to distance itself from the culturally hegemonic stance of previous eras, officials such as Commissioner Philleo Nash admitted that progress was slow.⁴⁰ Many Native leaders who focused on educational improvement continued to see the BIA as inefficient and at times “hostile.”⁴¹

The disconnect between Native students, communities, and their schools—along with the resulting poor educational achievement—meant high dropout rates throughout Indian country. Discouraging graduation and retention rates represented one of the most frequently expressed problems in the discourse of American Indian education throughout the 1960s. Anthropologist Paul Kutsche studied Cherokee high schools and concluded that “the Cherokee feel their system does not now serve them in important ways, [as] the dropout data eloquently testify.”⁴² In Oglala schools of South Dakota, researchers found that, because of a vast perceived separation between authority figures and students, “peer groups thrived with a fearful and frightening power strong enough to push students out of school.”⁴³

³⁹ See for example Lomawaima; Margaret Connell Szasz, *Education and the American Indian: The Road to Self-Determination Since 1928*, 3rd ed., rev. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1999), 64-65; Brenda J. Child, *Boarding School Seasons: American Indian Families, 1900-1940*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000); and Jon Reyhner and Jeanne Eder, *American Indian Education: A History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004), 132, 163, 185-85, 202.

⁴⁰ Philleo Nash, “The Education Mission of the Bureau of Indian Affairs,” *JAIE* 3, no. 2 (January 1964), 1-4.

⁴¹ Murray Wax and Rosalie Wax, “Cultural Deprivation as an Educational Ideology,” *JAIE* 3, no. 2 (January 1964), 15-18.

⁴² Paul Kutsche, “Cherokee High School Dropouts,” *JAIE* 3, no. 2 (January 1964), 27.

⁴³ “Oglala Sioux Educational Survey,” 9.

As the directors and students of the Workshop on American Indian Affairs knew all too well, even when students did move on to college, success was elusive there as well. At the University of New Mexico in the early 1960s, education professors noted that approximately 75 percent of all American Indian students dropped out before graduating.⁴⁴ As Clarence Wesley of the San Carlos Apache pointed out, the failure rate at the University of Arizona was very similar.⁴⁵ Dr. Robert Roessel Jr., who worked for years toward greater control by Navajos over their education systems, estimated that Navajo dropout rates in higher education remained close to 90 percent into the final years of the 1960s.⁴⁶ The individual successes of the Workshop's students—many of whom became active in the NIYC—stood out as the exceptions to a discouraging and persistent trend that appeared to stem from systemic failures.

At first glance, the efforts of the NIYC and other intellectual leaders to view the education system with a broad lens seemed only to add to the discouragement felt by Native communities. After all, their research revealed that all levels of schooling throughout Indian country experienced similar problems—namely, the lack of meaningful connections between schools and their Native students and, thus, feelings of alienation, poor performance, and high dropout rates. And yet, even the simple collaborations of research, writing, and debate that surrounded these disheartening conclusions contributed to a kind of positive momentum. Diverse voices became linked

⁴⁴ C. M. Charles, "A Tutoring-Counseling Program for Indian Students at the University of New Mexico," *JAIE* 1, no. 3, (May 1962), 10-12.

⁴⁵ Wesley, 4-7.

⁴⁶ "Navajo College Opens on Monday," *Navajo Times*, January 23, 1969.

through research-centered publications like the *JAIE* and *ABC*—as well as broader editorial works like *Many Smokes* magazine and the publications of Rupert Costo—and offered multiple perspectives but also a growing sense of a shared conversation. While opinions varied on some of the pedagogical issues of the structure and day-to-day operation of schools, many interested Native leaders at the national and community level began to circle around more fundamental questions, concluding that systemic problems required systemic solutions.

First among the topics that Native intellectual activists began prioritizing was the issue of American Indian identity. In other words, what role should it play in Native students' education, and who should be in charge of establishing and maintaining that role? The nationwide discourse woven by years of research had shown BIA and public schools to be largely incapable of handling these questions in satisfactory ways for Native students and their communities. Thus, even while some BIA officials like Hildegard Thompson began calling for students to let education “strengthen [their] pride in being an American, an Indian, and an individual of worth,” Native activists and their allies were largely unconvinced that such rhetoric portended any fundamental transformation in how the BIA operated.⁴⁷

Murray and Rosalie Wax, who had both contributed to the Workshop on American Indian Affairs, criticized the Bureau for expecting its new educational programs to suddenly win over Native communities after decades of failure and

⁴⁷ Hildegard Thompson, “You and Your Future – A Message to Indian Youth,” *JAIE* 1, no. 3 (May 1962), 4.

resentment.⁴⁸ They noted that officials had seemed too willing to blame Native communities for being “apathetic” to the BIA programs. “Our own observations,” they wrote, “are that ‘apathy’ is a convenient label to apply to people who don’t happen to agree with the program that a government official or other reformer happens to be *pushing*. Frankly, when we went to Pine Ridge, we did expect to see apathetic people. Instead we saw people [with a] lust for life.”⁴⁹

Robert Dumont encountered a similar positive energy in his summer program for Oglala Sioux school children in 1964. The program had no attendance requirements, but by embracing community rhythms for day-to-day life and celebrations, “the program moved rapidly and quickly became a *regular part of the community*,” drawing in students who showed up by seven o’clock in the morning each day, before program leaders had even set up for the day.⁵⁰ These moments revealed for Dumont and other activists the potential for positive change that might emerge from a true connection between a Native community and its schools. Nowhere did Dumont mention a “frightening separation” between students and their educational center, as did the Emory University researchers in South Dakota schools just over a year before.⁵¹ In a brief summer program of heightened community participation, Dumont already saw promise but looked for permanence:

“How can we unify the school and the community?”⁵²

⁴⁸ Wax and Wax.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 18 (emphasis mine).

⁵⁰ Robert V. Dumont Jr., “Oglala Community School Program,” *ABC* 2, no. 4 (December 1964), 6 (emphasis mine).

⁵¹ “Oglala School Educational Survey,” *ABC* 1, no. 1 (October 1963).

⁵² Dumont, “Education and the Community.”

In answering this question, Native people in the mid-to-late 1960s began proactively turning back the momentum of a previous era's terminationist policies through their own efforts to take control of their education systems. Fortunately, the federal government's proactive stance toward addressing poverty in the 1960s opened the door for ambitious Native leaders to adapt government platforms and arenas for their own purposes. They seized temporary opportunities for community-driven projects funded by the Johnson administration's "Great Society," and hoped to demonstrate the type of initiative that merited more permanent community control. As they did so, Native-driven schools arose as tangible sites of American Indian self-determination—years before that term became a common phrase in domestic American politics.⁵³ Native-driven schools, while often local in their immediate impact, also further contributed as sites of research and writing, adding power to the Native-driven national discourse on American Indian education.

By building up a national conversation on the problems of American schooling for Native students, Native intellectual activists in the early 1960s had quickly constructed an image of a broken system in need of fundamental changes. The evidence they accumulated and disseminated powerfully supported their arguments for reworking the entire relationship between Native students and American schools, and for placing greater control over that process in the hands of Native people themselves.

Creating New Sites of Native Control in American Indian Education

The traditional debate on the education of the American Indian has focused on the question of whether he should be educated to assume a place in the white

⁵³ Charles Wilkinson, *Blood Struggle: The Rise of Modern Indian Nations* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2005), 191-195.

man's world or in the Indian's world. I would suggest that the more fundamental question is whether or not we should educate the Indian [student] to become a self-actualized person.

Should he be taught to appreciate his native language, the language of his father and mother? The customs of his parents? I believe the answer is clearly yes. It seems reasonable to assume that the child who does not view his heritage with confidence has special difficulty in becoming what he is potentially.

- Dr. Bruce Meador, editor, *Journal of American Indian Education*, 1965

Bruce Meador did not specifically mention higher education in his call for “self-actualization” for American Indian students. Still, the basic principle applied to students of all ages, experiencing any type of education. Native activist Sun Bear (Ojibwe) expressed his own similar feeling through *Many Smokes*, a national magazine: “the American Indian stands at the threshold of a new time in history.”⁵⁴ Young Native people, he asserted, were in the midst of a “Renaissance” and a “rebirth of [their] culture,” where they began to take an active interest in learning from their histories and controlling their futures.⁵⁵ In the late 1960s and into the 1970s, Native intellectual activists increasingly saw this type of “self-actualization” as possible not simply on an individual basis but in a broader, more collective sense, through greater control of their education. Once that vision became tangible, they turned to higher education in particular as a crucial force for building sustainable routes of access to the highest levels of training, and for maintaining political, economic, and social leadership in their communities.

The late-1960s educational discourse reflected this strong momentum for self-determination in the context of schooling. Jack Forbes continued to act as a prolific

⁵⁴ Editorial, *Many Smokes* 1, no. 3 (1966).

⁵⁵ Editorial, *Many Smokes* 1, no. 4 (1966).

advocate in this direction, working toward his own proposal of an American Indian University but also showing support for other projects that promised to bring about “higher learning [that was] *both Indian-controlled and Indian-centered.*”⁵⁶ His university proposal in many ways mirrored Henry Roe Cloud’s vision at the American Indian Institute in the early twentieth century. Forbes’ tireless spirit and his willingness to reach out to others helped him act as a bridge between multiple generations of leaders who worked in the same vein of intellectual activism, sustaining the central goals of Roe Cloud’s older vision and sharing in its reconstitution in a new era.

By 1965, Forbes was corresponding directly with Sol Tax, D’Arcy McNickle, and several of the founders of the NIYC regarding organizational strategies and potential sources of funding for Native-driven projects in higher education.⁵⁷ The NIYC soon began conducting research in collaboration with the Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development, where Forbes worked as a director.⁵⁸ During this time Forbes also developed connections with Navajo educational leaders, who eagerly pursued their own opportunities at community control in schooling.⁵⁹ The fabric of correspondence that Forbes helped weave clearly illustrates the strength of the movement toward Native-

⁵⁶ Jack D. Forbes, “An American Indian University: A Proposal for Survival,” *JAIE* 5, no. 2 (January 1966), 1 (emphasis original).

⁵⁷ Sol Tax to Dr. Jack D. Forbes, January 3, 1965, Box 2 – Jack Forbes: Correspondence, Forbes Collection, UC Davis; Melvin D. Thom to Dr. Jack Forbes, September 14, 1965, Box 2 – Jack Forbes: Correspondence, Forbes Collection, UC Davis.

⁵⁸ For example, see “A Summary of the Indian Education Program,” ND, Box 51 – Native American Education Files, Forbes Collection, UC Davis; and Glen Nimmicht and Francis McKinley, “Recommendations to a Senate Investigating Committee on Education of Indians,” 1968, Box 51 – Native American Education Files, Forbes Collection, UC Davis.

⁵⁹ Jack D. Forbes to Robert Roessel, June 26, 1967, Box 4 – Jack Forbes: Correspondence, Forbes Collection, UC Davis.

driven education by the late 1960s. It was a shared conversation that balanced the individual contributions of a wide range of capable activists with a willingness to collaborate.

Central to the optimism these activists felt was the prospect of new government backing, put into motion by President Lyndon Johnson's Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) in the mid-1960s. As part of Johnson's larger effort to aid poverty-stricken areas across the country, federally-funded Community Action Programs (CAP) allowed many Native communities to develop proposals and run programs designed to boost economic development in a wide variety of ways. Reservation communities throughout the country immediately utilized the opportunities under the OEO to fund programs in education—from expanded pre-school, to remedial training for high school dropouts, to adult basic education and job skills training.⁶⁰ As one crucial example of this initiative, Navajo councilmen and educators quickly formed Demonstration in Navajo Education (DINE), a non-profit corporation designed to receive and administer funds for OEO educational programs.⁶¹ Though the OEO was far from universally-praised among Native reformers, these programs did provide a crucial breathing space for efforts at Native control to take root and demonstrate their own merit.⁶²

⁶⁰ Martin N.B. Holm to Commissioner of Indian Affairs Philleo Nash, May 13, 1965, Box 4 – Economic Opportunity Act Being Carried Out in the Aberdeen Area (ARC ID 1318720), Office of Indian Education Programs, General Records Relating to Education, 1889-1972, Record Group 75.10, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, National Archives and Records Administration—Washington, D.C. [hereafter cited as RG 75, OEO-Indian Ed., NARA DC].

⁶¹ Clark, 153.

⁶² For example, see “Indian Glossary,” *ABC 2*, no. 5 (June 1965), 7, where the NIYC lampoons the Office of Economic Opportunity as part of an “Indian Glossary,” defining the OEO as “a state of confusion.”

Perhaps the most transformative of these demonstrations began in 1966, when the OEO funded an entirely tribally-controlled, bilingual school for young children on the Navajo reservation—the Rough Rock Demonstration School.⁶³ In her account of the school’s history, education professor Teresa McCarty underscores the importance of this experimental program, noting that the Native administration and community control represented at Rough Rock marked “a course of action that forever changed... Indigenous schooling in the United States.”⁶⁴ Although “this little school [sat] in an isolated community, sixteen miles from the nearest pavement, where the average education for the adults [was] one year,” the principles that guided it resonated throughout the country.⁶⁵ And although Rough Rock served young children, its Native administration and creative curriculum served as examples translatable to any level. Even in its early days, Rough Rock’s supporters proudly pointed out that the “school belongs *entirely* to the Navaho people, through the local school board and the Board of Directors. [The] BIA and OEO have turned over all funds to DINE, Inc. with ‘no strings attached.’ The local Board of Education operates the school and sets all broad policy.”⁶⁶ After only six months of operation, the tangible demonstration of these principles of Native control had already attracted attention from thousands of visitors from across the country,

⁶³ Teresa L. McCarty, *A Place to be Navajo: Rough Rock and the Struggle for Self-Determination in Indigenous Schooling*, (Mawah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2002).

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, xv.

⁶⁵ Robert A. Roessel Jr., “The Right to be Wrong and the Right to be Right,” *JAIE* 7, no. 2 (January 1968), 2.

⁶⁶ Thomas R. Reno, “A Demonstration in Navaho Education,” *JAIE* 6, no. 3 (May 1967), 2.

interested in all types of schooling.⁶⁷ Over fifty American Indian tribes were represented among the visitors—the clearest sign available that the discourse surrounding the push for Native-driven education had continued to strengthen on a national scale.

The introduction of tribal control at Rough Rock was an important administrative change, but it signified far more than that. The “demonstration” aspect—the “cultural identification” expressed through the school’s faculty, staff, and curriculum—is what drew such encouraging attention.⁶⁸ Observers noted the uniquely Navajo curriculum, which “[made] Navaho culture a significant and integral part of the school program [whereas] in many [other] schools, students [were] directly or indirectly pressured into giving up their Navaho cultural heritage.”⁶⁹ Rather than focus solely on standards of individual achievement, the school was “organized around principles of kinship, family, and communalism” in way that allowed for and encouraged Navajo cultural knowledge to be passed between adults and children.⁷⁰

At Rough Rock, suddenly the means to protect and endorse expressions of tribal identity became a reality. No longer did there exist a sharp divide between the school and the community. Years before, this type of educational program was expressed as a hypothetical and hopeful philosophy—an intellectual proposal for a perceived problem. Now, the administrators, faculty, students, and community members at Rough Rock acted out a tangible process of self-determination in American Indian education.

⁶⁷ Robert Roessel, “The Right to be Wrong and the Right to be Right.”

⁶⁸ Reno, 3.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ McCarty, 86.

As Robert Roessel—“Bob” to his colleagues—pointed out in a speech soon after Rough Rock’s opening, the people within the community did not fail to notice this key moment. “On the Navaho Reservation... there are Bureau of Indian Affairs schools, which in Navaho is called a ‘Washington Beolta’ (Washington school). Public schools, which are attended by 95 percent of the Navahos, are called ‘Belagona Beolta’ (the white man’s school). Up until eight months ago these and the mission schools were the only kinds which Indians attended.”⁷¹ But Rough Rock created the need for a new term in Navajo Nation. There was “now a new type of school which I think has real significance: ‘Dineh Beolta’ (The People’s school, the Navaho school).”⁷²

While he applauded the community for largely embracing Rough Rock’s experimental methods, Bob Roessel and his wife Ruth also deserved credit for the leadership they provided. The Roessels’ lives aligned remarkably well with a notion of Native intellectual activism that Henry Roe Cloud would have supported, straddling the line between national and local action. Bob had earned his doctorate in education at Arizona State University, helped found that university’s influential Center for Indian Education, and also served on the Presidential Task Force on Indian Affairs.⁷³ His persistent desire to immerse himself in Navajo cultural knowledge and practice over many years had also earned him the respect and admiration of many community leaders, some of whom came to consider him “one of the people.”⁷⁴ Ruth’s father was a Navajo

⁷¹ Robert Roessel, “The Right to be Wrong and the Right to be Right,” 2.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ McCarty, 77-78.

⁷⁴ Clark, 186.

medicine man, and as a teacher she worked from a deep body of Navajo knowledge in her efforts to implement education as a holistic experience, involving constant interaction between an individual and his or her surrounding culture.⁷⁵ Their impactful achievements never prevented them from exuding enthusiasm for local activism, and they helped build community engagement and support not only for Rough Rock but for other Navajo education projects as well.

Before long, Native people throughout the country began seeing Rough Rock as a positive example of a fundamental change in the relationship between their students and the education system. Furthermore, Navajos and several other tribes began targeting existing gaps in higher education as a crucial context for introducing new sites of Native control. In 1968, the OEO approved a proposal to create Navajo Community College, and the tribe's approval of an all-Navajo Board of Regents represented an affirmation of Native authority at the first tribally-controlled reservation college in the country.⁷⁶

By 1972, half a dozen tribal colleges and universities (TCUs) had formed throughout the country. The American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC) formed the following year as a support base and information-sharing group for these new and economically-vulnerable institutions.⁷⁷ In this way, AIHEC contributed to the ongoing process of Native people building a discourse on the potential problems and solutions in American Indian education throughout the country.

⁷⁵ McCarty, 75-76.

⁷⁶ Bill Nixon, "Navajos Plan College on Reservation," *Navajo Times*, April 25, 1968; "Council Approves Community College Board of Regents," *Navajo Times*, July 25, 1968. See also Clark for background on Navajo Community College founders' influences and philosophical goals for the college.

⁷⁷ "About AIHEC," <http://www.aihec.org/who-we-are/index.htm> (Accessed May 1, 2016).

With new sites of Native-driven higher education and publication came an important new layer to this overall dialogue. Many common themes still connected various tribes, reservations, and institutions, but particular examples focusing on the goals of individual tribes added depth. Topics often included practical efforts for developing curricula, reaching out to students within the community, and negotiating with government bodies. Navajo Community College, for example, produced texts that focused heavily on Navajo-specific issues such as tribal history and the tribe's contemporary relationships with state and U.S. governments.⁷⁸ Through the *Sinte Gleska College News*, faculty members at that South Dakota college discussed ongoing efforts to secure funding and develop curricula, encouraged students to enroll in Lakota-centered cultural programs, and published editorials on the benefits of education in challenging racial stereotypes.⁷⁹

For all the early tribal colleges, progress toward full control came in stages, and collaboration with outside institutions was often necessary. Bismarck Junior College, Mary College, the Universities of South Dakota, Colorado, and Minnesota, and other institutions offered initial extension programs on reservations in North and South Dakota.⁸⁰ Navajos, too, worked closely with Arizona State University, Northern Arizona

⁷⁸ Ruth Roessel, ed., *Navajo Studies at Navajo Community College* (Many Farms, AZ: Navajo Community College Press, 1971).

⁷⁹ *Sinte Gleska College News*, November 1976; Editorial, *Sinte Gleska College News*, January 1978, 1.

⁸⁰ Wayne J. Stein, *Tribally Controlled Colleges: Making Good Medicine* (New York: Peter Lang, 1992).

University, and other area schools throughout the planning of Navajo Community College.⁸¹

These tribes, however, indicated firmly their intentions to exercise their own initiatives. Explicit references to autonomous, Native control echoed through the various goals and mission statements expressed by these colleges, as they attempted to create “real alternative[s]” rather than simply importing an outside form of education to their communities.⁸² In Navajo Nation, the term “by Navajos, for Navajos” reverberated in the dialogue produced by Navajo Community College president Ned Hatathli and his colleagues.⁸³ And at every school, mission statements stressed some variation of a similar sentiment concerning cultural identification: “tribal studies are an integral part of all courses offered,” for instance.⁸⁴ Still, the willing collaboration between tribal educators and outside institutions underscores the central vision of these early TCUs—that tribal identity was encouraged not as an end in and of itself, but as a crucial step in a larger mission to build and maintain a body of adaptable Native intellectual and professional leaders.

Like Henry Roe Cloud decades before, Native intellectual activists on the national and local levels in this era viewed BIA and public schooling as failing to serve Native students in meaningful ways—in terms of both cultural identification and in professional

⁸¹ “Navajo Junior College Will Open at Many Farms in January, 1969,” *Navajo Times*, May 16, 1968.

⁸² Quote is from Gerald One Feather of the Lakota Higher Education Center, or Oglala Lakota College, as quoted in Stein, 41.

⁸³ Ruth Roessel, ed., *Navajo Studies*; Hatathli, “Position Paper.”

⁸⁴ Larry Belgarde, “Preliminary Self Study,” 1974, as quoted in Stein, 88.

training. Like Roe Cloud's American Indian Institute, TCUs now sought to support young Native leadership by approaching both of these seemingly disparate educational realms in tandem. However, their particular community-driven missions also allowed them to more tightly focus on tribally-centered notions of leadership in ways that Roe Cloud's eclectic scope had not.⁸⁵ For Sinte Gleska College, this meant offering courses such as "Lakota music and dance, Sioux history and culture, [and] Lakota thought and philosophy."⁸⁶ For Navajos, it meant providing Navajo Studies courses in order to develop a firm rootedness in the language, the clan system, and the original Holy People.⁸⁷ From that baseline of tribal identity, TCUs' founders argued, students could have the strength to go on and engage the mainstream American systems of education and economics, more prepared to succeed because of an authoritative sense of self and group identity.⁸⁸

For the leaders of these early schools, succeeding meant much more than being able to freely teach Native history and culture. As outlined above, their communities experienced high dropout rates, difficult economic prospects, and social ills related to poverty and alienation. Tribal leaders thus saw TCUs as pivotal tools in attacking those economic and social ills. Navajos, for example, sought to train medical professionals to improve healthcare on the reservation through the work of their own people. They sought to do the same in education by training their own teachers, and they wanted to take

⁸⁵ See for example Clark, 88-89.

⁸⁶ "Course Catalog," *Sinte Gleska College News*, January 1978.

⁸⁷ Aronilth, 71, 75-78, 119.

⁸⁸ Clark, 88-89, 227.

control of valuable natural resources by training engineers and lawyers as a strategy for reducing their reliance on outsiders for help.⁸⁹ In these ambitions of an early tribal college can be seen the building blocks of self-determination as they were laid out in a community-focused setting.

The local lens of the tribal college model, however, did not mean the rejection of a broader, national vision of Native intellectual leadership as envisioned by someone like Henry Roe Cloud in the 1910s or Jack Forbes in the 1960s. While TCUs' mission statements expressed particular tribal goals, these early documents also borrowed from one another and revealed a shared purpose. Sinte Gleska College, for example, sought to "facilitate individual development and tribal autonomy" by instituting career training alongside "educational resources uniquely appropriate to the Lakota people," who were "rooted to the Reservation and culture [but] concerned about the future" of that community as well.⁹⁰ Part of the same mission, however, was a broader hope that Sinte Gleska and TCUs in general would serve as "a model for Indian-controlled education."⁹¹ At Turtle Mountain and Standing Rock community colleges, mission statements similarly promoted unique tribal perspectives and community-centered economic goals alongside a broader sense of "Indian control" and "the cultural and social heritage of the Indian people."⁹² In this way, the espoused missions of the early tribal colleges and universities

⁸⁹ Hatathli, "Position Paper"; see also Robert Roessel, "A Light in the Night," *JAIE* 11, no. 3 (May 1972), 26-29.

⁹⁰ Sinte Gleska College Catalog, 1984-86, as quoted in Stein, p. 70.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² Belgarde, as quoted in Stein, 88.

displayed a vision of an adaptable form of Native intellectual leadership that tethered together the concerns of American Indian people in a local and national context.

Ultimately, the willingness of TCUs to collaborate in forming AIHEC, to share organizational and pedagogical ideas, and to collectively strive for greater protective legislation showed the belief that Native intellectual leadership on a national scale could be developed through distinct, community-oriented sites. Tribal colleges and universities could work toward the same broad vision as Roe Cloud's American Indian Institute or an American Indian University envisioned by Forbes, while also addressing particular tribal goals and community needs. And even as reservation communities embraced tribal colleges, Roe Cloud's and Forbes' visions of off-reservation centers of Native-driven higher education would not die out, but would persist alongside the reservation-based TCU model.

Tribal Colleges and Universities as Demonstrations of Self-Determination

The linkage between education that supported Native or tribal identity and the capability to succeed in diverse and adaptable ways was the culmination of an argument that took years to outline, articulate, and demonstrate. The rapid expansion of a discourse on American Indian education from 1961 onward encouraged Native people and their allies in education to produce and share their ideas and experiences.

Their first step was assessing the state of education for Native students in America. The broad problems in the relationship between Native students, their communities, and their schools were not necessarily new. In many ways, these problems stretched back generations, to a time when Euro-American schooling for Native people served as a tool for cultural assimilation. The legacies of this particular aspect of

colonization should not be underestimated. Native responses to these obstacles were not new, either. However, the ability and willingness of Native intellectual activists to research and discuss these problems—and to share in a growing discourse with interested people across the country—was rapidly growing by the summer of 1961 and beyond. A growth in the number and reach of Native publications and organizations created a conversation that highlighted American Indian students' struggles with educational problems that deeply harmed the overall wellbeing of their communities. Widespread perceptions of cultural separations between teachers, administrators, students, and parents led to low achievement levels and high dropout rates.

Individual educators and government agents with the Bureau of Indian Affairs sought to address these issues by urging students to take pride in their history and heritage. But the BIA struggled to overturn its legacy in the eyes of many Native leaders, and tribal control over the administration and operation of schooling became the most promising path toward truly meaningful change. This change, they asserted, would bolster a student's sense of self by privileging culturally-relevant expressions of identity as the foundational source of authority for self-actualization. A philosophy of self-actualization did not apply solely to Native people, but in the effort to overturn a legacy of forced assimilation it became a useful tool for Native people to craft and promote their own paths to identity formation.

Increasingly, Native leaders and their allies tapped into a growing movement for American Indian self-determination—the ability of a tribe to collaborate with outside governments for assistance but to retain essential authority over its own programs. Native-driven institutions of education became key centers for expressing in tangible

ways the goals of self-determination. Tribal colleges and universities were especially important because of their prominence within their communities and their dedication to immediately addressing tribal issues such as access to professional leadership and to further higher education. These institutions also became important rhetorical platforms in their own right, contributing to the ongoing discourse on American Indian education by producing their own texts. They added a new layer to Henry Roe Cloud's broad goal of promoting Native identity as a source of strength by expressing what this meant on a particular tribal and community basis.

However, this tribal college movement grew not simply as an effort to preserve a static notion of culture and history for its own sake. Rather, like Roe Cloud, the new generation of Native intellectual activists behind this movement understood the encouragement and protection of tribal identities as an essential step in building adaptable leadership and, in turn, ameliorating the social, economic, and educational problems of modern American Indian communities. The simple but profound argument for Native-driven education was summed up in the mission statements of the early TCUs, as they repeatedly endorsed a balanced concept of Native leadership that was culturally rooted in tribal knowledge and values while capable of applying academic tools to "concrete problems."⁹³

This argument took years to develop, and the final expression of it through Native-driven schools could not provide a definitive sense of its absolute vindication. Indeed, poverty and unemployment persisted beyond the initial era of TCUs and into the

⁹³ Belgarde, as quoted in Stein, 88.

twenty-first century.⁹⁴ But by the final years of the 1970s, several TCUs had already become recognized candidates for full accreditation from the North Central Association of Secondary Schools and Colleges (NCA).⁹⁵ The NCA's award of full accreditation to Navajo Community College in 1976 came as a form of vindication for all TCUs, which shared the common goal of improving the lives of their community members. The NCA praised Navajo Community College for its "outreach and continuing education programs which provide much-needed community services" to Navajos.⁹⁶

Endorsement from the broader American education system became a source of pride for TCUs, but enthusiasm among the student body showed even before accreditation. At Sinte Gleska, Oglala Lakota, and Turtle Mountain Community Colleges, enrollment increased or remained steady throughout the first several years after founding.⁹⁷ At Navajo Community College, enrollment increased while retention approached 90 percent—a symbolic reversal of the near-90 percent dropout rate that Bob Roessel had estimated for Navajos at off-reservation colleges.⁹⁸

As the initial wave of TCUs worked toward strengthening their programs and securing accreditation, the 1978 Tribally Controlled Community Colleges Assistance Act

⁹⁴ "Tribal Colleges: An Introduction," prepared by American Indian Higher Education Consortium, and the Institute for Higher Education Policy, February 1999, <http://www.aihec.org/colleges/TCUstudents.cfm> (accessed December 16, 2012).

⁹⁵ Stein, 52-55, 70-74, 87-90.

⁹⁶ "NCC Granted Full Accreditation," *Navajo Times*, July 29, 1976.

⁹⁷ Stein, 54, 64, 85.

⁹⁸ Enrollment figures from "The Navajo Culture Center: Purpose and Plans. A Shrine and Living Symbol for the Navajo," (Tsaile, AZ: Navajo Community College Press, 1972); retention rate from House, 76; dropout estimate from "Navajo College Opens on Monday," *Navajo Times*, January 23, 1969.

(TCCCA Act) provided a permanent source of funding for existing schools and for a second wave of new institutions that spread the movement onward.⁹⁹

As mentioned above, many reservations across America continued to struggle with persistent poverty and high unemployment, and those with TCUs did not quickly or easily escape these problems. But the ambitions of the tribes responsible for these institutions required long-term commitment, and over the years, some encouraging results have come into view. A survey of 1980s graduates of Turtle Mountain Community College found an unemployment rate of just 13 percent, compared with 55 percent on the reservation as a whole.¹⁰⁰ Several other TCUs reported employment rates for graduates in a similar range.¹⁰¹ Researchers also uncovered limited but encouraging results as students transitioned from TCUs to other segments of American higher education. In one case study from the early 1990s, Native students who attended Salish Kootenai College before transferring to the University of Montana fared markedly better in GPA and rate of graduation than those who went straight from high school.¹⁰²

Researchers continue to find encouraging signs in the work of tribal colleges and universities. While these anecdotal results do not show TCUs as a panacea for all reservation communities, it is important to keep in mind that that was never the heart of

⁹⁹ “Tribeally Controlled Community College Assistance Act of 1978,” Public Law 95-471, *U.S. Statutes at Large* 92 (1978), 1325-1331 [hereafter cited as “TCCCA Act of 1978”].

¹⁰⁰ Figures are from Paul Boyer, *Native American Colleges: Progress and Prospects* (Princeton: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1997), as cited in “Tribal Colleges: An Introduction,” p. D-3.

¹⁰¹ Boyer.

¹⁰² Hans P. Zaglauer, “The Role of a Tribal College in the Academic Performance of American Indian Students,” (Master’s thesis, University of Montana, 1993).

the argument for these schools. Rather, Native intellectual activists in the 1960s and 1970s—not to mention the several decades before—argued simply but crucially for the worthiness of their own educational methods and their own paths to leadership. As before, the most important element of the argument was also the most fundamental, summed up in a simple but powerful phrase or two: “by and for Indians,” as Henry Roe Cloud had printed on his school newspaper, or “Indian-controlled and Indian-centered,” as Jack Forbes put it. And now, at the dawn of the tribal college era, this old but still-relevant sentiment was yet again being re-deployed, this time in the language of Native self-determination: “As a young Navajo has expressed it, ‘How do we change without destroying ourselves?’ While self-determination does not answer this question, it allows Native Americans the freedom to wrestle with it.”¹⁰³

¹⁰³ David Adams, “A Case Study: Self-Determination and Indian Education,” *JAIE* 13, no. 2 (January 1974), 26.

CHAPTER FOUR

“An Exercise in Tribal Sovereignty”: The Early Years of the Tribal College Era

On a summer Saturday in 1968, at Fort Defiance, Arizona, Navajo Nation commemorated the centennial anniversary of the “Treaty of Peace between the U.S. Government and the Navajo Tribe.”¹ The June 1st Treaty Day Festival included a parade with dozens of entrants, “Indian dance groups... marching bands and a drill team,” and “two little old ladies, wizened but spry and in good humor, [who] carried away first prize in the Old-Timers category.”² What made these “little old ladies” such an important part of the Treaty Day celebration? They were twin sisters, over one hundred years old, whose lives directly coincided with a key era in Navajo history. Born in the time of the “Long Walk to exile at Fort Sumner,” New Mexico in 1864, their lives traced the “century of progress” following the Treaty of 1868.³ Behind them lay an ambivalent century—a modern era of peace but also one filled by the hardships and restrictions of reservation life for Native people in the United States. Ahead lay still more uncertainty. As Tribal Chairman Raymond Nakai noted, progress had been “quite good,” but Navajos “were still lagging behind their neighbors economically.”⁴ Still, hope resonated in his voice as he pledged that the Tribe would work tirelessly to move from a century of progress toward the “next century—the century of achievement.”⁵

¹ “Treaty Day Celebration on Saturday,” *Navajo Times*, May 30, 1968.

² Front page caption, *Navajo Times*, June 6, 1968.

³ “Fort Defiance,” *Navajo Times*, June 6, 1968.

⁴ Roland C. Billie, “Treaty Day Gets in High Gear,” *Navajo Times*, June 6, 1968.

⁵ Raymond Nakai, as quoted in Billie, “Treaty Day Gets in High Gear.”

Raymond Nakai was motivated by the prospect of increased tribal control in the 1960s, and from the beginning of his tenure as Tribal Chairman he had been an outspoken proponent of placing schools at the center of that vision for greater self-determination. As he urged Navajos to enter a new and more prosperous era, events were already in motion that seemed to represent an affirmative answer to his call. Less than two months after the Treaty Day celebration, the tribal council approved an all-Navajo Board of Regents for the newly-formed Navajo Community College (NCC), the first tribally-controlled college on reservation land in the United States.⁶ Classes would not commence for another six months, and yet the early dedication to Navajo control already signaled the school's stance as community-driven and community-focused. Soon, NCC would become a centerpiece for the types of celebrations illustrated above. At several other reservations across the country, additional tribal colleges and universities (TCUs) would rise as the newest centers of a Native-driven activist effort toward fundamental change in the relationship between American Indian students and American higher education.

This history has explored the intellectual development of a Native activist effort to establish greater access to and control of higher education for American Indians. Despite the dampening impact of policies such as American Indian Termination on Native initiatives, many threads of this activism remained intact into the 1960s and beyond. Clear connections exist between the early-twentieth-century efforts of Native leaders such as Henry and Elizabeth Roe Cloud, and the postwar Native activism of

⁶ "Council Approves Community College Board of Regents," *Navajo Times*, July 25, 1968.

people like Jack Forbes and the leaders of the National Indian Youth Council (NIYC). Indeed, Elizabeth Roe Cloud, D’Arcy McNickle, and others contributed directly to the development of this intellectual activism in both eras. They embodied a sense of continuity through their work in a range of institutions and programs, from the American Indian Institute and the Indian New Deal to the founding of American Indian Development (AID) and the Workshop on American Indian Affairs.

Over the course of several decades, this movement maintained a dedication to both national contexts as well as particular communities. In his educational career, Henry Roe Cloud sought to develop a “Native and national leadership” that might also preserve connections to the social, economic, and cultural developments of reservation communities.⁷ Similarly, D’Arcy McNickle, Bob Thomas, and other mentors in the Workshop pushed their students to recognize the value of home communities’ cultural practices and forms of knowledge and leadership, even (and especially) as they pursued higher education in mainstream American institutions. Finally, as tribal colleges and universities became viable in the late 1960s and early 1970s, reservation communities embraced these platforms as new tools for pursuing the type of Native leadership that Roe Cloud and the others had striven for, but by anchoring that effort in tribal identities and the practices of local communities.

The emphasis of this larger history will shift here. The central theme of the story remains the Native intellectual activist effort for greater control of and access to higher

⁷ Henry Roe Cloud to Dr. Will Carson Ryan Jr., August 7, 1934, Box 135 – Personal Correspondence July 1934-Feb 1935, Haskell Series: Correspondence of the Superintendents, 1890-1942 (ARC ID 2143367), Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Record Group 75, National Archives and Records Administration—Central Plains Region (Kansas City) [Hereafter cited as RG 75, Haskell Series, Corr. Supt., NARA KC].

education. Now, however, individual tribes and communities come into greater focus. Focusing narrowly on this era—roughly 1968 to 1978—reveals in great detail the moment when reservation communities first seized the opportunity to reinvigorate in tangible ways a Native intellectual activism that had been building for years. Through this perspective, the topics that mattered most to the founders of these schools become more visible. In other words, as funding and viability hung in the balance for these fledgling institutions, what principles did their founders consider most important, and what fundamental missions did they pursue most aggressively?

In crafting their responses to these questions, founders and advocates of tribal colleges and universities also began to link the language and philosophy of American Indian self-determination to their efforts in higher education. Lyndon Johnson’s administration helped give this concept traction through tangible policy changes, as funding under the new Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) assisted community-led projects such as Rough Rock Demonstration School and Navajo Community College (NCC).⁸ Johnson’s domestic effort to build a “Great Society” sought to aid the country’s poor, and opened these and other new avenues for Native people to pursue self-determination. At the onset of the 1970s, Richard Nixon would also express the federal government’s support of American Indian self-determination.⁹ This is not to say that self-

⁸ See for example Thomas R. Reno, “A Demonstration in Navaho Education,” *Journal of American Indian Education* [Hereafter cited as *JAIE*] 6, no. 3 (May 1967); Lyndon B. Johnson, “Special Message to the Congress on the Problems of the American Indian: ‘The Forgotten American,’” March 6, 1968, in John Woolley and Gerhard Peters, The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=28709> (accessed February 26, 2017). See also Charles Wilkinson, *Blood Struggle: The Rise of Modern Indian Nations* (New York: Norton, 2005), 191-195.

⁹ Richard Nixon, “Special Message to the Congress on Indian Affairs,” July 8, 1970, in John Woolley and Gerhard Peters, The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=2573> (accessed December 12, 2016).

determination was a political invention of officials in Washington, but neither was it an effort by Native people to completely alienate themselves from the larger American society.

Comanche scholar LaDonna Harris and others have written of self-determination as a movement that focuses on bringing about “effective sovereignty [and] self-sufficiency” for Native communities, but often by “partnering with their neighbors, the nation, and the world for mutual advancement.”¹⁰ This contemporary understanding of self-determination matches well the practical efforts of tribal colleges and universities, which from the beginning have sought to endorse tribal identity and protect Native sovereignty while also collaborating with mainstream American institutions for educational support and economic growth.¹¹ Indeed, TCUs can be considered one of the earliest practical expressions of the philosophy of American Indian self-determination.¹² But despite the changes in the language employed by Native activists—and the new opportunities available to them in the realm of federal policy—the founders of TCUs pursued missions that showed remarkable continuity with the work of previous leaders in the same vein of intellectual activism. In their efforts to build and institutionalize paths to Native leadership through higher education, TCUs’ advocates relied on strategies and

¹⁰ LaDonna Harris, Stephen Sachs, and Barbara Morris, eds., *Re-Creating the Circle: The Renewal of American Indian Self-Determination* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2011), vii.

¹¹ Wayne J. Stein, *Tribally Controlled Colleges: Making Good Medicine* (New York: Peter Lang, 1992), 14, 44-46, 88, 101. See also Paul Boyer, *Native American Colleges: Progress and Prospects – A Special Report* (Princeton, NJ: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1997); Paul Boyer, *Capturing Education: Envisioning and Building the First Tribal Colleges* (Pablo, MT: Salish Kootenai College Press, 2015). For more frequent and sustained examinations of recent developments in TCUs, see also *Tribal College: Journal of American Indian Higher Education*, which was begun in 1989.

¹² Wilkinson, 191-195.

discourses with deep roots. Just as Henry Roe Cloud had at the American Indian Institute and Haskell Institute, TCUs in the 1960s and 1970s hoped to engage and utilize the dominant models of American education and politics, while bending and reshaping those models to better empower Native people with Native identities.

Even as this movement took on new forms in the tribal college era, it remained at once local and national. The practical and philosophical construction of each TCU was a unique development, but also held clear ties to the growth process at other schools. While each tribal college began with its own ideas for academic achievement and community outreach, making the idea of a “typical” TCU somewhat unrealistic, these institutions did share much in common—often intentionally so. Collaboration and information-sharing among these schools and their related publications remained a key part of the tribal college movement. With that shared history in mind, the related foundational processes at the first five reservation-based TCUs in the United States will be explored in more detail here.

The earliest groups to take on the opportunity and challenge of running tribal colleges were the Navajo, the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians in northern North Dakota, and three different Siouan communities in the Dakotas—Pine Ridge, Rosebud, and Standing Rock. All five of the schools—Navajo Community College,¹³ Turtle Mountain Community College, Oglala Lakota College, Sinte Gleska College,¹⁴ and Standing Rock Community College¹⁵—were founded within a brief span of five

¹³ Now Diné College.

¹⁴ Now Sinte Gleska University.

¹⁵ Now Sitting Bull College.

years, and were key members in the formation of the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC) in the early 1970s.¹⁶ The founders of these five schools laid the groundwork to not only bring alive a new type of institution but to ensure long-term stability as well. They collaborated with older American colleges and universities, secured necessary funding from government and private sources, established academic and social missions with tribal communities in mind, and continuously worked toward greater protection in terms of accreditation and legislation that would benefit new TCUs in the future. Eventually, these efforts were rewarded with a sense of validation and permanence, as TCUs became cornerstones of their communities and created a new connection between Native students and American higher education. As a sign of the success of those early efforts, all five of these institutions remain active today.

Within this group, Navajo Community College will serve as the primary example in this chapter, because of its leading role as the very first of these schools and because of the relatively high population of its home community and its student body. However, while the bulk of the source material concerns NCC, the institutions shared connections and commonalities that highlight the overall intellectual collaboration of the early tribal college era.

¹⁶ Stein, 109. I have decided to use the school names that are most relevant to and recognizable from the historical period under study in this chapter, which covers roughly 1968-1978. The name changes for Diné College, Sinte Gleska University, and Sitting Bull College all came after that era. In those cases, it made sense to use the names that appeared consistently in the documents from that time. Oglala Lakota College presented a different challenge, as this institution's name was changed twice within that early timeframe. I have decided to use "Oglala Lakota College" because this name was adopted in 1978 and has remained the same since, making it fit within the era under study here but also making it the most consistently recognized name for the institution to date.

Establishing a Foothold in the American Higher Education Landscape

As discussed above, one of the elements that separated the tribal college era from previous developments in Native-driven education was an increase in political and institutional support. In the early twentieth century, Henry and Elizabeth Roe Cloud struggled constantly to support the American Indian Institute with funds from private donors and charitable organizations. Even at the government-run Haskell Institute, Roe Cloud was forced to confront massive restrictions in funding and curricular freedom in the midst of the Great Depression. In the postwar period, the looming prospect of American Indian Termination policies forced Native activists to argue for the very existence of their unique communities and identities. With the tribal college era of the 1960s and 1970s, some powerful actors in American politics and education finally began to support the idea of American Indian self-determination, and TCUs in particular. This chapter is largely framed by that political support—beginning with the tribal projects funded by the Office of Economic Opportunity in the 1960s, and concluding with the passage of the Tribally Controlled Community College Assistance Act of 1978 (TCCCA Act), which helped lay out a permanent scaffolding of federal support for existing and prospective TCUs.¹⁷ Despite the importance of these federal policies, this infrastructure of support was only secured because of the determined advocacy of Native activists.

Bringing the ideas of self-determination into practice through tribal colleges and universities took years of persistent work on both national and local levels. Well before

¹⁷ “Tribally Controlled Community College Assistance Act of 1978,” Public Law 95-471, *U.S. Statutes at Large* 92 (1978), 1325-1331 [hereafter cited as “TCCCA Act of 1978”]. See also “Message from the president,” *Sinte Gleska College News*, November 1978, for a contemporary assessment of this Act’s importance; and Stein, 115-118, for a brief discussion of the lobbying effort.

the Office of Economic Opportunity agreed to fund American Indian education projects—indeed, well before the OEO existed—Native activists were laying the intellectual foundations for those projects. Some national organizations—such as American Indian Development, the Workshop on American Indian Affairs, and eventually the National Indian Youth Council—dedicated themselves to these projects. At the same time, however, reservation leaders also began imagining programs that could address community-specific educational needs.

In the early postwar period, Navajos began envisioning large-scale educational improvements as a key factor in confronting poverty on the reservation—not by assimilating, but by striving for a space within the system of federal funding in which a uniquely Navajo identity could flourish.¹⁸ In a 1953 speech to his tribal council, Navajo Tribal Chairman Sam Ahkeah sought to make this sentiment more tangible by highlighting particular goals. He called for new programs in higher education as a potential tool for placing Navajos in vital positions as lawyers and conservationists working on the tribe’s behalf.¹⁹ In the late 1950s, increasing royalties from the tribe’s natural resources gave tangible backing to these educational ambitions. Rather than disperse these profits in lump sums to tribal members, the Navajo Tribal Council looked to effect a more prolonged positive impact, establishing scholarship funds to encourage greater participation in higher education.²⁰

¹⁸ Ferlin Clark, “In Becoming Sa’ah Naaghai Bik’eh Hozhoon: The Historical Challenges and Triumphs of Diné College,” (PhD diss., University of Arizona, 2009), 119-120, 123-125; Peter Iverson, *For Our Navajo People: Diné Letters, Speeches, and Petitions* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2002), 108.

¹⁹ Iverson, 108.

²⁰ Clark, 123-125.

Even a call for increases in educational programs was never a simple, one-sided issue. Some Navajos pointed to the ever-changing demands of the American economy and questioned the possibility of a truly Native identity surviving in modern American society.²¹ But there were always strong voices—even among students themselves—arguing that a Native identity was not simply possible but essential for survival.²² Higher education came to represent for many the path toward gaining strength politically and legally, taking full control of natural resources on tribal land, and safeguarding community livelihood by addressing the shortage of Navajo professionals like teachers, doctors, and nurses. In the first years of the 1960s, Dillon Platero, Chairman of the Education Committee of the Navajo Tribe, gave further direction to this energy for continued educational advancement among his tribe. He began corresponding with as many charitable foundations as he could—not to mention individuals like Jack Forbes—about the possibility of supporting a new center for higher education on Navajo land.²³ In his writings, Platero asserted his desire that, wherever an institution might be founded, Native control should prevail.²⁴ As early as 1960, he expressed his concern that “programs that were not sanctioned by the Navajo people [had] been rather unsuccessful. When we see the enthusiasm [to go on to high school or college] among the students

²¹ Ibid., 168.

²² Iverson, 108-109.

²³ Dillon Platero to Dr. Jack D. Forbes, June 14, 1961, Box 2 – Jack Forbes: Correspondence, Jack D. Forbes Collection, University of California – Davis, Special Collections [Hereafter cited as Forbes Collection, UC Davis]; Mary Gorman to Dr. Jack Forbes, July 31, 1961, Box 2 – Jack Forbes: Correspondence, Forbes Collection, UC Davis.

²⁴ Platero to Forbes, June 14, 1961, Box 2, Forbes Collection, UC Davis.

themselves,” he wrote, “then we would like to provide some type of education for them beyond their [current] program.”²⁵

Taken together, the rhetorical stances of Ahkeah and Platero displayed the balanced vision of Native education that stretched back at least to Henry Roe Cloud’s American Indian Institute. They revealed in one sense a straight-forward drive to secure higher levels of education and professional leadership for Native people. However, they also showed the resolve to transform that education by appropriating the dominant American models into a unique system that was designed, maintained, and experienced by Native people in a way that validated Native identities.

One of the first routes toward establishing concrete expressions of this appropriation arose with the Office of Economic Opportunity, formed in 1964. The OEO became an important tool for handling much of the Johnson administration’s War on Poverty in the United States, reviewing proposals and distributing funds for community-led programs.²⁶ Reservation communities throughout the country eagerly harnessed newly-available OEO funds for education and other community projects. Included in this group of reservations were all four of the communities that would join Navajo in founding the first wave of TCUs—the Turtle Mountain, Pine Ridge, Rosebud, and Standing Rock reservations in North and South Dakota.²⁷ For their own part, Navajos

²⁵ Dillon Platero, January 25, 1960, as quoted in Iverson, 110.

²⁶ Teresa L. McCarty, *A Place to be Navajo: Rough Rock and the Struggle for Self-Determination in Indigenous Schooling*, (Mawah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2002), 73.

²⁷ Martin N.B. Holm to Commissioner of Indian Affairs Philleo Nash, May 13, 1965, Box 4 – Economic Opportunity Act Being Carried Out in the Aberdeen Area (ARC ID 1318720), Office of Indian Education Programs, General Records Relating to Education, 1889-1972, Record Group 75.10, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, National Archives and Records Administration—Washington, D.C. [Hereafter cited as RG 75.10, OEO Indian Ed. Records, NARA DC].

secured a separate office—the Office of Navajo Economic Opportunity—to facilitate those OEO projects across their large reservation.²⁸ As a sign of the OEO’s commitment to Native control, the Navajo office featured an executive board on which a majority of members were Navajo representatives as opposed to outside officials.²⁹ It hardly seems a coincidence that the communities involved in establishing the earliest tribal colleges and universities would be some of the first to appropriate the OEO platform for their own educational projects.

Bob Roessel, long-time activist and educator among the Navajo, saw an opportunity with OEO programs to put tribes’ own plans into action. He argued that a key reason many Native people embraced this new platform was the basic fact that it bypassed the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA).³⁰ The BIA in the 1960s still carried a deep-seated reputation among Native people as a “paternalistic” agency whose primary contact with reservation communities involved “dictat[ing] to Indian groups what they could or could not have or do.”³¹ In contrast, Roessel saw the OEO as taking up an “encouraging posture,” rather than a dogmatic one.³² With this change, Native activists immediately recognized a space in which their own creative energy could finally be recognized as the

²⁸ David E. Wilkins, *The Navajo Political Experience*, rev. ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 90.

²⁹ *A History and Semi-Annual Report by the Office of Navajo Economic Opportunity to the Advisory Committee of the Navajo Tribal Council* (Fort Defiance, AZ: Office of Navajo Economic Opportunity, 1968).

³⁰ Robert A. Roessel, *Navajo Education, 1948-1978: Its Progress and its Problems* (Rough Rock, AZ: Navajo Curriculum Center, Rough Rock Demonstration School), 1979.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 47.

³² *Ibid.*

driving force in addressing community problems. By 1965, community leaders at the Turtle Mountain, Pine Ridge, Rosebud, and Standing Rock reservations had laid the early groundwork for tribally-controlled higher education by instituting a broad range of educational activities through the OEO. Many of these initiatives were explicitly directed toward vocational training and adult basic education, but “the interest shown in [these] activities [was] very apparent” from the beginning, which would prove crucial for expanding the size and scope of tribal control over educational efforts in the ensuing years.³³

The larger implications of Native-driven educational projects became visible almost immediately. Navajos first highlighted those larger implications not in the form of a college but in early education, at the Rough Rock Demonstration School in 1966. The early success of this school—and its explicit dedication to Navajo language and culture—represented an important demonstration of the promise of self-determination in education, and only strengthened the resolve of community-focused activists who wanted to apply a similar model to higher education.³⁴

For Navajo Nation, the higher education model began to take shape in 1968, when the OEO agreed to fund a community college project.³⁵ Dr. Sanford Kravitz, as a leader of the OEO’s efforts to fund worthy Community Action Programs, had been an early proponent of Rough Rock Demonstration School and other Native-driven education projects. In the ensuing effort to found Navajo Community College, he would become

³³ Holm to Nash, May 13, 1965, Box 4 – RG 75.10, OEO Indian Ed. Records, NARA DC.

³⁴ McCarty.

³⁵ Bill Nixon, “Navajos Plan College on Reservation,” *Navajo Times*, April 25, 1968; “Council Approves.”

“instrumental in obtaining initial OEO funding.”³⁶ Navajo leaders would make up the Board of Regents and design the curriculum and overall academic mission, but would also seek the committed support of outside donors, educators, and the government. In this way, Navajo Community College in the early years represented a clear indication that the pursuit of self-determination could retain space for collaboration.

The patchwork of contributions to NCC’s founding was exhibited in several distinct ways. For one, the Navajo tribe worked closely with officials at Northern Arizona University and Arizona State University in 1966 and 1967 to determine the potential need for and feasibility of a reservation-based community college.³⁷ This early planning process was a necessary step in securing the founding grants from the OEO. Even as the OEO endorsed the plan and became the primary financial backer, Navajos in NCC’s early years continued to explore a broad range of options for support. They garnered approximately 20 percent of the school’s budget from private grants and donations, while the tribe itself contributed another 20 percent.³⁸ Almost immediately, Navajo leaders also sought to raise ten million dollars in tribal funds for the construction of a permanent, central campus on the reservation, one that might truly represent a Navajo-centered creation.³⁹ Until that campus could be completed, the tribe came to an agreement to

³⁶ Norman T. Oppelt, *The Tribally Controlled Indian Colleges: The Beginnings of Self Determination in American Indian Education* (Tsaile, AZ: Navajo Community College Press, 1990), 34.

³⁷ Robert W. Ashe, Director, *Survey Report: Navajo Community College* (Bureau of Educational Research and Services, College of Education, Arizona State University, 1966); “Navajo Junior College Will Open at Many Farms in January, 1969,” *Navajo Times*, May 16, 1968; see also Oppelt, 34.

³⁸ Robert Roessel, *Navajo Education*, 70.

³⁹ “Council Approves.”

utilize classroom space at a new BIA high school campus in Many Farms, Arizona.⁴⁰ These early efforts to cooperate with the OEO, the BIA, and outside educational institutions were necessary steps in bringing NCC into a favorable but finely-balanced relationship with the established systems of American higher education and politics. Much like the American Indian Institute some fifty years before, Native leaders at Navajo Community College wanted to retain control over the school's mission and administration, while also ensuring that students' accomplishments were recognized and respected by outside institutions and employers.⁴¹

Despite the assistance of the Office of Economic Opportunity, the founders of Navajo Community College understood the need for a more stable, long-term funding solution. In the summer of 1969, Bob Roessel stepped down as NCC president and moved to the position of executive vice president, with Ned Hatathli entering as the first Navajo president of the college.⁴² Hatathli projected strength in both his physical presence and his rhetoric, unabashedly pursuing a greater sense of Navajo influence over every aspect of the school's development. Soon, a college council was formed within the tribal government, further solidifying a sense of Native control in the school's administration. Still, Hatathli understood the necessity of continued collaboration. With the school's administrative structure taking shape, he and Roessel continued a push for protective legislation and greater funding to ensure NCC's growth. This need for

⁴⁰ "Navajo Junior College Will Open."

⁴¹ Clark, 182-183, 189-192.

⁴² "Ned Hatathli Named President of Navaho Community College," *Navajo Times* June 12, 1969; Lloyd L. House, "The Historical Development of Navajo Community College," (PhD diss., Arizona State University, 1974), 112.

expansive support became especially apparent as the tribe strove for construction of a new campus site near Tsaile, Arizona.⁴³

One of the significant barriers to greater stability for early tribal colleges was a general lack of state funding. While state laws in Arizona or the Dakotas might include benign language regarding cooperation with tribes, this rarely led to concrete funding opportunities, as states often argued that American Indian education was a federal matter.⁴⁴ As early as April 1968, the *Navajo Times* pointed out this particular difficulty, lamenting the rigidity of the state government's position.⁴⁵ "There appears to be no way," an article read, "that Arizona tax money could be used to subsidize the Navajo college, unless drastic amendments to the educational laws are passed."⁴⁶ The *Navajo Times* writers were right in perceiving the entrenched nature of this roadblock; four years later, the situation had not changed. "It must be remembered," read a 1972 NCC report to the tribal council, "that the State of Arizona, which provides full support for state-operated junior colleges, contributes absolutely nothing to Navajo Community College."⁴⁷ The lack of state funding thus represented a reminder that not all structures or discourses

⁴³ "Navajo College Campus Dedicated," *Navajo Times* April 15, 1971; Oppelt, 35.

⁴⁴ Stein, 6.

⁴⁵ Bill Nixon, "Navajos Plan College."

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ *Report to the Navajo Tribal Council for Navajo Community College*, (Many Farms, AZ: Navajo Community College Press, 1972), 49-50.

guiding mainstream American society were open to manipulation by marginalized groups like tribal governments.⁴⁸

Fortunately, NCC found an ally on the federal level in Congressman Wayne Aspinall, a Democrat from Colorado who chaired the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs.⁴⁹ Aspinall had gained respect for Navajo educational leaders like Dr. Guy Gorman and the Roessels over the course of several meetings, in part because of their persistence but also because of their willingness to engage the Congressman in a personal, caring manner.⁵⁰ Aspinall sought to return the favor by attending the dedication ceremony for the opening of construction at the Tsaile campus site in the spring of 1971. Aspinall described the ceremony in striking terms, saying that he had “felt the power of God” during the Navajo prayers.⁵¹ From then on, he was fully committed to pursuing further supportive legislation. Perhaps his most lasting collaborative effort with school administrators was his influence in the passage of the Navajo Community College Act (NCC Act) in December of 1971. Under this new legislation, NCC could receive up to \$5.5 million in construction funds for the new campus.⁵² Even more importantly, the Act provided for “an annual sum for operation and maintenance of the college” at the same per-capita rate that was used to fund other federally-supported American Indian

⁴⁸ This issue remains a significant restriction on TCUs today. See for example Higher Learning Commission, *Distinctive and Connected: Tribal Colleges and Universities and HLC Accreditation—Considerations for HLC Peer Reviewers* (Chicago: Higher Learning Commission, 2013).

⁴⁹ Robert Roessel, *Navajo Education*, 60.

⁵⁰ Clark, 134-136.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 136.

⁵² “Navajo Community College Act of 1971,” Public Law 92-189, *U.S. Statutes at Large* 85 (1971), 646 [hereafter cited as “NCC Act of 1971”].

schools.⁵³ This legislation's significance lay not simply in the money it provided, but in its apparent endorsement of a new era of self-determination being undertaken at NCC. It showed that a Native-driven project could garner the same level of support as an established BIA institution.

Despite the victory that the Navajo Community College Act represented in principle, there were immediate concerns about its practical implementation. In the spring of 1972, the *Navajo Community College Newsletter* conveyed the school administration's disappointment in what it perceived as a lack of commitment from the BIA to apply the Act to its full extent.⁵⁴ Indeed, the Bureau had requested less than the maximum funding allowed under the NCC Act's terms for the school's 1973 budget, and had in turn been awarded less than that request. As a result, school officials began scrambling to raise approximately \$900,000 for 1973, rather than the \$500,000 they had expected to contribute.⁵⁵ The NCC Act did represent a positive commitment from the federal government, and its funds provided necessary resources in the growth of the tribal college movement. Still, this type of incident served as a reminder to Native intellectual activists that their effort to institutionalize a new vision in higher education would require a constant and diligent sense of advocacy.

At the Turtle Mountain, Pine Ridge, Rosebud, and Standing Rock reservations, Navajo Community College could provide a positive illustration of tribally-controlled higher education, but rarely a perfectly replicable model. Pine Ridge's Oglala Lakota

⁵³ "NCC Act of 1971," 646.

⁵⁴ "Fund Cut Severe Jolt to College," *Navajo Community College Newsletter* 4, no. 3 (March 1972).

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

College (OLC), for example, serves as a useful illustration of the trajectory faced by these four communities. Oglala Lakota arose like NCC from a years-long tribal effort to institutionalize higher education and build on the momentum of OEO projects.⁵⁶ However, unlike at Navajo, the OEO educational projects at Pine Ridge did not immediately transition into start-up grants for a community college. Pursuing multiple alternate routes, Pine Ridge's Lakota leadership in 1969 and 1970 secured temporary partnerships with the University of Colorado and Black Hills State College, which offered reservation-based courses to their own students as well as tribal members. In 1971, tribal leaders took the next step by officially founding Oglala Lakota College, cobbling together a meager school budget from a variety of sources. By the following year, the primary source of funding became the BIA, which, as indicated above, developed a reputation among the early TCUs for failing to fund these schools at the maximum allowable limits.⁵⁷

Even with the daunting challenges of securing start-up funds and the misgivings about the role of the BIA, the early TCUs remained resilient. One key tool that Turtle Mountain, Oglala Lakota, Sinte Gleska, and Standing Rock community colleges all eventually utilized was Title III of the Higher Education Act of 1965. One of Title III's expressed purposes was to "assist in the establishment of cooperative arrangements" between existing colleges and "developing institutions," so that those developing institutions might offer higher education to students otherwise "isolated from the main

⁵⁶ Stein, 41-42.

⁵⁷ "Fund Cut Severe Jolt"; Stein, 44.

currents of academic life.”⁵⁸ Both Oglala Lakota College at Pine Ridge and Sinte Gleska College at Rosebud formalized partnerships with Black Hills State College through the help of Title III grants, while Turtle Mountain partnered with North Dakota State University and Standing Rock with Bismarck Junior College.⁵⁹

These partnerships under Title III increased the influence of established colleges and their faculties in the growth process of TCUs, but Native administrators retained a great deal of control over the overall missions of the schools. In the long run, tribal officials often saw the agreements as a necessary and pragmatic form of protection—a breathing space in which new TCUs could secure and legitimize their place in the higher education landscape. As Turtle Mountain Chippewa educator Wayne Stein has written, a willingness to collaborate with and seek advice from established schools as well as from one another was a key characteristic in the success of the early tribal colleges.⁶⁰

Furthermore, this type of collaboration aligned with a well-established tradition among earlier Native intellectual activists. At the American Indian Institute in the late 1910s, Henry Roe Cloud had partnered with faculty and tutors from nearby Fairmount College, appreciating the quality of instruction without viewing the relationship as a threat to his particular focus on Native leadership.⁶¹ Decades later, D’Arcy McNickle and the other directors of the Workshop on American Indian Affairs had similarly worked within the

⁵⁸ “Higher Education Act of 1965,” Public Law 89-329, *U.S. Statutes at Large* 79 (1965), 1229.

⁵⁹ Stein, 48-49, 65, 83, 97.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 78-81.

⁶¹ Henry Roe Cloud to Victor Gordon, August 9, 1917, Reel 2, Records of the American Indian Institute, 1908-1954 (microfilm), Record Group 301.8, United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. Board of National Missions Dept. of Health, Education and Welfare, [hereafter cited as Records of the AII].

established system of American universities and colleges, all the while challenging students to utilize that education to better serve their Native people.⁶² Tribal colleges and universities built on that tradition of pursuing a higher education that balanced outward collaboration with a particular focus on Native issues, and they finally instituted that effort within Native people's home communities.

In order to solidify productive relationships among the TCUs and bolster the effort to garner outside support, representatives from the developing schools formed the American Indian Higher Education Consortium in 1973.⁶³ Numerous private foundations provided start-up funds for the Consortium, but attention soon turned toward the task of lobbying for legislation that might help the tribal college movement become broader and more permanent. For the schools themselves, AIHEC proved vital in coordinating assistance on grant writing and sharing information on the details of useful legislation such as the Higher Education Act.⁶⁴ Beyond the initial concerns over funding, the group also facilitated cooperation in developing curricula, carrying out new research, and exploring routes to accreditation.⁶⁵ From its inception, AIHEC thus served a dual purpose as a supportive platform for the member TCUs as well as a unified point of contact with

⁶² "Education for Leadership," 1961, Records of the National Indian Youth Council, (MSS 703 BC, Box 1, folder 12), Center for Southwest Research, University Libraries, University of New Mexico [hereafter cited as Records of NIYC, CSWR]; Rosalie H. Wax, "A Brief History and Analysis of the Workshops on American Indian Affairs Conducted for American Indian College Students, 1956-1960, Together With a Study of Current Attitudes and Activities of Those Students," October 1961, National Congress of American Indians records, National Museum of the American Indian Archive Center, Smithsonian Institution [Hereafter cited as NCAI records, NMAI].

⁶³ "About AIHEC," AIHEC.org Web site, Aihec.org/who-we-are/history.htm (accessed February 24, 2017).

⁶⁴ Stein, 78-81.

⁶⁵ "About AIHEC."

outside organizations and the federal government. It rose as yet another example of how this particular vein of intellectual activism remained at once local and national, dedicated to greater Native leadership and control, and consciously open and adaptable to the support of non-Native advocates.

Pursuing Native-Driven Curricular and Community Missions

In their initial efforts to secure and formalize their academic and economic status, the founders of the early tribal colleges and universities shared a sense of common purpose in their willingness to balance goals of tribal control with the pragmatic limits of mainstream American power structures. The partnerships they formed with one another and with outside schools, foundations, and government organizations represented clear illustrations of their willingness to seek that balance. However, it was as they formed their curricular and community missions that they truly revealed their shared intellectual vision.

The core of that vision was a dual purpose often explicitly laid out in the founding documents and mission statements of TCUs: to provide positive illustrations of Native history and culture while also enabling Native students to become more likely to succeed according to mainstream American systems of education and economics. Despite particular tribal lenses, this vision was woven into each TCU's mission with remarkable continuity, and held the central threads of a Native intellectual activism pursued by the likes of Henry Roe Cloud as early as the 1910s. At Turtle Mountain Community College, for example, the founding administration in the early 1970s sought "to create an environment where the cultural and social heritage of the Indian people can be brought to bear through the curriculum," and in turn to "establish an administration, faculty, and

student body involved in exerting leadership within the [Turtle Mountain Chippewa] community.”⁶⁶ Just as Roe Cloud had, the founders of the early TCUs envisioned Native and tribal culture as vitally relevant to contemporary American Indian leadership, rather than as part of a static past. At Oglala Lakota College, the mission statement expressed a similar desire to “assist in the development of Sioux culture” in an active, ongoing process, as an “attempt to solve the social, political, and economic problems plaguing the reservation.”⁶⁷ Navajo Community College pursued the same dual purpose, tethering the immediate educational and vocational needs of its community members to the active study and development of Native cultures.⁶⁸

At NCC, this dual purpose was also prefaced by a statement that spelled out in plain terms the fundamental importance of self-determination in education. “It is essential,” the Board of Regents wrote in 1968, “that educational systems be directed and controlled by the society they are intended to serve,” and within those systems, “each member of that society must be provided with an opportunity to acquire a positive self-image and a clear sense of identity.”⁶⁹ Ferlin Clark’s gathering of oral histories related to the founding of Navajo Community College illustrates just how important this concept was for the school’s founders, who developed NCC with both non-Native and Navajo concepts of intellectual leadership in mind.⁷⁰ They understood that many traditional

⁶⁶ Larry Belgarde, *Turtle Mountain Community College Statement*, 1974, as quoted in Stein, 88.

⁶⁷ “Oglala Sioux Community College Survey,” 1976, as quoted in Stein, 45-46.

⁶⁸ Robert Roessel, *Navajo Education*, 62.

⁶⁹ “Philosophy and Objectives of Navajo Community College,” as quoted in Robert Roessel, *Navajo Education*, 62.

⁷⁰ Clark, 88-89.

Navajo leaders within the community would be hesitant to recognize the leadership of a young generation that did not possess a deep knowledge of Navajo cultural beliefs and practices, regardless of higher education degrees and certificates.⁷¹

Importantly, however, the authors of NCC's early mission statement did not seek to protect Navajo identity in a way that simply separated students from other cultural systems. Rather, they insisted, the empowerment that came from self-determination—from rooting students in a home community and a home identity—would be essential in navigating the demands of the broader world. “Members of different cultures,” they wrote, “must [also] develop their abilities to operate effectively ... in the complex of various cultures that make up the larger society of man.”⁷² As with the founding documents of the other schools, NCC's objectives thus echoed the approach to Native leadership that Henry Roe Cloud had articulated in his years of educational work in the early twentieth century. In particular, Roe Cloud had repeatedly argued that cultural pride and positive expressions of Native identity provided a foundation that *enhanced* rather than detracted from the overall goal of adaptable Native leadership.⁷³

The early tribal colleges of the 1960s and 1970s built on this idea and enhanced it in at least one manner, by bringing Roe Cloud's basic philosophy of Native leadership through higher education into more direct contact with Native communities. In other

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² “Philosophy and Objectives of Navajo Community College,” as quoted in Robert Roessel, *Navajo Education*, 62.

⁷³ Henry Roe Cloud, “Foreword,” *The Indian Leader* 38, no. 1 (September 7, 1934), 1; Annette M. Lingelbach, “Indian Leadership: Reading Past History,” *The Indian Leader* 37, no. 11 (November 17, 1933), 9.

words, while they provided Associate's Degree programs for students who might transition to careers and institutions off-reservation, they also demonstrated a firm commitment to the social and economic goals of their home communities.

Navajo Community College illustrated this point through a variety of early programs. For example, Navajo Adult Basic Education (NABE) formed as one of the most versatile of NCC's initiatives, with sections as diverse as "Job Development, Tribal Work Experience, Community Development," courses on the causes and effects of alcoholism, and an extension program with the University of Arizona.⁷⁴ By 1972, fourteen sites across Navajo Nation offered these programs, showing that the tribe's push for a permanent central campus did not prevent NCC from remaining flexible in reaching as many community members as possible. As part of that goal, the school participated in a "Career Opportunities Program" for "teacher aides [to] work with children in the classroom or dormitory."⁷⁵ Career Opportunities students at NCC gained classroom experience in the reservation's elementary schools in preparation for their careers as educators. Other TCUs adopted this method as well, and it aligned with the general goal of extending a philosophy of self-determination over a larger portion of the education system. Like Henry Roe Cloud at the American Indian Institute, officials at Navajo Community College also hoped to study and improve agricultural possibilities on the reservation. Navajo farmers and ranchers felt the impact of NCC through the Community Agriculture Program, which disseminated strategies in crop and soil management,

⁷⁴ *Report to the Navajo Tribal Council*, 28.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

irrigation, livestock raising, and marketing.⁷⁶ The Community Agriculture Program was supplemented by a farmers' cooperative that helped organize the leasing of basic equipment. Through these myriad services, NCC immediately signaled that tribal colleges would do more than simply import existing models of higher education to their communities—they would re-shape those models in ways that made them more adaptable to the particular goals and needs of their people.

Adapting to the needs of community members carried over to the student body as well. Tribes were eager with their new schools to control curricular programs but also to reform the fundamental relationship between Native students and institutions of higher education. The founders of Navajo Community College understood well the problems Native students had commonly encountered in mainstream American higher education. With few peers and hardly any faculty, counselors, or advisors coming from a Native background, Navajo students in non-reservation schools had reported that they felt “pushed aside” by others, or that others too quickly interpreted their reserved personalities as “ignorance.”⁷⁷

In order to prevent this type of alienation at NCC, administrators thought deeply about remodeling the entire experience of attending college. For students pursuing an Associate's Degree, the “Inquiry Circle” became an innovative tool in that effort.⁷⁸ This open-ended counseling format allowed a student to bring up “any question, problem,

⁷⁶ *Navajo Culture Center Purpose and Plans: A Shrine and Living Symbol for the Navajo to be Located at Navajo Community College*, (Tsaile, AZ: Navajo Community College Press, 1972), 22-23.

⁷⁷ “Young Navajos Discuss Problems,” *Navajo Times*, June 6, 1968.

⁷⁸ *Navajo Culture Center*, 18.

difficulty, or conflict he would like to resolve. It may be a question about his relationship with other people, his values and beliefs, his view of the world... [or] his career.”⁷⁹

Further seeking to correct the perceived blind spots evident at non-reservation institutions, NCC also provided counselors and student aides who would be allowed to come to students’ homes and discuss issues unfamiliar to parents and family members who lacked college experience.⁸⁰ These extensive services aimed to retain Navajo students and prepare them and their families for possible transitions to off-reservation schooling and careers. But they also sought to overturn entrenched legacies of American academic institutions, which had sometimes been characterized by a “frightening separation” between educators, students, and their families.⁸¹

Addressing that legacy of separation through proactive services allowed TCUs to extend the type of work envisioned not just by Roe Cloud but by the directors of the Boulder Workshop in the 1950s and 1960s—utilizing the benefits of aligning with the American higher education system while encouraging students to remain rooted in their Native cultures and cognizant of the strengths of their own people’s leaders. Unlike those previous efforts, however, TCUs now carried this work directly to reservations, and institutionalized it as a recognizable pathway for a greater number of students.⁸²

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 24-25.

⁸¹ “Oglala Sioux Educational Survey,” *Americans Before Columbus* [hereafter cited as *ABC*] 1, no. 1 (October 1963), 9.

⁸² Even today, efforts to improve retention and completion remain a central concern for TCUs, but innovative programs like those at NCC also continue to develop. See for example Iris HeavyRunner and Richard DeCelles, “Family Education Model: Meeting the Student Retention Challenge,” *JAIE* 41, no. 2 (2002), 29-37; and Raphael M. Guillory and Mimi Wolverson, “It’s About Family: Native American Student Persistence in Higher Education,” *JAIE* 79, no. 1 (2008), 58-87.

Perhaps nothing was more vital to this re-shaping of the higher education model than a concerted effort by tribal colleges to place Native studies at the center of the curriculum. By organizing curricula that grew around a central base of Native and tribal studies programs, the founders and educators of early TCUs embraced the understanding that cultural factors could never be divorced from the learning process, no matter the subject.⁸³ This understanding, furthermore, was portrayed in TCUs' curricula as an opportunity to impact the present and future rather than as a reason to retreat to the past. In other words, while TCUs sought to root students in cultural knowledge that stretched to immemorial pasts, they also emphasized particular events in tribal histories and contemporary contexts that in turn impacted the social, economic, and political circumstances of students. In this way, Native and tribal studies programs became a necessary tool in the pursuit of the intellectual vision outlined in their mission statements.

Navajo Community College provides perhaps the clearest illustration of this multi-layered approach to Native studies. In its early years, NCC benefited from a strong philosophical agreement between its top administrators and its Navajo Studies educators. The school's first president, Bob Roessel, wholeheartedly supported his wife Ruth as Navajo Studies director, and when Ned Hatathli soon stepped in as the school's first Navajo president, that advocacy continued. Hatathli clearly expressed his desire that the Navajo Studies program would act not as a "veneer" but as "the heart of Navajo Community College."⁸⁴ Fortunately, this sentiment was also echoed by Tribal Chairman

⁸³ See as an example Jack Barden, ed., "Self-Study: Standing Rock Community College," (Fort Yates, ND: Standing Rock Community College, 1984), 10.

⁸⁴ Ned Hatathli, "Navajo Studies at Navajo Community College," (paper presentation, UCLA American Indian Culture Center 1971 Short Term Summer Institute, Many Farms, AZ, July 1971), 1-2.

Peter MacDonald, who encouraged the program as a source of individual and collective pride for students.⁸⁵

With administrators and educators aligned, Navajo Studies became a vehicle for a unique body of knowledge and a unique approach to higher education. As a sign of the level of commitment to the program, Navajo Studies coursework was required rather than optional. The overall program included over 30 courses, with about half focusing on Pan-Indian issues and the others addressing specifically Navajo topics, sometimes taught only in the Navajo language.⁸⁶ In order to support this extensive program, NCC streamlined the qualifications for Navajo Studies instructors, recognizing that academic qualifications according to the norms of American academia were often less relevant than a deep knowledge of the material and an ability to teach that material.⁸⁷ Pursuing this route, the program was “staffed entirely by full-blood Navajos,” by 1971.⁸⁸ In her role as director of the program, Ruth Roessel was not simply an administrator but an experienced educator with a firm grounding in Navajo culture. Her father was a Navajo medicine man, and an appreciation for that type of deep cultural knowledge helped shape the program.

⁸⁵ *Navajo Culture Center*, 16.

⁸⁶ Hatathli, “Navajo Studies,” 1-2.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 1-2. For further examination of the importance of “blood,” clan, and other categories and relationships for NCC administrators, see Clark. Multiple scholars have examined the problematic and potentially exclusionary elements of the concept of “blood” in tribal membership and recognition. For example see Eva Garrouette, *Real Indians: Identity and the Survival of Native America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Melinda Maynor Lowery, *Lumbee Indians in the Jim Crow South: Race, Identity, and the Making of a Nation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); Susan A. Miller, “Seminoles and Africans under Seminole Law: Sources and Discourses of Tribal Sovereignty and ‘Black Indian’ Entitlement,” in *Native Historians Write Back: Decolonizing American Indian History*, ed. Susan A. Miller and James Riding In (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 2011), 187-206; and Seah-dom Edmo, Jessie Young, and Alan Parker, *American Indian Identity: Citizenship, Membership, and Blood* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2016).

Even for NCC administrators who had grown up with a firm sense of their tribal history, the process of constructing this curriculum became an important moment of reflection and re-commitment to a deeper understanding of the foundations of Navajo culture and the teaching of that knowledge.⁸⁹ In the early years, Navajo Community College president Ned Hatathli encouraged administrators and educators to undertake a deep study of traditional Navajo forms of the education process, and to consider how those traditional teaching methods could inform a modern higher education effort.⁹⁰

Students in the Navajo Studies program often began by encountering some of the most basic teachings of a Navajo approach to life. For example, Wilson Aronilth Jr., who taught Navajo Studies at NCC from its inception, emphasized the Navajo clan system as the foundation of all identity.⁹¹ The clan system traced a direct and personal connection to the very origins of the Navajo people. Knowledge of this deep connection, Aronilth hoped, would engender confidence in a student's individual sense of identity and place in society, while also underscoring a shared past as a source of collective strength.⁹² As with so many Native intellectual activists and educators of the era, Aronilth saw his teaching as much more than a lesson in history or cultural tradition. He interpreted his work as directly relevant to many of the problems facing reservation communities in modern America—generational divides, broken families, depression—which he saw as stemming

⁸⁹ Clark, 156-157.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Wilson Aronilth Jr., *Foundation of Navajo Culture* (Tsaile, AZ: Navajo Community Press, 1991), 75-76.

⁹² Ibid., 119.

from a crisis of identity.⁹³ For Aronilth, re-constructing positive expressions of Native identity in modern America would never be done by abandoning one source of knowledge for another, or attempting to take on an entirely new identity. Instead, he felt that students must first enter a “learning and re-learning process of what our forefathers taught us,” understanding their cultural values but also “why [we] use these values.”⁹⁴ From there, students could “understand cross cultural ideas through comparison, participation, and discussion of values,” thus constructing a balanced body of knowledge and a balanced worldview.⁹⁵

In many cases, discussions of contemporary contexts were much more direct. In an early Navajo Studies text that she helped author for the program, Ruth Roessel addressed tribal relations with governments, reservation economic development and land management, the relevance of Supreme Court cases for Native sovereignty, and examples of self-determination.⁹⁶ Roessel sought to ensure that the Navajo Studies program and her text in particular were infused with a powerful Native voice, allowing her activist stance to shine through in her descriptions of the contemporary relationships between tribes and American governments.⁹⁷ Under Roessel’s direction, the program also required students

⁹³ Ibid., 17-18.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 19, 22.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 75.

⁹⁶ Ruth Roessel, ed., *Navajo Studies at Navajo Community College* (Many Farms, AZ: Navajo Community College Press, 1971).

⁹⁷ Ibid., 48-55.

to attend seminars on current affairs impacting Native people, and encouraged attendance at events such as the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) conference.⁹⁸

Ruth Roessel's willingness to combine the multiple layers of cultural, historical, and contemporary studies in her program aligned well with the school's mission statement and with the long line of intellectual activism to which she added. This effort was also mirrored at the other early TCUs. At Sinte Gleska College, an "Ethnic Studies Curriculum Development" project sought to bring Native worldviews into discussions on topics ranging from politics to science to poetry, while workshops were set up to re-examine the roots of common Siouan cultural practices.⁹⁹ The Sinte Gleska curriculum, like NCC's, also encouraged students to engage with contemporary Native issues and organizations such as the National Indian Education Association (NIEA). Through these diverse applications, a core of Native studies at tribal colleges and universities carried out the schools' curricular and community missions in powerful and proactive ways, and re-shaped the experience of higher education for American Indian students.

Early TCUs sought to expand their innovative influence outside the curricular realm as well. Publishing newsletters, books, and other materials quickly became a way to privilege tribal perspectives and to harness an established educational and rhetorical instrument for the particular goals of Native people. This method was not entirely new. Henry Roe Cloud had understood well the empowering aspect of publishing, devoting

⁹⁸ *Navajo Community College Newsletter* 1, no. 3 (October 1969).

⁹⁹ "Indian Ethnic Heritage Studies Curriculum Development Project," *Sinte Gleska College News Letter* (Rosebud, SD), November 1976.

much of his time at the American Indian Institute and Haskell to creating forums on Native issues and disseminating his own writings.

No school in the tribal college era seized this opportunity more aggressively than Navajo Community College, where the press became not simply a necessary device for the daily needs of the institution itself, but a powerful platform for voices all across Navajo Nation.¹⁰⁰ This work initially overlapped with the Navajo Studies curriculum, with Ruth Roessel writing enthusiastically of the opportunity to teach from a perspective that relied primarily “upon those sources which originate from the Navajos themselves.”¹⁰¹ Over time, the NCC press expanded to carry out an ambitious effort to publish Navajo perspectives on some of the tribe’s most important historical topics and contemporary issues. True to her word, Roessel was instrumental in privileging Native sources, editing or collecting Navajo accounts for at least five books during NCC’s first five years.¹⁰² One of these, *Navajo Stories of the Long Walk Period*, was considered “the first Navajo account of the traumatic events surrounding” the Navajo exile to Fort

¹⁰⁰ *Report to the Navajo Tribal Council*, 11. See also *Navajo Community College Newsletter* 1, no. 1 (August 1969).

¹⁰¹ Ruth Roessel, *Navajo Studies*, 19.

¹⁰² Robert Roessel, *Navajo Education*, 63-66. Examples of works include Ruth Roessel, ed., *Papers on Navajo Life and Culture* (Many Farms, AZ: Navajo Community College Press, 1970), Ruth Roessel, *Navajo Studies*; Ruth Roessel, ed., *Navajo Stories of the Long Walk Period* (Tsaile, AZ: Navajo Community College Press, 1973); Ruth Roessel, *The Role of Indian Studies in American Education* (Chinle, AZ: Navajo Community College Press, 1974); and Ruth Roessel and Broderick H. Johnson, *Navajo Livestock Reduction: A National Disgrace* (Chinle, AZ: Navajo Community College Press, 1974).

Sumner in the 1860s.¹⁰³ Another collected Navajos' stories of the government-imposed livestock reduction program during the Great Depression.¹⁰⁴

Through these projects, the press privileged Native voices in ways that had not been done before. It gave Navajos an additional platform in their effort to assert the strength of their own perspectives and bodies of knowledge. Like the college itself, the press acted as a demonstration of a tribe appropriating the established tools of intellectual empowerment in America for Native-driven purposes. As it did so, it became another clear example of TCUs acting as sites of self-determination, and contributed directly to the enhancement of a long line of Native intellectual activism. It also helped to illustrate that tribal colleges and universities sought to accomplish much more than a simple importation of an existing higher education model. They pursued curricular and community missions that in many ways aligned with mainstream American educational models, but that also emphasized the enormous relevance of Native culture, history, and identity to students' everyday lives in modern America.

Seeking Permanence and Validation

The sense of balance that permeated the overall missions of early tribal colleges and universities was also built into the effort to establish a greater sense of permanence for the schools. Early TCUs' administrators and advocates understood that the most plausible path to truly institutionalizing this new model of higher education required solidifying their relationships with mainstream American educational and political

¹⁰³ Quote is from Robert Roessel, *Navajo Education*, 63. See also Ruth Roessel, *Navajo Stories of the Long Walk*.

¹⁰⁴ Ruth Roessel and Broderick Johnson, *Navajo Livestock Reduction*.

systems through accreditation and legislation. At the same time that they sought these outside forms of validation, however, they would need to ensure that their community members still recognized these institutions as Native-driven entities.

For Navajo Community College, the enthusiastic push for a newly-constructed campus became one of the essential factors in establishing the school as a permanent cornerstone of the reservation community. From the moment of NCC's inception, the Navajo Tribal Council had begun a drive to acquire construction funds, and—thanks to the generosity of Board of Regents member Yazzie Begay—land for a campus site became available near Tsaile, Arizona.¹⁰⁵ With the added financial assistance of the Navajo Community College Act of 1971, the ambitious campus project was spurred onward and became an early point of pride for NCC's advocates.¹⁰⁶ In order to understand the true significance of this construction project, it is useful to take a careful and deliberate look at how the new NCC campus fit into Navajo Nation in both a physical and philosophical sense.

The chosen campus site in Tsaile sat in the heart of Navajo Nation, nestled among the rugged Chuska Mountains. The landscape of this area vividly brought to mind both the power and the beauty of nature. The rocky bluffs and mesas jutted out from the desert and asserted their immediate physical strength. At the same time, their subtle mixes of reds, browns, and oranges suggested a softness. The site was beautiful, but also remote. At the outset of the campus project in 1971, there barely existed a functional road to

¹⁰⁵ House, 110.

¹⁰⁶ "NCC Act of 1971."

service construction personnel, let alone the hundreds of would-be students, faculty, and staff expected to attend in the future.¹⁰⁷

While this relative obscurity seemed to make the Tsaile site an unlikely fit for a community college, Yazzie Begay and other Navajo advocates saw a benefit in rooting the school “in the heart of the reservation.”¹⁰⁸ Not only would the new location keep NCC within a one-hour drive for over one-third of the Navajo population, but it would also represent in a very real sense a protected space, located near the center of the reservation and also free from any negative connotations associated with existing BIA facilities.¹⁰⁹

The notion of the new campus as a protected space for Navajo identity was a powerful metaphor, but it was also grounded in physical realities. As Navajo Studies instructor Wilson Aronilth Jr. writes, the importance of the location of the new campus stemmed from its position within the traditional Navajo homeland, as marked out by the four sacred mountains that correspond to the cardinal directions.¹¹⁰ Beginning in the east was *Sisnaajini* (Blanca Peak, Colorado), adorned with a white shell. According to the Navajo tradition from which Aronilth taught, a lightning bolt fastened this mountain to Mother Earth. To the south lay *Tsoodzil* (Mt Taylor, New Mexico), colored turquoise. A stone knife fastened it to the earth. In the west was *Dook’o’oosliid* (San Francisco Peaks, Arizona), colored yellow and dressed with abalone shell, and tied to the earth with a

¹⁰⁷ *Report to the Navajo Tribal Council.*

¹⁰⁸ House, 110.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 104.

¹¹⁰ Aronilth, 12, 30-34.

sunbeam. And to the north lay *Dibé Nitsaa* (Hesperus Mountain, Colorado), colored with black jet, and fastened to the earth with a rainbow beam. For Aronilth, each of these mountains also signified a particular type of emotion or mindset, meant to evoke positive thinking, good health, social unity, or general harmony. As literal landmarks, they helped map out the boundaries of the traditional homeland, while their ties to the origins of the Navajo people gave them a cultural grounding and made them a sort of “shield from evil, harm, and danger” that might threaten Navajo identity.¹¹¹ The new NCC campus, located within the bounds of these four sacred mountains, was meant to draw on and reflect the strength that they demonstrated.

Nowhere was the connection to the sacred markers of Navajo homeland and identity more apparent than in the design for the Culture Center, a campus building meant to evoke in Navajos the same reverence that the White House or Mount Vernon might for other Americans.¹¹² For the planning of this particular project, the Board of Regents entrusted a group of Navajo medicine men, who hoped to display for students and other visitors a connection between the contemporary tribe and the original Navajo Holy People. They designed sanctuary walls within the building to resemble “the mythological home of the Sun,” who had built a special dwelling for Changing Woman.¹¹³ The walls of the sanctuary would be made of the same materials as the four sacred mountains—white shell, turquoise, abalone shell, and jet.¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 30.

¹¹² *Navajo Culture Center*, 39.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 40, 41.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

A similar thought process pervaded the “design and structure” of the “entire campus... [which] was made to represent the traditional Navajo” lifestyle.¹¹⁵ For example, all buildings’ main entrances faced east, calling to mind the traditional setup of a Navajo dwelling, the Hogan.¹¹⁶ Dorms sat on the west side of campus, as the west side represented the resting place in the home. The campus library held a vital position at the center of campus, reflecting a firm belief in the power of its knowledge as a source of great life and energy, as “the center of the Hogan is where the fire burns.”¹¹⁷ The attention to detail in each of these steps meant that the campus itself became a forceful, physical reminder of the connections between contemporary students and the origins of Navajo identity.

Even before construction began, a ceremony in April of 1971 ensured that, as Navajo Community College grew to meet the demands of modern American higher education, it would also maintain connections to older traditions of tribal knowledge.¹¹⁸ At the dedication ceremony, “a traditional cane [or *gish*] was used in planting the seed of NCC.”¹¹⁹ A medicine man planted “white and yellow corn... for the blessing of the college,” and the seed was meant to “grow and develop into a beautiful spirit of Navajo education.”¹²⁰ It was during these prayers that Congressman Wayne Aspinall “felt the

¹¹⁵ Aronilth, 12.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 12-14.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹¹⁸ “New NCC Campus at Tsaile Lake Dedicated,” *Navajo Community College Newsletter* 3, no. 4 (April 1971).

¹¹⁹ Aronilth, 10.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 14.

power of God,” and was filled with hope for NCC’s future.¹²¹ With the site properly blessed, construction began in the summer of 1971 and, with the encouragement of president Ned Hatathli, builders employed 95 percent Navajos in the construction workforce.¹²² Truly then, NCC’s permanent home was developing through the work of its own people’s hands, and was emerging as another example of how TCUs could refashion established higher education models to fit their own needs and become truly Native-driven projects.

As reservation communities embraced the tribal college movement, TCUs’ advocates understood the need to establish a similarly strong position within the larger systems of American education and politics. The clearest test in the early years concerned the ability of tribal college graduates to transfer their credits or certificates to off-reservation schools. At Navajo Community College, tribal officials and educators had worked with faculty at Northern Arizona University and Arizona State University in the planning process. Still, they were anxious to see how NCC credits would transfer to other schools throughout the country. In 1972, administrators noted with satisfaction that “NCC students with the Associate of Arts degree have been accepted with full credit... at institutions in other parts of the country. No student has been denied credit, including that received in Navajo culture and language courses.”¹²³ This example became an early sign of validation for the tribal college movement, especially as courses in Native cultural studies and language were accepted alongside general studies and vocational credits.

¹²¹ Clark, 136.

¹²² *Navajo Culture Center*, 28.

¹²³ *Report to the Navajo Tribal Council*, 15.

Despite the early acceptance of NCC credits and the positive academic partnerships that had aided Turtle Mountain, Oglala Lakota, Sinte Gleska, and Standing Rock community colleges, supporters of the early tribal colleges agreed that an effort toward full accreditation would truly secure their standing. In order to achieve that goal, all five schools worked with the North Central Association of Secondary Schools and Colleges (NCA). The road to full accreditation generally required multiple visits from NCA staff to assess curricula, teaching, and administration, and could last seven years or more.¹²⁴ This lengthy process was often made more challenging for TCUs by the tenuous nature of their funding. Still, the collaborative network provided by the American Indian Higher Education Consortium enabled the schools to share advice on conducting the necessary self-studies and administrative preparations to meet NCA standards.¹²⁵

In the meantime, TCUs continued to pursue their missions, gaining confidence from incremental signs of permanence and validation. In the fall of 1973, for example, Navajo Community College officially moved to its permanent site in Tsaile, a long-awaited step in the school's growth. Enrollment could expand at the new site, and "90 percent of the previous semester's students returned for the second semester" in the 1973-74 school year, an encouraging figure that showed an almost complete reversal of the troubling dropout rate for Navajos in other post-secondary schools.¹²⁶ The curriculum at

¹²⁴ "NCC Granted Full Accreditation," *Navajo Times*, July 29, 1976.

¹²⁵ Stein.

¹²⁶ Quote from House, 105; previous dropout estimate from "Navajo College Opens on Monday," *Navajo Times*, January 23, 1969.

NCC also began featuring a “flourishing” summer fine arts program.¹²⁷ A *Navajo Times* article in the summer of 1976 discussed at length the impact of decorated faculty and eclectic influences on the summer program. Ceramics courses brought in students from as far away as New Jersey, while a bi-lingual Navajo theatre ensemble performed original plays written by the instructors—“members of the Native American Theatre Ensemble of New York.”¹²⁸ Well-known Acoma poet Simon Ortiz became another popular guest instructor as well. This summer program—and the positive response it received—was an important signal as TCUs pursued accreditation and acceptance from mainstream American organizations. It showed that the effort toward outside collaboration and validation did not have to mean de-emphasizing the goals of demonstrating Native leadership through administration, instruction, and positive expressions of Native identity.

Just three weeks later, as if in agreement with the praise of the *Navajo Times*, the NCA awarded full accreditation to Navajo Community College, making it the first fully-accredited tribal college on reservation land.¹²⁹ As perhaps the most significant endorsement, the NCA review committee noted the “clarity of philosophy and objectives” at NCC, along with the “unity of the Board of Regents, faculty and staff, supportive of that philosophy.”¹³⁰ The NCA’s approval of Navajo Community College’s guiding principles represented in essence an endorsement of the potential for American

¹²⁷ “Fine Arts Flourishing at NCC,” *Navajo Times*, July 1, 1976.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ “NCC Granted Full Accreditation,” *Navajo Times*, July 29, 1976.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

Indian self-determination in education. Just as importantly, that sense of validation extended to the entire tribal college movement. By 1978, Turtle Mountain, Oglala Lakota, Sinte Gleska and Standing Rock were all well on their way to the same goal, having reached the stage of recognized candidates for accreditation.¹³¹

At the same time that the early tribal colleges approached full accreditation, the persistent lobbying of AIHEC's members finally began gaining momentum among elected officials in Washington D.C. As long-time tribal college administrator and supporter Wayne Stein has written of this effort, the early years of AIHEC's existence were often a struggle to find common ground between the energetic optimism of its members and the disinterested skepticism of representatives in Congress.¹³² Over time, however, AIHEC's members won key allies, thanks in large part to their determination to seek out any official representing a state where TCUs had been founded. In particular, James Abourezk, a Democratic Senator from South Dakota, proved an interested advocate. Abourezk served as the first chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Indian Affairs, beginning in 1977, giving him a vital influence in supporting future legislation.¹³³

In October of 1978, AIHEC's effort to win legislative support for their cause finally reached a key milestone, with the passage of the Tribally Controlled Community

¹³¹ Stein, 54, 72, 90, 106.

¹³² Ibid., 112-117.

¹³³ Rudolph C. Ryser, "American Indian Policy Review Commission," in *Native America in the Twentieth Century: An Encyclopedia*, rev. ed. (New York: Routledge, 2014), 38-39.

College Assistance Act.¹³⁴ The Act provided a sense of fiscal stability for TCUs by making grants available through the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare—and by *requiring* the dispersal of a minimum number of grants to existing TCUs within the first year of its passage.¹³⁵ The legislation encouraged the Department to seek the advice of tribal governments and national American Indian organizations, and explicitly sought to support schools that “demonstrate[d] adherence to stated goals, a philosophy, or a plan of operation which [was] directed to meet the needs of” Native people in particular.¹³⁶ Administrators at TCUs immediately cheered this development. Sinte Gleska’s president Lionel Bordeaux, for example, wrote in his school’s newsletter that he viewed “the funding of this bill [as] necessary to [the school’s] survival.”¹³⁷

Even as the TCCCA Act became a reality and represented a further collaborative step to strengthen the early tribal colleges, the founders of these schools realized that TCUs could quickly become sites of vehement philosophical and political disagreement, even among supporters. At Navajo Community College, the death of President Ned Hatathli in 1972 contributed to a prolonged shake-up in leadership that Bob Roessel would later lament as a significant hurdle in the school’s development.¹³⁸ After that time, Roessel argued, NCC became the focus of political disagreements among Navajo Tribal Council members regarding the best course for the school’s future and its role in

¹³⁴ “TCCCA Act of 1978.”

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 1326.

¹³⁷ “Message from the President.”

¹³⁸ Robert Roessel, “Navajo Education,” 81.

engaging the larger American systems of education and economics. Roessel was disappointed by the NCC administration's changes to the initial vision of the curriculum during the 1970s. He criticized the administration for too readily de-emphasizing Navajo Studies and breaking the program up "into little pieces," rather than keeping it as a central pillar.¹³⁹

This particular curricular issue reflected a much larger philosophical divide between those who wanted the school to conform to the needs of the American economy, and those who—like Roessel—saw Native and Navajo Studies as a crucial and uniquely appealing aspect of NCC that must remain the foundation.¹⁴⁰ Jack Forbes, too, came to see a danger in early TCUs clinging too closely to the established models of the American junior college. He argued that such a strategy would not appeal to the most ambitious and qualified Native students and faculty, and would in turn detract from the effort to develop Native leadership that could impact American intellectual circles on a high level.¹⁴¹ As usual, Forbes was perceptive in his observations; the debate over this balance was something all early tribal colleges grappled with from their inceptions, and it will likely continue to some degree for as long as TCUs exist.

As a result of the philosophical battles in leadership and curricular direction, Navajo Community College suffered dozens of resignations among its faculty and staff

¹³⁹ Ibid., 76.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid. See also Clark, 168, 182-183, 189-192.

¹⁴¹ Jack D. Forbes, "The Development of a Native American Intelligentsia and the Creation of D-Q University," 1980, in Hartmut Lutz, ed. *D-Q University: Native American Self-Determination in Higher Education* (Davis, CA: Department of Applied Behavioral Sciences/ Native American Studies Tecumseh Center, 1980), 80.

during the mid-to-late 1970s, and encountered difficulty even in accurately tracking and reporting enrollment for funding purposes.¹⁴² Roessel, like many other advocates, worried that these struggles could damage the school's reputation and cause hesitation within Congress regarding the prospect of further supportive legislation for TCUs. To this day, the legacy of these pressures and struggles is a concern for TCU supporters, and these issues remain a pressure point for politicians who argue against increased funding.¹⁴³

In the midst of these challenges, however, supporters of the early tribal colleges also found cause for optimism. As full accreditation stood within reach in the late 1970s, the prospect of new supportive legislation signaled the chance for more Native communities to initiate their own efforts to increase access to and control of higher education. Looking backward from today's perspective, it is easy to conclude that the optimism of that moment has since been mixed with frustration. But the flashes of optimism that appeared in the 1960s and 1970s are an important part of this history, and deserve to be highlighted because they reveal the resilience of Native intellectual activists in the face of persistent challenges. Throughout the time that the TCCCA Act wove its way through Congress, promising greater financial security and another form of

¹⁴² Robert Roessel, "Navajo Education," 71.

¹⁴³ Tom Burnett, "The Tragedy of Tribal Colleges: Government-Subsidized Colleges for Native Americans Spend Lavishly but the Results Are Poor," *The John William Pope Center for Higher Education Policy*, June 9, 2013, <http://www.popecenter.org/commentaries/article.html?id=2858#.U84JZ-NdXJD> (accessed January 8, 2017).

validation for the early TCUs, the schools remained dedicated to their particular missions and to what the founders of NCC called “an exercise in tribal sovereignty.”¹⁴⁴

In the winter of early 1978, Sinte Gleska College held a graduation ceremony for ten recipients of Associate’s Degrees and dozens of students receiving their GEDs.¹⁴⁵ In conjunction with graduation, the tribe held the annual *wacipi*—a special type of powwow. Trade and art shows featured handmade crafts. Banquets, musical performances and dance contests for all ages lasted for three days. The entire community celebrated Lakota culture through the festivities’ connection to tribal history. But the *wacipi* also encouraged a living, practiced identity—an indication of what it meant to be a part of the Lakota people in that year and in that moment. The fact that such an important expression of identity occurred in conjunction with graduation showed how central the young school had already become to the community. In another of South Dakota’s tribal colleges—Oglala Lakota College—students encountered a curriculum that focused on the “whole person in balance,” or *Wolakota*.¹⁴⁶ Across the country at Navajo Community College, students learned to value a connection with their original Holy People through the clan system, and they emphasized “living in a way of beauty,” or in harmony with the world around them.¹⁴⁷ These unique concepts emphasized particular histories and philosophies, but all shared a connection to a long thread of

¹⁴⁴ Mike Mitchell, as quoted in Clark, 212.

¹⁴⁵ “1978 Graduation and Annual Wacipi,” *Sinte Gleska College News*, February 1978.

¹⁴⁶ Jon Reyhner and Jeanne Eder, *American Indian Education: A History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004), 302.

¹⁴⁷ Aronilth, 78. See also Martin A. Link, ed., *Navajo: A Century of Progress, 1868-1968* (Window Rock, AZ: The Navajo Tribe, 1968).

Native intellectual activism that stretched back decades and incorporated individual activists, national organizations, and tribal leaders.

In the 1960s and 1970s this form of activism benefited from a greater commitment to American Indian self-determination on the part of key allies in American government and education. On a basic level, this allowed students in Native communities to gain greater access to higher education and the American professional world than they had before. Some received GEDs or adult basic education while others completed Associate's Degrees, certificates, and other credits that would transfer to four-year universities off the reservation. But these schools did more than simply formalize a relationship between Native students and the established American educational, political, and economic landscape. They transformed that relationship into something new, and rather than simply import a model of higher education they reshaped it into something that encouraged an ongoing demonstration of Native leadership, and that fit the particular needs of the tribal communities they served. In so doing, they became cornerstones of those communities.

With this dedication to Native administration and tribal focus, TCUs rooted students' education in cultural knowledge and practice that might stretch back to time immemorial, while also emphasizing specific factors of tribal history and contemporary politics that impacted students in immediate ways. In this process, tribal colleges sought to demonstrate the relevance of Native identities in the modern world, and to institutionalize a path in higher education that prepared students to adapt to the realities of that world and to contribute to Native leadership in their own right.

CHAPTER FIVE

“Embracing Pan-Indianism”: Off-Reservation Institutions and Their Place in the Tribal College Era

Even as the tribal college movement took root in reservation communities, Native leaders elsewhere maintained their long-developing efforts to cultivate Native, national leadership on an intertribal basis. In a tumultuous era of social and political protest emerging in the late 1960s and early 1970s, intertribal activism became more visible than ever. Groups like the American Indian Movement (AIM) demanded greater accountability from government bodies regarding the recognition of Native people’s individual and tribal rights. In turn, the administrations of Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon began to formalize the U.S. government’s repudiation of American Indian Termination policy and the endorsement of self-determination.¹

Two institutions in particular captured what the tribal college movement could look like in this context, both within the structure of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), and purposefully divorced from it. In the latter effort, Jack Forbes’ persistent activism for an American Indian University finally came to life in the form of Deganawidah-Quetzalcoatl University (D-Q University), a small, intertribal school near Davis, California.² Within the BIA, the Bureau transformed Haskell Institute in Lawrence,

¹ Lyndon B. Johnson, “Special Message to the Congress on the Problems of the American Indian: ‘The Forgotten American,’” March 6, 1968, in John Woolley and Gerhard Peters, The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=28709> (accessed February 26, 2017); Richard Nixon, “Special Message to the Congress on Indian Affairs,” July 8, 1970, in John Woolley and Gerhard Peters, The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=2573> (accessed December 12, 2016).

² Jack Forbes, “Brief Proposal for D-Q University,” 1970, in *Native American Higher Education: The Struggle for the Creation of D-Q University, 1960-1971*, by Jack D. Forbes, 1985, Box 228 – Native Higher Education and Colleges, Jack D. Forbes Collection, University of California – Davis, Special

Kansas into a postsecondary school with a broader academic mission under the name Haskell Indian Junior College.³

Together, the stories of these two institutions in the early years of the tribal college era help shine light on difficult questions regarding the fundamental nature of Native intellectual activism and self-determination in twentieth-century America. Some activists asked, how could true Native intellectualism flourish in a BIA school? How could American Indian self-determination exist within the rules and structures established by the United States government? Others asked, how could any impactful reform come about *without* the assistance of non-Native people and the approval of powerful political forces? Why should Native activists *not* utilize the tools of the colonizer in their decolonization efforts? These fundamental questions regarding how Native activism should operate were intimately linked to questions about the nature of Native identity. In Forbes' work, especially, this tension occasionally rose to the surface as he appeared to struggle over the basic question, what should an American Indian University look like? Or even more simply, he seemed to ask in his writings, what did Native *identity* look like? Clearly, this question did not have one answer, even for Forbes himself. But D-Q University and Haskell Indian Junior College both gave students the opportunity to explore it. Perhaps predictably, only one of these schools survives today, but they were both linked to the era's Native activism, and both illustrated crucial elements of how the

Collections [Hereafter cited as Forbes Collection, UC Davis]; Hartmut Lutz, ed. *D-Q University: Native American Self-Determination in Higher Education* (Davis, CA: Department of Applied Behavioral Sciences/ Native American Studies Tecumseh Center, 1980).

³ "School History," Haskell Indian Nations University Web site, <http://www.haskell.edu/about/history.php> (accessed December 12, 2016).

tribal college movement resonated beyond reservation communities and in intertribal settings.

In principle, Jack Forbes remained a staunch opponent of government funding and oversight of D-Q University throughout its development in the 1970s.⁴ This stance aligned with his philosophy of American Indian self-determination, but also revealed a possible disconnect between philosophy and practice, and presented pragmatic barriers that impacted the effort to keep the fledgling school open. Initially ambitious for the prospects of an American Indian University drawing students from all over the Americas, Forbes by the end of the 1970s expressed deep frustration in his writings. He articulated acutely the bitterness of a Native activist struggling for radical change in the face of powerful mainstream structures in American politics and education.

While Forbes attempted to cultivate a new generation of Native intellectual leaders outside the influence of colonial systems, a related but quite different effort was taking over Haskell Institute. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Haskell transformed from a vocational boarding school to a junior college model. Some Native activists like Forbes perceived the BIA's influence over Haskell as its central characteristic, and refused to see the school as a Native-driven entity.⁵ However, many administrators and educators saw Haskell's transition as an opportunity to push government structures and institutions further into an acceptance of self-determination. By the 1970s, Haskell's students

⁴ Jack D. Forbes, "The Development of a Native American Intelligentsia and the Creation of D-Q University," 1980, in Hartmut Lutz, ed. *D-Q University: Native American Self-Determination in Higher Education* (Davis, CA: Department of Applied Behavioral Sciences/ Native American Studies Tecumseh Center, 1980), 75-88.

⁵ Ibid.

understood themselves as part of a broad effort toward a Native intellectual leadership that still unequivocally embraced Native expressions of identity.⁶

These schools were linked to the tribal college movement through common goals and administrative connections such as the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC).⁷ Despite their fundamental administrative differences, DQU and Haskell shared in common their effort to perform the work of tribal colleges and universities (TCUs) in an off-reservation, intertribal setting. In this respect, they were in turn linked to the activism of Henry Roe Cloud in the early twentieth century. Roe Cloud had envisioned Native intellectual leadership broadly, encompassing many different forms of tribal and Indigenous identity and many different skill sets. His career at the American Indian Institute and at Haskell embodied the struggle between creative Native leadership and the barriers associated with federal administration and assistance. The stories of D-Q University and Haskell in the 1960s and 1970s reveal new developments and enduring continuities in that tense relationship.

The DQU Vision for Native Intellectual Activism

By the time D-Q University first opened its doors to students in 1971, it had already existed in Jack Forbes' mind for more than a decade.⁸ Beginning in the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s, Forbes consistently pursued the development of Native self-

⁶ See for example "Story of Haskell," *The Indian Leader* (Yearbook Issue, volume 78, 1976), 162-165; and Fred Rednest, "Right to be Indian Conference Held at Haskell," *The Indian Leader* 81, no. 15 (May 19, 1978), 2.

⁷ Wayne J. Stein, *Tribally Controlled Colleges: Making Good Medicine* (New York: Peter Lang, 1992), 109.

⁸ Jack D. Forbes, "A Proposal to Create an American Indian University," 1961, in *Native American Higher Education: The Struggle for the Creation of D-Q University, 1960-1971*, by Jack D. Forbes, 1985, Box 228 – Native Higher Education and Colleges, Forbes Collection, UC Davis.

determination and intellectual activism, and held an intertribal American Indian University as a potential centerpiece of that effort. He first sent his university proposal to members of the Kennedy administration, Congressmen, and fellow educators and Native activists in 1961, but he continued to revise and disseminate his ideas throughout the ensuing decade.⁹

Forbes never mentioned Henry Roe Cloud by name when discussing his university proposal in the 1960s. Still, he was familiar with Roe Cloud's work, and his ideas and ambitions for the project showed remarkable continuity with Roe Cloud's early hopes for Native intellectual leadership at the American Indian Institute in the 1910s. One potential reason that Forbes did not identify Roe Cloud as a direct influence was their differing views of the relationship between Christianity and Native activism. Roe Cloud had understood Christianity as one of several positive influences on his own life, and as a vehicle for encouraging useful qualities in students' lives.¹⁰ Forbes, on the other hand, emphasized Christianity's role as a fundamental tool of colonization against Native cultures.¹¹

⁹ For a list of recipients, see "American Indian University Brochures," ND, Box 2 – Jack Forbes: Correspondence, Forbes Collection, UC Davis. For examples of the proposal and revisions see Forbes, "A Proposal," 1961, Forbes Collection, UC Davis; and Forbes, "American Tribal Higher Education: A Proposal," 1965, in *Native American Higher Education: The Struggle for the Creation of D-Q University, 1960-1971*, by Jack D. Forbes, 1985, Box 228 – Native Higher Education and Colleges, Forbes Collection, UC Davis.

¹⁰ Henry Roe Cloud to W. S. Lank, October 26, 1923, Reel 2, Records of the American Indian Institute, 1908-1954 (microfilm), Record Group 301.8, United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. Board of National Missions Dept. of Health, Education and Welfare, [hereafter cited as Records of the AII]; see also "Ten Commandments of Success," *The Indian Outlook* 1, no. 1 (November 1, 1923), 4.

¹¹ Forbes, "Native American Intelligentsia."

When writing in defense of his American Indian University proposal, Forbes understandably prioritized the merits of Native culture, intellectualism, and innovation over those of Christian or Euro-American culture.¹² His invested stance led him to resort to broad strokes in some of his writings, such as his suggestion that Native intellectuals and activists needed to “reject white values.”¹³ These statements reflected Forbes’ intense commitment to working toward Native-driven intellectual activism, but did not acknowledge the nuances involved in the type of work undertaken by Roe Cloud and other activists. After all, Roe Cloud had not only emphasized the importance of Native history and contemporary Native issues, but had maintained his own Native language and a commitment to his home reservation in a manner that Forbes would champion as a key starting point for grassroots activism in his own time.¹⁴ A close examination of these two men and their work reveals that they did in fact share much in common. As they navigated layers of personal and collective culture and identity, they hoped to bring about similar overall goals. They both held higher education as a centerpiece for developing Native intellectual activism in modern America. In the process, both utilized and grappled with the mainstream American structures of education and politics, and both were forced into compromises and contradictions much more complex than a simple dichotomy between “Native values” and “white values.”

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid., 78.

¹⁴ Jack D. Forbes to Drew Pearson, April 8, 1961, Box 228 – Native Higher Education and Colleges, Forbes Collection, UC Davis; Forbes, “A Proposal,” 1961, Forbes Collection, UC Davis; Forbes, “American Tribal Higher Education,” 1965, Forbes Collection, UC Davis.

The starting point for Native empowerment for both Henry Roe Cloud and Jack Forbes was a broad understanding of Native identity—one that, for both men, reached beyond some of the commonly accepted notions of nation and tribe. Roe Cloud frequently expressed the merits of his American Indian Institute in terms of benefits for Native people of the United States, but he strove for an eclectic student body and hoped to bring in students from throughout the Americas.¹⁵ In 1922, he expressed his broad notion of common indigeneity when he wrote to his mentor and adoptive mother Mary W. Roe that he hoped their work would inspire “untold possibilities of good [for] the whole Indian race in the Western Hemisphere.”¹⁶ Less than six months later, his American Indian Institute accepted a Honduran student, and he wrote optimistically that the Institute considered “the Central American and South American Indians” within its potential scope.¹⁷ Though the language barrier between this student and the faculty eventually served as a deterrent for additional efforts in the same vein, Roe Cloud’s actions revealed his optimism for an intellectual movement that prioritized common Indigenous experience and identity over tribal divisions.

In the 1960s, Jack Forbes articulated a similar argument.¹⁸ His original university proposal of 1961 focused primarily on issues facing tribes in the United States, but by 1965 his revised proposal included a section dedicated to “Inter-American Indian

¹⁵ Henry Roe Cloud to Mrs. Walter C. Roe, October 4, 1922, Reel 1, Records of the AII.

¹⁶ Henry Roe Cloud to Mrs. Roe, October 4, 1922, Reel 1, Records of the AII.

¹⁷ Quote is from Henry Roe Cloud to Mrs. J. F. Schermerhorn, March 7, 1923, Reel 2, Records of the AII; see also Henry Roe Cloud to Mrs. Walter C. Roe, March 5, 1923, Reel 1, Records of the AII.

¹⁸ Forbes, “American Tribal Higher Education,” 1965, Forbes Collection, UC Davis. See also Roberto Cintli Rodriguez, *Our Sacred Maiz is Our Mother: Indigeneity and Belonging in the Americas* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2014), 85-86.

Affairs.”¹⁹ Forbes estimated that “30 million or more Native Americans outside of the United States are in need of programs similar to” the ones he envisioned for tribal members in the United States.²⁰ He incorporated his training as an anthropologist and historian into a long-term framework that emphasized a common Indigenous experience with colonialism. In the late 1960s Forbes’ language clearly displayed this inclusive understanding, as he frequently described recognized tribes in the United States as well as Chicanos as “tribal groups” or “Native Americans,” connected by cultural as well as racial ties.²¹ He argued that self-determination in the face of the colonial experience was best pursued by a united intellectual leadership that was intertribal and international.

Working from this broad understanding of Native identity, Forbes’ proposals for an American Indian University came to display ever more the ambitious spirit that Roe Cloud had poured into the American Indian Institute in the 1910s and 1920s. Roe Cloud had consistently written of the need for expansion in terms of funding and enrollment in order for the Institute to make “the greatest strides” for “Indians of every tribe,” and to become a true national center for Native leadership.²² In the 1960s, Forbes’ plans for a university project echoed the same hopes for a nation-wide—if not international—impact. With each year, as he honed and revised his vision, his ambition grew. In 1965, his proposal still carried the original focus on professional education in teaching, medical

¹⁹ Forbes, “A Proposal,” 1961, Forbes Collection, UC Davis; Forbes, “American Tribal Higher Education,” 1965, Forbes Collection, UC Davis, 52.

²⁰ Forbes, “American Tribal Higher Education,” 1965, Forbes Collection, UC Davis, 52.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 49-53; Lutz, 9.

²² See for example Henry Roe Cloud to E. C. Sage, April 24, 1918, Reel 2, Records of the AII; *The Indian Outlook* 3, no. 2 (October-November 1925); *The Indian Outlook* 3, no. 3 (December 1925); and Mary A. Steer to Henry Roe Cloud, March 20, 1928, Reel 1, Records of the AII.

fields, and business, but also brought in additional material on the need for programs in remedial work, agricultural development, law and tribal government, and even education for “social workers and government personnel” who worked within Native communities.²³ In this way, Forbes’ expanding proposal sought to reach nearly every aspect of Native higher education, from college preparatory work to advanced research to interactions with government officials. This concerted effort to impact contemporary Native issues mirrored the work of the founders at Navajo Community College and the other TCUs. Forbes explicitly wrote that his university would “do much more than merely ‘preserve’ tribes” in its effort to produce “a marked improvement in tribal patterns of self-development and self-realization.”²⁴

Moreover, Forbes’ inclusive view of Native identity also meant that his proposed project would stretch beyond national borders, acting as “a major and unique research center in tribal [and] inter-tribal... relations the world over. A comparative program,” he concluded, “might well be of international significance.”²⁵ In his 1965 proposal’s final paragraph, Forbes summed up what he viewed as the potential impact of his work: “It could be *the* major effort in the ‘war on poverty’ in so far as tribal groups are concerned.”²⁶

Despite his bold language, Jack Forbes understood that, in order to make a tangible impact, he must eventually strike a balance between his own ideals and the

²³ Forbes, “American Tribal Higher Education,” 1965, Forbes Collection, UC Davis, 51.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 50, 53.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 52.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 53.

existing realities in American politics and education. The inclusion of the Johnson administration's phrase "war on poverty" hinted at that realization. By 1968, his revised university proposal captured the meeting point between boundless ambition and practical restraints.²⁷ This updated version maintained Forbes' broad academic vision, but also referenced the particular developments of the late 1960s, such as the future of Navajo Community College and the potential trend at Haskell Institute toward a college model.²⁸ Perhaps sensing the possibility of his own project gaining traction, Forbes for the first time dedicated lengthy sections to the problems of funding his project and securing resources and faculty.

Just as Henry Roe Cloud had in his original vision for the American Indian Institute, Jack Forbes expressed ambivalence about federal funding and oversight, warning that "bureaucratic administration would nullify the goals of a Native university."²⁹ He pointed to the large Bureau of Indian Affairs budget for education—as well as federal efforts to fund Howard University as an institution primarily for African American students—as evidence that the problem with funding lay not in whether the money existed. Indeed, he argued, the federal government could make "a simple decision" to "democratize its Indian programs" and fund an expansive, Native-driven

²⁷ Jack D. Forbes, "American Tribal Higher Education," 1968, in *Native American Higher Education: The Struggle for the Creation of D-Q University, 1960-1971*, by Jack D. Forbes, 1985, Box 228 – Native Higher Education and Colleges, Forbes Collection, UC Davis.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 68.

²⁹ Quote is from Forbes, "American Tribal Higher Education," 1965, Forbes Collection, UC Davis, 53; see also Henry Roe Cloud, "Education of the American Indian," *Quarterly Journal of the Society of American Indians*, 2, no. 3 (July-September, 1914), 203-209.

project such as his from within the BIA's existing resources.³⁰ The key issue, Forbes concluded, was that the federal government would simply not commit serious BIA funds to a project that it could not administer directly. This fundamental understanding of the need for all-Native administrative control was a central pillar of Forbes' vision of self-determination and intellectual activism, and would remain the key difference between his project and the BIA effort to refashion Haskell Institute.

From the late 1960s onward, Forbes took a number of concrete strides in rapid succession that brought his project into reality. In 1967 and 1968, he helped organize and formalize the California Indian Education Association (CIEA). This organization arose from a conference of approximately 150 Native educators and activists in the state who committed themselves to getting Native "parents, educators, and grassroots people organized in a pressure group" to push for immediate changes in Native education.³¹ The CIEA strove to approach the education system broadly, rather than to pin blame for poor student outcomes on any one issue. The group pushed Native parents to become more active in parent-teacher associations and in routine meetings with educators, hoping to raise awareness of negative stereotypes and systemic biases that impacted public schools from early childhood to postsecondary years.³² One of CIEA's most visible efforts involved pressuring colleges and universities to establish programs in Native American Studies (NAS)—an initiative that would see fifteen separate California schools establish

³⁰ Forbes, "American Tribal Higher Education," 1968, Forbes Collection, UC Davis, 67.

³¹ Quote is from Lutz, 13; see also Forbes to Pearson, April 8, 1961, Forbes Collection, UC Davis.

³² Lutz, 14.

NAS programs between 1968 and 1978.³³ Though these new programs were often forced to stretch their budgets paper-thin, they were an encouraging sign of the potential influence of groups like the CIEA, which sought to link intellectual leaders such as Forbes to ordinary Native parents and students at the grassroots level.

As a central part of the effort to institute NAS programs, Forbes took up a faculty position at the University of California-Davis in 1969.³⁴ He immediately began working with David Risling Jr. (Hoopa Valley) to organize the Tecumseh Center of Native American Studies, and in 1970 they were joined by Sarah Hutchinson (Cherokee).³⁵ At this time, Forbes was still in his mid-30s, and he quickly came to see Hutchinson and especially Risling as two of his closest colleagues and advisers.³⁶ He admired Risling's intellectualism but also his pure determination, calling him "a bulldog-like fighter for a brighter future for Native people."³⁷ Over time, Forbes considered Risling not only a friend, but an "elder brother."³⁸

Once together at UC Davis, Forbes, Risling, and Hutchinson began to imagine the Tecumseh Center as a sort of base of operations for pursuing Forbes' university project.

³³ Ibid., 15. UC Davis was among the first of schools to form a NAS program in the late 1960s, along with UC Berkeley and UCLA.

³⁴ Barbara Risling, "Lifetime Achievement: Jack D. Forbes," ND, Box 1 – Chronology and Biography, Forbes Collection, UC Davis.

³⁵ Lutz, 22.

³⁶ Jack D. Forbes, "My Elder Brother Walks On," 2005, https://nas.ucdavis.edu/sites/nas.ucdavis.edu/files/attachments/risling_tributebyjackforbes.pdf (accessed February 27, 2017); see also "Past Contributors," UC Davis Native American Studies Web site, <https://nas.ucdavis.edu/people/past-contributors> (accessed February 27, 2017).

³⁷ Forbes, "My Elder Brother," 2005.

³⁸ Ibid.

The CIEA had already helped organize a feasibility study with funding from the Donner Foundation, which had also provided initial funds for Navajo Community College.³⁹ Originally dedicated to cancer research in the 1930s, the Donner Foundation began supporting projects in arts, culture, and especially education by the 1960s, and became a key source of funding for many Native-driven projects.⁴⁰ Following their feasibility study, Forbes and Risling began supporting the argument that surplus government land could be repurposed for the potential university.⁴¹ By the summer of 1969, they had identified a former Army communications complex as a potential site.⁴² The complex had “various large buildings suitable as dormitories, offices, [and] class rooms,” and sat just a few miles outside of Davis.⁴³ With a particular site identified, it became more and more imaginable that Tecumseh Center faculty, together with members of the CIEA, could act as volunteer organizers and teachers in the effort to get a university up and running. Students could plausibly utilize some of UC Davis’ resources when necessary, or even take courses at both institutions.⁴⁴

³⁹ “Council Approves Community College Board of Regents,” *Navajo Times*, July 25, 1968; Jack Forbes, “Brief Proposal for D-Q,” 1970, Forbes Collection, UC Davis, 115; Lutz, 21-22.

⁴⁰ “About William H. Donner,” The William H. Donner Foundation Web site, <http://www.donner.org/aboutwilliam.html> (accessed February 25, 2017); “The William H. Donner Foundation,” Foundation Directory Online Web site, <https://fconline.foundationcenter.org/grantmaker-profile?collection=grantmakers&key=DONN004> (accessed February 25, 2017); “Chronological History,” American Indian Graduate Center Web site, <http://www.aigcs.org/about-us/history-and-mission/chronological-history/> (accessed February 25, 2017).

⁴¹ Forbes, “Brief Proposal for D-Q,” 1970, Forbes Collection, UC Davis, 115.

⁴² Lutz, 22.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Forbes, “American Tribal Higher Education,” 1968, Forbes Collection, UC Davis.

The strategy of pursuing the surplus Army land introduced one possibility that Forbes had originally feared—dependence on the federal government—but it also represented an opportunity to act out de-colonization in concrete ways. In other words, while permission to use the land would come from the federal government, the ensuing development of the university project would be administered by Native leaders and dedicated to cultivating Native intellectual activism among its students. It was a strategy that fit perfectly into the context of the time and place, given the ongoing occupation of Alcatraz Island in nearby San Francisco Bay by Native activists calling themselves the “Indians of All Tribes.”⁴⁵ The Alcatraz occupiers hoped to “re-claim” the island as a way to draw attention to a history of abuses that all American Indians shared in their relationship with the U.S. government.⁴⁶ Forbes and Risling appreciated and drew on that same activist spirit, but they focused their attention more sharply on a less symbolic and more practically significant plot of land.

The targeting of a physical site so close to Davis helped push the project into the final stages of formal organization. By 1970, Forbes had worked with Luis Flores, head of Chicano Studies at UC Davis, to solidify plans for a university administrative structure that would balance Native American and Chicano Studies.⁴⁷ In finally giving a name to

⁴⁵ Lutz, 22-24. For more information on the Alcatraz occupation and its relationship with other Native activism of the time see Paul Chaat Smith and Robert Allen Warrior, *Like a Hurricane: The Indian Movement from Alcatraz to Wounded Knee* (New York: New Press, 1996); Adam Fortunate Eagle, with Tim Findley, *Heart of the Rock: The Indian Invasion of Alcatraz* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002); and Dennis Banks, with Richard Erdoes, *Ojibwa Warrior: Dennis Banks and the Rise of the American Indian Movement* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004).

⁴⁶ Indians of All Tribes, “To the Great White Father and All His People,” 1969, as cited in Fortunate Eagle, 207-209.

⁴⁷ Larry Spears, “Indians, Chicanos Get Their University,” *The Oakland Tribune*, February 14, 1971.

the project—Deganawidah-Quetzalcoatl University—Forbes reached deep into Native intellectual and cultural history and sought to capture that balance.⁴⁸ “Deganawidah,” wrote Forbes, was a “reformer and statesmen,” who “originated the concept of the League of Nations” among the Iroquois in the 1300s, while Quetzalcoatl “guid[ed] the Toltecs in their development of a superb civilization” before the arrival of the Spaniards.⁴⁹ Additional faculty from throughout the state soon pledged to support DQU’s development—even if it meant volunteering their time—and the academic framework became clearer.⁵⁰ The model that emerged included four main areas of study: American Indian studies, Chicano studies, medical training, and a vocational program.⁵¹ In the fall of 1970, D-Q University was officially incorporated as a non-profit organization, and the DQU Board began the process of applying to the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) to take over the government surplus land site near Davis.⁵²

At that moment, Forbes’ decade-long goal to establish a platform for Native people “to acquire,” “to transform,” and “to create their own educational institutions” stood within reach.⁵³ His ambition and optimism remained a driving force as DQU’s founders looked forward to translating their ideal model into a concrete reality. It is

⁴⁸ Lutz, 1, 26.

⁴⁹ Jack D. Forbes, as quoted in Lutz, 26. See also “Deganawidah-Quetzalcoatl University,” 1971, Box 252 – D-Q University: Chronology, Correspondence, Clippings, Forbes Collection, UC Davis.

⁵⁰ Spears.

⁵¹ “Key to Transcript,” ND, Box 252 – D-Q University: Chronology, Correspondence, Clippings, Forbes Collection, UC Davis. See also “Deganawidah-Quetzalcoatl University,” 1971, Forbes Collection, UC Davis.

⁵² Forbes, “Brief Proposal for D-Q,” 1970, Forbes Collection, UC Davis, 116.

⁵³ Forbes, “American Tribal Higher Education,” 1968, Forbes Collection, UC Davis, 69.

important to understand these years of persistent work leading up to that moment in the fall of 1970. It is important to understand the commitment by these educators and activists to a particular intellectual vision, and their dedication to goals of both inclusiveness and Native self-determination—which, for Forbes as well as for the founders of other tribal colleges and universities, were not necessarily at odds.⁵⁴ It is especially important to understand D-Q University in this moment of optimism because, in the years that followed, the institution’s development would become heavily impacted by constricting forces in the established systems of American education and politics. From 1971 onward, DQU’s story would become less about the intellectual vision of Jack Forbes and his colleagues, and more about the immense challenges and compromises facing activists attempting to reshape the relationship between Native students and American higher education.

The Concrete Struggles of Implementing the DQU Vision

The implementation of the D-Q University intellectual vision brought both excitement and immediate challenges. In the fall of 1970, DQU officials waited anxiously but confidently for the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare to approve their formal request to acquire the surplus land near Davis. They had already toured the complex multiple times, and were informed that theirs was the only application for the site.⁵⁵ However, in a few short weeks from September to November 1970, Forbes, Risling, Flores, and the rest of the DQU founders were blindsided by a series of

⁵⁴ Ibid., 62-64; “Deganawidah-Quetzalcoatl University,” 1971, Forbes Collection, UC Davis.

⁵⁵ Forbes, “Brief Proposal for D-Q,” 1970, Forbes Collection, UC Davis, 114-119.

mysterious reversals within HEW. First, they saw reports of a competing application submitted by UC Davis—a development that directly contradicted the information they had received not only from their contact in HEW, but from the University of California Board of Regents. On October 30, HEW informed DQU that it was denying their application and awarding the site to UC Davis instead. As Forbes and his colleagues became increasingly aware of the illegitimate nature of this reversal—given that the UC Davis application was incomplete and unsanctioned by the Board of Regents—they quickly organized a two-pronged protest.⁵⁶ As faculty members with their careers now potentially compromised by this confrontation, Forbes and the other DQU administrators sought to appeal the decision through the established rules guiding HEW and the state’s university system. At the same time, they helped organize and direct the energy of Native and Chicano student protestors at UC Davis and other nearby colleges, encouraging a peaceful occupation of the site beginning on November 3.⁵⁷ This two-pronged strategy proved effective, as the combined visibility of the “occupation, court action, and public education ... succeeded eventually in forcing the [UC system] to repudiate its own defective application,” effectively awarding the site to DQU.⁵⁸

The combined strategy of the public protest by students and the legal challenge by faculty and staff became an immediate point of pride for Forbes. After all, despite his

⁵⁶ Lutz, 22-24.

⁵⁷ Jack D. Forbes, Kenneth R. Martin, and David Risling Jr., “The Establishment of D-Q University: An Example of Successful Indian-Chicano Community Development,” 1972, in Hartmut Lutz, ed. *D-Q University: Native American Self-Determination in Higher Education* (Davis, CA: Department of Applied Behavioral Sciences/ Native American Studies Tecumseh Center, 1980), 22-23.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 23.

rhetoric against “white values,” he clearly understood the necessity of occasionally operating “within the system” to bring about change.⁵⁹ He considered the linking of Native intellectual leaders and grassroots organizers and protestors a crucial part of the effort toward self-determination, and a crucial part of DQU’s mission.⁶⁰ It seemed fitting, then, that the very founding of the school would be a demonstration in the type of activism it would promote.

Still, the acquisition of the campus site was not without its foreboding signs for the embryotic D-Q University. Like the Alcatraz occupation, the protest at DQU was joined by many who had no real interest in the particular goals of the original protestors.⁶¹ Indeed, some of the most vocal and latest-arriving occupiers to the site had taken part in the Alcatraz protest, and seemed more motivated by the public display of occupation than the long-term academic vision of DQU. While the original student occupiers dedicated themselves to the cause of legally establishing an innovative university, many newcomers “argued for simple seizure ... according to a doctrine of ‘Indian rights’ which refused to recognize the legitimacy of negotiating with the white government.”⁶² This branch of occupiers only gained influence as many of the original student protestors were forced to return to their studies at UC Davis and elsewhere, lest they fall behind in their academic standing and lose valuable scholarships. These

⁵⁹ Lutz, 24.

⁶⁰ Forbes, “American Tribal Higher Education,” 1968, Forbes Collection, UC Davis.

⁶¹ Jack D. Forbes, Kenneth R. Martin, and David Risling Jr., “Internal Problems Faced by the D-Q Movement,” 1972, in Hartmut Lutz, ed. *D-Q University: Native American Self-Determination in Higher Education* (Davis, CA: Department of Applied Behavioral Sciences/ Native American Studies Tecumseh Center, 1980), 95-99.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 96.

conflicts between factions of occupiers were eventually resolved, although at some points DQU officials had to enlist the support of law enforcement to remove the most unwelcome and hostile protestors.⁶³

The overlap between the academic goals of students and faculty and the activist goals of non-students was to some degree intentionally courted. Forbes hoped to utilize DQU as a center for connecting intellectual training with grassroots action. However, that relationship would prove an occasional flashpoint of tension throughout the school's early development, especially in an institution with an experimental mission and scarce resources. Furthermore, the rather clandestine attempt to block DQU's application confirmed suspicions that officials within HEW and other segments of the federal bureaucracy—not to mention the UC system—might present active opposition to the entire development of the project. From that moment, hopes for robust support from the government were dampened, and any basic level of trust was damaged. Thus, while members of the D-Q University movement proclaimed "Deed Day" on April 2, 1971—the day when they finally achieved formal control of their campus site—the moment was rightfully a balance of celebration and trepidation.⁶⁴

Throughout DQU's early history, Forbes sought to harness the positive elements of the collaborative energy that arose during the campus site occupation. He wanted to feed off of, rather than denigrate, the emerging racial and ethnic activism represented by groups like the American Indian Movement. Despite the problems during the campus

⁶³ Ibid., 97-98.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 98-99.

occupation effort, he understood a certain degree of tension and struggle as a necessary part of the development of DQU, especially considering the school's dedication to principles of self-determination through direct community involvement.⁶⁵

One of the earliest and most exciting efforts to reach Native communities was the Native American Language Education (NALE) project. NALE was actually a series of individual community programs which DQU helped organize and run with funding from the Office of Education.⁶⁶ At the Zuni reservation in New Mexico from 1973 to 1975, DQU staff contributed to a curriculum development project that produced teaching materials in the Zuni language, meaning students could encounter a standardized American curriculum while aligning it to their native language in their home community. While DQU's contact with the program ended in the 1970s, the initial contributions of the NALE program were important for the establishment of a Zuni-controlled school district in 1980.⁶⁷ Similar DQU extension programs impacted communities throughout California, with the school acting as a "roof" to protect Native-driven education projects that would have otherwise struggled for adequate staff and funding.⁶⁸ In this way, D-Q University truly did serve as an agent of self-determination in the way that Forbes had envisioned. Native and Chicano intellectuals at DQU could utilize their new foothold in the mainstream channels of American politics and education to funnel resources to otherwise marginalized grassroots activists.

⁶⁵ Forbes, "American Tribal Higher Education," 1968, Forbes Collection, UC Davis.

⁶⁶ Lutz, 37.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

Unfortunately, the effort to pursue Native and Chicano community development could also bring on serious complications for the fledgling university. In 1972, DQU received a grant of over three million dollars from the Department of Labor to teach and assist migrant Mexican farmworkers in California over a two-year period.⁶⁹ Part of the project's scope included the purchase of heavy farm equipment, and some DQU board members suggested rejecting the grant, on the grounds that the project did not align in significant ways with the mission of a university.⁷⁰ With such a large windfall at stake, however, the grant presented too many intriguing possibilities for the majority of board members to turn it down. Over time, the project became a sprawling and disjointed collection of activities. Multiple interest groups from outside the original DQU administration attempted to influence the project and, in doing so, impacted the direction and public perception of the school. The real damage to the university's reputation came almost two years after the project had closed. New directors in the San Francisco regional office of the Department of Labor suddenly accused DQU of mismanaging funds that had been used to purchase tractors for one of the project's extension sites. This accusation led to years of investigations into DQU's administration, which produced little evidence of mismanagement but represented for the school's founders an opening for relentless harassment from the federal government.⁷¹

The university's commitment to linking intellectual training with real-world activism also drew the attention of leaders with a national focus. Most notable of these

⁶⁹ Ibid., 35.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid., 36-37.

was Dennis Banks (Ojibwe), who joined the DQU faculty in 1975.⁷² Banks had become perhaps the most visible Native activist of the era, thanks in large part to his role in the American Indian Movement. By 1975, AIM had already captured the attention of the public as well as the federal government for its connections to the Alcatraz occupation, the occupation of the Bureau of Indian Affairs offices in 1972, and the Wounded Knee takeover at the Pine Ridge reservation in 1973.⁷³ The Wounded Knee incident had resulted in criminal charges against Banks and other Native activists, but California governor Edmund “Jerry” Brown refused to extradite Banks to South Dakota.⁷⁴ Nevertheless, in an era of intense government suspicion of minority activist groups, Banks’ notoriety drew attention from the FBI, which in turn brought additional unwanted scrutiny to DQU as an institution.⁷⁵ Many DQU personnel heartily supported Banks, but they became convinced by the late 1970s that the federal government was unfairly targeting the institution simply because of the school’s activist stance and connections.⁷⁶

While accusations of mismanagement and the ensuing negative press harmed D-Q University’s reputation, the persistent reality of low funding remained perhaps the most important obstacle to the school’s overall development. Even as DQU received government grants, it lacked a permanent and secure base of general funding that could

⁷² Ibid., 31.

⁷³ Banks.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 321-322.

⁷⁵ Lutz, 34, 46-47.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 34, 37, 45-48. See also Forbes, “Native American Intelligentsia.”

be used at the discretion of the university's directors.⁷⁷ Instead, DQU's various efforts depended on individual grants for finite projects, and faculty often taught courses on a volunteer basis.⁷⁸ These conditions contributed to uncertainty, which in turn prevented enrollment from growing at the ambitious rate that Jack Forbes had originally envisioned.⁷⁹ Hartmut Lutz, an instructor at DQU in the late 1970s, estimated the university's enrollment at approximately 200 students per year—by no means an insignificant number, but nowhere near Forbes' original vision of 3,000.⁸⁰ Given the reality of low funding and enrollment, DQU's accreditation was limited to the junior college level, which restricted Forbes' ambitions for a graduate program.⁸¹ Despite this blow, Forbes and David Risling continued to draw up and discuss plans into at least 1974 in the hopes that one day DQU would develop a PhD track.⁸² While the graduate program never materialized, the plans displayed the founders' commitment to their intellectual vision despite the enormous obstacles they faced.

At the end of the 1970s, when Forbes had finally surrendered his immediate plans for four-year and graduate programs, he still sought to re-ignite support for DQU's

⁷⁷ Lutz, 39.

⁷⁸ Jack D. Forbes, "Dear Friends," ND (c. 1972), Box 252 – D-Q University: Chronology, Correspondence, Clippings, Forbes Collection, UC Davis. See also Lutz, 39.

⁷⁹ "Deganawidah-Quetzalcoatl University," 1971, Forbes Collection, UC Davis.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*; Lutz, 28.

⁸¹ Forbes, "Native American Intelligentsia." See also Lutz, 27.

⁸² "Graduate Committee Minutes, February 25, 1974," Box 252 – D-Q University: Chronology, Correspondence, Clippings, Forbes Collection, UC Davis; "A Preliminary Presentation on Ph.D. Degree," ND, Box 252 – D-Q University: Chronology, Correspondence, Clippings, Forbes Collection, UC Davis; "Key to Transcript," ND, Forbes Collection, UC Davis.

original intellectual vision.⁸³ In a piece on “The Development of a Native Intelligentsia,” he deftly articulated the mission that he believed DQU could still accomplish with adequate support. He wanted to “empower and strengthen the traditionalist intelligentsia” of Native communities, while training “younger people in such a way that they would be able to return to their communities and lead the intellectual and creative struggle for liberation.”⁸⁴ In many ways, this echoed the mission statements at other TCUs throughout the country. Turtle Mountain Community College, for example, sought “to create an environment where the cultural and social heritage of the Indian people can be brought to bear through the curriculum,” and in turn to “establish an administration, faculty, and student body involved in exerting leadership within the community.”⁸⁵ Furthermore, DQU had joined the other TCUs in the American Higher Education Consortium from its early days, and even sought funding under the Tribally Controlled Community College Assistance Act of 1978 (TCCCA Act).⁸⁶

Forbes, however, did not emphasize his connections to contemporary TCUs or the long line of Native intellectual activism on which they built. He wrote his “Native Intelligentsia” piece in a time of dire financial straits at DQU—a time of frustration with the dearth of support and the abundance of harassment that he felt his school had suffered over the previous decade. The toll of his emotional investment appeared to impact his

⁸³ Forbes, “Native American Intelligentsia,” 75-88.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 79.

⁸⁵ Larry Belgarde, *Turtle Mountain Community College Statement*, 1974, as quoted in Stein, 88.

⁸⁶ For the TCCCA Act, see “Tribally Controlled Community College Assistance Act of 1978,” Public Law 95-471, *U.S. Statutes at Large* 92 (1978), 1325-1331 [hereafter cited as “TCCCA Act of 1978”]. For DQU effort to obtain TCCCA Act funds, see Lutz, 29-30.

writing as he implored, “isn’t it clear that we need to support an Indian-controlled university?”⁸⁷ While much of his frustration in this effort was directed at the federal bureaucracy, he implicated a swath of Native activists as well, painting the situation facing Native people as a black and white choice between becoming “a servant of colonialism” or “an avowed nationalist.”⁸⁸

In lashing out at the federal government and the Native people that he saw as unwilling to embrace his full commitment to self-determination, Forbes overlooked the nuanced work of not only the other TCUs but of people such as Henry Roe Cloud, whose struggle at the American Indian Institute had shown so many similarities to his own work at DQU. Indeed, Roe Cloud’s Institute had been freer of government funding and restrictions than Forbes’ own effort. Forbes further overlooked the later efforts of people such as Elizabeth Roe Cloud and D’Arcy McNickle, who had worked within the BIA when they viewed it as an empowering platform for Native people, but rejected the Bureau when they perceived it as a tool of Termination. Forbes, prolific intellectual that he was, was perhaps too emotionally invested in the effort to acquire support for his own project to admit how it, too, constantly negotiated and inhabited the world of the colonizer and the world of the resister at the same time. In that mindset, it is perhaps understandable that he sought to portray his endeavor as particularly innovative, worthwhile, and indeed *necessary*—even if that meant overlooking the impact that others had made before him.

⁸⁷ Forbes, “Native American Intelligentsia,” 83.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 78.

Hartmut Lutz, visiting instructor at UC Davis and D-Q University in the late 1970s, became a valuable observer to this stage of Forbes' career. Lutz fully supported Forbes' philosophical stance on self-determination, but more readily admitted the numerous compromises to that stance that became unavoidable at DQU. Lutz compiled a brief history of DQU during his time there, which provides a crucial perspective because of his position as both insider and outsider. He actively participated in and supported the DQU mission, but could also more easily step back and take a detached view of the role that the institution played in the grand scheme of Native activism in the 1970s.⁸⁹

With that perspective, we can more clearly see that while D-Q University's early development never reached the lofty levels that Jack Forbes had projected, it nevertheless operated as an important site in the growing nationwide effort for Native self-determination. It pursued many of the same goals as the other tribal colleges and universities, but did so by "embracing Pan-Indianism" on an even more explicit intertribal and international basis, and in a way that boosted grassroots education projects in numerous Native communities.⁹⁰ Additionally, DQU served as an important intertribal cultural center in much the same way that reservation-based TCUs did for particular tribes. When Dennis Banks was unable to return to the Dakotas for the Sun Dance in 1976, he helped construct ceremonial grounds and organize the dance on the DQU campus.⁹¹ And in 1978—a milestone year with the passing of the TCCCA Act—DQU remained dedicated to contemporary Native activism by helping to organize the Longest

⁸⁹ Lutz.

⁹⁰ Quote is from Forbes, "Native American Intelligentsia," 79.

⁹¹ Banks, 322-324..

Walk. The Walk saw Native protestors march across the continent from Alcatraz and DQU in the West to Washington D.C. in the East, “symbolically rever[sing] the process of destruction” during Euro-American colonialism.⁹² In these and many other instances, D-Q University operated as a key center for the demonstration of a Native intellectual activism that was both philosophical and concrete, traditional and modern.

The Reorientation of Haskell Institute

Jack Forbes and his colleagues may not have seen the full development they had hoped for at D-Q University, but they nevertheless sought to advance core principles that aligned with a long thread of Native intellectual activism that stretched back to Henry Roe Cloud in the early twentieth century. DQU became an important complement to the reservation-based tribal college movement, and represented another key site in the ongoing development of a discourse on Native self-determination and Native leadership in higher education. That discourse found support in off-reservation settings, not only taking root at DQU, but appearing to impact the direction of the federal government’s stance as well. The transition toward a post-secondary academic model that the Bureau of Indian Affairs initiated at Haskell Institute in the late 1960s and early 1970s can be seen as an illustration of that impact.

Like many BIA policy initiatives, the transition at Haskell was far from seamless, and was in large part born out of the frustrations of a preceding strategy. Indeed, the Bureau’s plans for Haskell in the early 1960s showed quite a different approach. In those years, the BIA attempted to shape Haskell Institute not as a junior college with a broad

⁹² Ibid., 41.

academic mission, but as a center of primarily vocational training for high school graduates. From 1960 to 1965, as Jack Forbes marshaled his argument for an intertribal university to train “experts on Indian history... anthropology, sociology, psychology, religion, and language,” the BIA instead reorganized Haskell with an increasingly sharp focus on trade programs that included auto mechanics, plumbing, painting, and baking.⁹³

While this reorganization phased out high school courses and allowed Haskell to operate as a post-secondary institution by 1965, the bare vocational focus was a stark contrast to the rhetoric of Forbes and other Native intellectual activists, and was palpable in Haskell’s published materials. For instance, surveys on the progress of alumni focused almost exclusively on the occupations of former students, while even the school’s mission statement and promotional bulletins in the mid-1960s praised “the assimilative value of the Haskell program” and the benefits of “off-reservation employment.”⁹⁴ These materials—especially the updates on alumni career paths—were meant to show current and prospective students a vivid and personal image of the value of a Haskell education, and to provide encouraging displays of pride from graduates. However, they were just as revealing in what they lacked. In page after page of alumni summaries, there never materialized an argument for Haskell as a supporter of broadly adaptable and particularly

⁹³ Forbes quotes are from Jack D. Forbes, “Suggestions for Improving Our Indian Program,” 1960, Box 2 – Jack Forbes: Correspondence, Forbes Collection, UC Davis. For Haskell vocational focus see “The Haskell Story,” 1967, Box 4, Folder 31, Wallace Galluzzi Collection, Kansas Collection, RH MS 807, Kenneth Spencer Research Library, University of Kansas [Hereafter cited as Galluzzi Collection, KU]; Mrs. Louise L. Baker, “Haskell Alumni News Letter,” 1970-1975, Box 4, Folder 26, Galluzzi Collection, KU; and “School History.”

⁹⁴ Quotes are from “Haskell Institute Bulletin of Information,” 1964, as quoted in James Goodner, Richard G. Woods, and Arthur M. Harkins, *Characteristics and Attitudes of 1968 Haskell Institute Students* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1970), 3-4. For Haskell alumni updates regarding the 1960s vocational training see Baker, “Haskell Alumni,” 1970-1975, Galluzzi Collection, KU.

Native intellectual leadership.⁹⁵ In comparison with the deep discourse produced by Native educational reformers, Haskell's early-1960s publications appeared out of step—not only with contemporary activists like Forbes, but with the efforts of the school's own Superintendent Henry Roe Cloud in the early 1930s.⁹⁶

The sharp focus on vocational training and the broad endorsement of Haskell's "assimilative value" did little to counter arguments from Native activists like Jack Forbes and the National Indian Youth Council (NIYC) that the BIA was stubbornly paternalistic and narrow-minded.⁹⁷ Still, the BIA was never as monolithic as its critics might have argued. After all, individuals such Henry and Elizabeth Roe Cloud and D'Arcy McNickle had shown that, at times, the power of the BIA could be pushed and re-directed by individuals in ways that aligned with the goals of Native activists.

In the late 1960s, BIA leadership under Commissioner Robert L. Bennett (Oneida) began to assist that push in the realm of education. Appointed by Lyndon Johnson in 1966, Bennett was just the second American Indian selected as Commissioner of Indian Affairs.⁹⁸ Though a long-time BIA employee, as Commissioner he immediately sought to reform and improve the Bureau's relationship with Native communities, seeing

⁹⁵ Baker, "Haskell Alumni," 1970-1975, Galluzzi Collection, KU.

⁹⁶ For Roe Cloud on leadership at Haskell see "Haskell Needed for Future Work: Commissioner Silences Rumors," *The Indian Leader* 38, no. 11-12 (November 23, 1934), 17-18. See also Annette M. Lingelbach, "Indian Leadership: Reading Past History," *The Indian Leader* 37, no. 11 (November 17, 1933), 9; and Annette M. Lingelbach, "Indian Leadership: Personal Contacts," *The Indian Leader* 37, no. 21 (January 26, 1934), 5.

⁹⁷ Forbes, "Suggestions for Improving," 1960, Forbes Collection, UC Davis; Mel Thom, "For a Greater Indian America," *Americans Before Columbus* [hereafter cited as *ABC*] 2, no. 1 (March 1964), 1-2.

⁹⁸ Jeffrey D. Schultz et al., eds., *Encyclopedia of Minorities in American Politics: Hispanic Americans and Native Americans* (Phoenix: Oryx, 2000), 592; Donald L. Fixico, *Bureau of Indian Affairs* (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood, 2012), 168.

the BIA's best role as that of a supporter for Native-led initiatives. He hoped to open up communication between Congress, the BIA, and individual reservations, and one of his particular areas of focus became Native representation in American higher education and law.⁹⁹ Though his brief tenure as Commissioner ended with the incoming Nixon administration in 1969, Bennett remained dedicated to assisting Native intellectual activist efforts. He acted as founding director of the University of New Mexico Native American Law Center, assisted the Donner Foundation as a consultant, and encouraged the development of Haskell Institute as a junior college.

Though Bennett's departure necessarily impacted the tone of the Bureau's leadership, the push toward a college model at Haskell continued—largely due to the efforts of a man named Wallace Galluzzi. At first glance, Galluzzi seemed an unlikely force for shifting the BIA's mission at Haskell Institute to more closely resemble the goals of the tribal college movement. He was a non-Native man born and raised in an Italian-American family in western Pennsylvania.¹⁰⁰ When he joined Haskell's administration in the summer of 1963, he had spent his entire career—nearly fifteen years—in the Bureau.¹⁰¹ His time in the BIA up to his arrival in Lawrence had largely overlapped with one of frustration for Native activists who saw the Bureau as aligning too readily with goals of Indian Termination and rapid assimilation.¹⁰² Finally, his first

⁹⁹ Schultz et al., 592; "Chronological History."

¹⁰⁰ "Resume of Wallace E. Galluzzi," ND, Box 4, Folder 20, Galluzzi Collection, KU.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² For example see Jack D. Forbes to Secretary of the Interior, June 28, 1957, Box 2 – Jack Forbes: Correspondence, Forbes Collection, UC Davis; see also Dorothy R. Parker, *Singing an Indian Song: A Biography of D'Arcy McNickle* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), 132-136, 176.

years at Haskell came in the midst of the school's overall push toward strengthening specific trade programs at the expense of non-vocational courses.

A closer look at his work, however, reveals that Galluzzi dedicated his career to expanding Native educational opportunities.¹⁰³ After earning his Education degree from Slippery Rock Teachers College in Pennsylvania, his first Bureau experiences came as a counselor and educator at the Standing Rock and Turtle Mountain reservations, and he eventually became responsible for overseeing higher education programs throughout the Dakotas.¹⁰⁴ Though he departed for Lawrence before the initiation of government funding that aided the early TCUs at Turtle Mountain, Pine Ridge, Rosebud, and Standing Rock, he took pride in expanding educational programs for students at those reservations, and was undoubtedly aware of the community-driven initiatives leading into the tribal college era.¹⁰⁵ And while his first years at Haskell came at a time of prioritizing vocational paths rather than a comprehensive academic mission, he showed that he was unwilling to continue pursuing that strategy if it proved ineffectual.

Galluzzi became Principal of Haskell Institute in the summer of 1963, and during the first several years of his tenure the school completed its formal reorganization as a center of postsecondary vocational training. During that time, however, he monitored

¹⁰³ "Resume," Galluzzi Collection, KU.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

closely the shifting nature of Haskell's mission, and the ways in which that shift impacted its student body.¹⁰⁶

As Principal, Galluzzi occupied the administrative position most intimately connected to the process of accepting and evaluating new students each school year. By the spring of 1968, he had seen enough of a shift among the student body to express serious concerns with the potentially negative impacts of Haskell's transition. "During the past five years," he wrote, "we have seen the caliber of student in regard to academic ability decrease rapidly each year."¹⁰⁷ He lamented the large number of American Indian college dropouts entering Haskell as a secondary option, and noted that Haskell did not appear to significantly ameliorate the dropout problem in its own right. Galluzzi's immediate plan called for restructuring the application process with more tangible prerequisites for prospective students, combined with greater collaboration between Haskell administration, BIA officials in Washington, and contacts at the reservation level.¹⁰⁸ Within months, these efforts would expand, as Galluzzi was promoted to Superintendent of Haskell. From that point, he took on an instrumental role in reshaping the Institute to not only address the issues he had tracked as Principal, but to align with the more ambitious academic goals of the tribal college movement.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ Wallace E. Galluzzi to Superintendent, Haskell Institute, April 15, 1968, Box 1, Folder 13, Galluzzi Collection, KU.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ "Resume," Galluzzi Collection, KU; "Haskell Bids Farewell," *The Indian Leader* (Commencement Issue, 1969), 6.

As Superintendent, Galluzzi immediately initiated an institutional self-study in the spring of 1969, which led to an evaluation later that year by outside educators in order to assess Haskell's strengths as well as areas for improvement and expansion.¹¹⁰ The ensuing plan for transforming Haskell into a junior college developed rapidly, and involved efforts to maintain vocational strength while significantly broadening the school's scope in terms of academic and community leadership. In Galluzzi's own words, he wanted to "elevate" Haskell's existing trade programs to turn out "professionals" rather than "journeymen," while also institutionalizing a more "comprehensive junior college" academic offering.¹¹¹ Thus, while Haskell's administration expanded its auto mechanics and medical occupations programs, it also laid out the framework for Associates of Arts and Associates of Applied Sciences degrees, with newly added divisions including humanities, social sciences, music, and art, as well as a distinct division for Native American Studies.¹¹² With the expanded academic mission, the school became Haskell American Indian Junior College in the fall of 1970, and Galluzzi's position eventually shifted from Superintendent to President.¹¹³

Galluzzi's effort to shape Haskell into a more ambitious academic institution built on his years-long work to expand Native opportunities in higher education, but it also

¹¹⁰ "Evaluation Team," 1969, Folder A, John L. Glinka Collection, Kansas Collection, RH MS P202, Kenneth Spencer Research Library, University of Kansas [Hereafter cited as Glinka Collection, KU]; see also "Administrators, Staff Lead," *The Indian Leader* (Commencement Issue, 1970), 10.

¹¹¹ "Resume," Galluzzi Collection, KU; "Administrators, Staff Lead," 10.

¹¹² "Administrators, Staff Lead," 10; Lew Ferguson, "Indian School's New Name Signals Change," *Aberdeen American-News*, September 24, 1970; "Spring Semester 1972," 1971, Box 1, Folder 12, Galluzzi Collection, KU.

¹¹³ Ferguson; "Resume," Galluzzi Collection, KU. The school would soon after be known by the shorter "Haskell Indian Junior College."

overlapped with a symbolic shift in the federal government's stance on American Indian policy. In 1968, President Lyndon Johnson delivered a special message to Congress called "The Forgotten American," in which he criticized the era of American Indian Termination. Instead, Johnson endorsed a policy of "maximum choice for the American Indian," in the form of programs that supported a philosophy of self-determination.¹¹⁴ Though much of Republican Richard Nixon's political agenda differed from that of his Democratic predecessor, he took a similar stance on the topic self-determination. In the summer of 1970, just before Haskell would officially begin its new life as a junior college, President Nixon echoed Johnson's "Forgotten American" speech and put his own voice behind the movement toward self-determination.¹¹⁵ While some of the Johnson administration's programs in the Office of Economic Opportunity had given assistance to Native-driven projects as early as the mid-1960s, these two messages were powerful because they delivered explicit repudiations of the American Indian Termination policy, and came directly from the presidents themselves.¹¹⁶ Many members of Congress put their support behind this rhetorical push for a new era in American Indian policy, and that support only buttressed Haskell's new initiative.¹¹⁷

As at the other early tribal colleges and universities, the accreditation process at Haskell forced the administration to demonstrate a detailed understanding of how it could

¹¹⁴ Johnson, "Special Message: The Forgotten American."

¹¹⁵ Richard Nixon, "Special Message to the Congress."

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Jane Lee, "Self-Leadership, Education Cited as Vital to Indians," *Lawrence Journal-World*, October 25, 1971.

successfully enact its new academic programs. The process was an opportunity for the school's leaders to clearly articulate their ambitious vision in a way that mirrored the process at other TCUs. By 1971, that vision was taking form in Haskell's stated goals and objectives, which discarded the previous emphasis on the school's "assimilative value" and instead preached "knowledge and skills concerning [Native] culture" and American Indian "communities and families."¹¹⁸

Galluzzi's emphasis in forming the broad new mission at Haskell only became clearer over time. As part of his overseeing the accreditation effort, Galluzzi in 1973 wrote a piece on Haskell's future that, while only two pages in length, read like a manifesto for increased Native access and control in higher education, with Haskell as a centerpiece.¹¹⁹ In the opening sentence, he clearly expressed his desire that Haskell should serve not the goals of assimilation as conceived by American government officials but the goals of Native people—"the reservation Indian; the urban Indian... the identity-seeking Indian; the contemporary Indian; the traditional Indian... the non-English speaking Indian; the English speaking Indian."¹²⁰

In the concise but powerful paragraphs that followed, Galluzzi outlined as tangibly as possible his plans to push Haskell to "identify more closely with Indian communities" through more than simple rhetoric.¹²¹ He recognized the ever-changing

¹¹⁸ Office of Education, Bureau of Indian Affairs, *Higher Education Opportunities for American Indians* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, 1971), 10.

¹¹⁹ Wallace E. Galluzzi, "Projection for the Future Development of Haskell Indian Junior College," 1973, in *Haskell Indian Junior College, Lawrence Kansas: Self-Study Report*, 1973, Box 4, Folder 35, Galluzzi Collection, KU, i-ii.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, i.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

needs of not only Native students but Native communities and tribal governments in the modern world. As Roe Cloud had done at Haskell four decades prior, Galluzzi pledged to address those needs through a comprehensive program aimed at broad intellectual leadership. In that vein, he proposed that Haskell initiate educational extension programs to tribal governments and their enterprises.¹²² As a concrete example of this attempt at outreach, Haskell began offering courses for college credit at nearly two dozen reservations.¹²³ In vocational pursuits, Galluzzi repeated his assertion that the school should work to move beyond “journeyman” trades and strive for “management and executive” levels of training.¹²⁴ On the academic program, he noted the importance of traditional courses in education, social work, and law, but argued that “Haskell also has the responsibility for becoming... an authority in Indian culture. Its expertise should [also] encompass the development of Indian leadership [and] tribal structures in the area of government, justice, and management.”¹²⁵

By framing the projections for Haskell’s future as a “responsibility,” Galluzzi provided an important acknowledgment of the federal government’s position as one of *obligation*. In other words, Haskell was obligated to pursue the many and varied educational needs of Native students in modern America, and in Galluzzi’s mind this was only possible through true collaboration with American Indian people themselves. The acceptance of this position was a key component in working toward a philosophy of self-

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ “Outreach,” *The Indian Leader* (Yearbook Issue, Volume 78, 1976), 180.

¹²⁴ Galluzzi, “Projection for the Future,” 1973, Galluzzi Collection, KU, i.

¹²⁵ Ibid., ii.

determination, and Galluzzi made his position even clearer in his suggestion that Haskell's future should include "consideration [for] changing the control of the college from the Bureau of Indian Affairs to an Indian government body such as the Haskell Board of Regents."¹²⁶

In the institutional study that followed this brief statement, Galluzzi's voice remained a strong presence. In language that called to mind Henry Roe Cloud, D'Arcy McNickle, and the founders of the reservation-based TCUs, Haskell's mission was characterized as the pursuit of a "comprehensive learning process" that could "adapt to meet the needs of the Indian community."¹²⁷ As he oversaw the transition at Haskell, Galluzzi thus pushed the school sharply away from an assimilative mission. Instead, he positioned the new Haskell Indian Junior College to carry out a broad mission of academics and service that aligned with the tribal college movement as well as an even deeper vein of Native intellectual activism in higher education.

The ambitious goals laid out by Galluzzi and his staff in the early 1970s quickly found a general sense of support among the Haskell faculty and students.¹²⁸ In practice, however, the transition was difficult for many who disagreed on exactly how it should take place. Among faculty and staff, the transition required a collaboration between those who had spent years pursuing the old vocational model and those who had recently joined and were by definition dedicated to the new junior college mission.¹²⁹

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ *Haskell Indian Junior College, Lawrence Kansas: Self-Study Report*, 1973, Galluzzi Collection, KU, 4.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 6-7.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 7.

Even among students, stark differences of philosophy regarding American Indian education and activism became apparent. In the early 1970s, surveys of Haskell graduates showed that many were deeply concerned with the transition.¹³⁰ Multiple recent graduates worried that students in the new program were gaining an undue sense of power and entitlement, while one alumnus expressed “displeasure with the ‘red power’ infiltrating Haskell.”¹³¹ These responses indicated that even in an institution like Haskell—with all the bureaucratic support upholding it—the process of changing the landscape of American Indian higher education rarely found universal acceptance.

More important than the school-specific issues they addressed, however, these responses showed that Haskell was in many ways dealing with issues relevant at any tribal college. Indeed, if “the red power” were truly gaining a foothold among Haskellites, it represented yet another example of how Haskell’s transition toward a junior college model helped bring it into the same discourse on Native activism that impacted the other TCUs as well. And though this vision for an intertribal educational and cultural center was largely shaped by a non-Native official at a BIA institution, the fundamental objectives in fact aligned quite closely with another, more explicitly activist intertribal effort—that of Jack Forbes at D-Q University.¹³² Perhaps Haskell’s students shared more in common with the students at DQU than would have been apparent at first glance.

¹³⁰ Baker, “Haskell Alumni,” 1970-1975, Galluzzi Collection, KU, (no. 5, p. 10).

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² Forbes, “American Tribal Higher Education,” 1965, Forbes Collection, UC Davis; Forbes, “American Tribal Higher Education,” 1968, Forbes Collection, UC Davis; Forbes, “Brief Proposal for D-Q,” 1970, Forbes Collection, UC Davis.

As Roe Cloud had envisioned in his short but frustrating tenure in the 1930s, Haskell in the 1970s began pursuing an educational model that represented more than a government-run vocational training center for American Indians. Though still a Bureau-controlled entity, Haskell was laying the groundwork for a broader educational mission that would allow students the freedom to pursue a wide variety of intellectual and professional goals while expressing in myriad ways what it meant to be a Native student in modern America.

For their part, Haskell's students seemed to embrace this vision and make it their own. Throughout the 1970s, Haskell remained as diverse as ever, consistently pulling in students from more than 80 tribes and more than 30 states.¹³³ Student publications like the annual yearbook placed a firm emphasis on Native identity in its many sources and forms—"always adaptive, always resourceful... able to meet the challenges of a new time."¹³⁴ "The Haskell graduate," one article asserted, "is well-prepared to assume, intellectually and emotionally, a responsible and rewarding role in a traditional or modern society."¹³⁵ More than simply choosing one path or another, however, the writer portrayed contemporary Native students as able to learn and live "in one world [layered by] many cultures."¹³⁶

¹³³ Office of Education, 9; Esther Harjo, "Tribes Compiled Categorically," *The Indian Leader* (Yearbook Issue, Volume 78, 1976), 20-21.

¹³⁴ "Story of Haskell," 162.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 164.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 162.

Outside observers agreed that this assessment of Haskell's role as an important contributor to the modern landscape of Native education was more than flowery rhetoric. During the final stages of the accreditation process in the late 1970s, evaluators from the North Central Association of Secondary Schools and Colleges (NCA) praised Haskell faculty and staff for their preparation and ability to promote positive academic development among students.¹³⁷ The NCA also singled out the Native American Studies program as a vital piece of the overall institutional mission, and noted that it had "the potential to help the college increase its national reputation for uniqueness and excellence."¹³⁸

As the process of accreditation drew to a close in 1978 and 1979, students demonstrated their commitment to Native intellectual development at Haskell much as they did in other TCUs. For example, just as Sinte Gleska College in South Dakota had celebrated its graduates with the Lakota *wacipi* in early 1978, students in Lawrence closed the spring semester of that same year by taking part in the annual Haskell Pow Wow.¹³⁹ Haskell paired celebrations with a conference titled "The Right to be Indian," a two-day meeting that balanced cultural demonstrations with a day-long discussion on the policies impacting American Indian self-determination.¹⁴⁰ The meeting brought in experts in American Indian law and education, including Sam Deloria (Standing Rock Sioux),

¹³⁷ Cyndy Bell, "North Central Lists Strengths, Weaknesses," *The Indian Leader* 82, no. 10 (February 23, 1979).

¹³⁸ Bell.

¹³⁹ "Miss Indian America Opens Pow Wow," *The Indian Leader* 81, no. 15 (May 19, 1978).

¹⁴⁰ Rednest.

director of the University of New Mexico Native American Law Center; and Ruth Roessel, one of the founders of the Rough Rock Demonstration School and of Navajo Studies at Navajo Community College.¹⁴¹ These types of intertribal events—addressing vital issues of education and politics that faced Native people on a national scale—represented much of what Native leaders from Roe Cloud to Forbes had pursued for decades. The conference also provided another concrete example of how Haskell participated as a legitimate site in the development of Native intellectual activism and the expanding tribal college movement.

The Multiple Realities of the Tribal College Movement

A new reality began setting in at Haskell in the 1970s. The school's students had always taken pride in their training, but now they also pursued broader academic missions in higher education. The new scope helped students envision themselves as Native leaders exhibiting Native identities in a collective as well as an individual sense, which made the school a key contributor to the tribal college movement and in turn to a long line of Native intellectual activism. In many ways, it was a transformation like the one Henry Roe Cloud had sought to bring about at Haskell four decades earlier. Even contemporary Native antagonists of the BIA like Jack Forbes would almost certainly have admitted that Haskell's students in the 1970s were gaining real opportunities “to think, to pioneer, to plan, to propose, to explore, [and] to create new visions” as “members of the Native intelligentsia.”¹⁴²

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Forbes, “Native American Intelligentsia,” 84.

Despite this reality, the framework laid out by an unyielding proponent of de-colonization like Forbes—a framework that labeled the Bureau an instrument of colonialism—was also grounded in its own reality. The problem for Forbes did not concern the experience of a single student or even an entire cohort at Haskell, but rather the basic structure behind the school. It lay in the fact that, as had so often happened before, a change in emphasis within the BIA or the federal government at higher levels could reshape or even shut down the entire project. After all, the transition at Haskell that brought the school into the tribal college movement had taken place just a few years after an entirely different initiative that focused on assimilative vocational training.

Forbes was not the only voice warning of the possible damages of this fundamental dependence on the Bureau structure. At the “Right to be Indian” conference on Haskell’s campus in 1978, for example, Sam Deloria spoke of a perception among Native people that federal programs and funding seemed to run dry as soon as Native communities were no longer perceived as “poor, sick, and dumb.”¹⁴³ Deloria thus gave voice to the feeling that while the government ostensibly acknowledged its responsibility to American Indians, in reality it failed to reward innovation among Native people or to sustain true collaboration with the most successful Native initiatives. Haskell had benefited from the active leadership of a capable and committed individual in Wallace Galluzzi, but there was no guarantee that his vision would prevail when his time had ended. Even Galluzzi himself had sought to address this issue, suggesting as early as 1973 that Haskell be placed beyond the direct control of the Bureau, and in particular

¹⁴³ Rednest.

seek a deeper and more diverse range of funding possibilities.¹⁴⁴ Two years later, Haskell's funding continued to come entirely from the BIA, as efforts to garner additional grants under the Higher Education Act of 1965 and the Vocational Education Act of 1963 were denied.¹⁴⁵ The school's status as a federal institution guaranteed it the BIA funding, but also prohibited it from obtaining monies from a host of alternative sources.¹⁴⁶ In the 1979 accreditation evaluation by the NCA, the lack of deep and secure financial support remained a concern that was identified not only by Haskell administrators and supporters but by the outside evaluators as well.¹⁴⁷ Unfortunately, the basic reality of this funding structure has remained essentially unchanged to the present day.¹⁴⁸

This was the frustrating reality that Forbes saw when he viewed the Bureau of Indian Affairs as an antagonist in his pursuit of de-colonization and self-determination. Though he could not have predicted in the late 1970s what the next several decades would hold for DQU and Haskell, his skepticism regarding Bureau control in efforts at Native self-determination was perceptive.

¹⁴⁴ Galluzzi, "Projection for the Future," 1973, Galluzzi Collection, KU.

¹⁴⁵ U.S. Government Accountability Office, Letter to The Honorable James B. Pearson, United States Senate, April 11, 1975, <http://www.gao.gov/1/fl0001005.php> (accessed December 12, 2016). For the legislation, see "Vocational Education Act of 1963," Public Law 88-210, *U.S. Statutes at Large* 77 (1963), 403-419; and "Higher Education Act of 1965," Public Law 89-329, *U.S. Statutes at Large* 79 (1965), 1219-1270.

¹⁴⁶ U.S. Government Accountability Office.

¹⁴⁷ Bell.

¹⁴⁸ Sara Shepherd, "Haskell Formally Resolves to Gain More Autonomy from Federal Government, Create Endowment Association," *Lawrence Journal-World*, October 8, 2015; Associated Press, "Haskell Indian Nations University Funding Falls Flat," in *Native Times*, October 11, 2015, <http://www.nativetimes.com/index.php/life/education/12229-haskell-indian-nations-university-funding-falls-flat> (accessed December 12, 2016).

Still, it is important to acknowledge the optimism of the moment, and the intertwined goals that made that optimism possible. After all, many Haskellites saw themselves—in their coursework as well as in events like the “Right to be Indian” conference—as an important part of the development of leadership impacting not just their particular school but all of Indian country. And for all their differences in background and affiliation, Jack Forbes and Wallace Galluzzi shared much in common in how they perceived the role of comprehensive higher education for Native people. Both acknowledged the benefit of bringing together individuals who expressed myriad forms of Native identity, and both saw a need to link Native intellectual leadership on a national scale to local reservation leadership. At institutions that at times appeared drastically different, both directed programs that accomplished these similar goals. Because of that, these individuals and the institutions they influenced represented important complements to the reservation-based tribal college movement, and key contributors to a decades-long thread of Native intellectual activism.

CONCLUSION

A Century of American Indian Intellectual Activism from Roe Cloud to Today

Historian Daniel Cobb has described Native activist efforts in postwar America as a layered composition, “a series of overlapping parts that were at once distinct and interrelated.”¹ Cobb’s description also fits well the longer history outlined in these pages—the effort for greater Native access to and control of higher education and, in turn, for intellectual leadership and empowerment in the systems of politics and economics impacting Native people. Like the many twisting wires that form a steel cable, Native leaders and their non-Native advocates from Henry Roe Cloud onward each added their own particular voices and tangible contributions to this growing thread. While displaying the unique contributions of Roe Cloud and subsequent individuals, this history has also shown how each has in some way remained connected to a core activist effort.

Over the course of his two decades directing the American Indian Institute and Haskell Institute, Henry Roe Cloud constructed and sought to embody a complete vision of Native intellectual activism. He worked from a basic understanding that Native leadership must be at once culturally rooted and adaptable to modern challenges. In this way, he moved beyond the simplistic efforts at assimilation that dominated American Indian policy throughout much of his lifetime.² His educational and administrative efforts instead explicitly placed value on Native languages, cultural practices, and identities.³ For

¹ Daniel Cobb, *Native Activism in Cold War America: The Struggle for Sovereignty* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2008), 194.

² Henry Roe Cloud, “Foreword,” *The Indian Leader* 38, no. 1 (September 7, 1934), 1.

³ Henry Roe Cloud to Mrs. J. F. Schermerhorn, March 7, 1923, Reel 2, Records of the American Indian Institute, 1908-1954 (microfilm), Record Group 301.8, United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. Board of

his own part, Roe Cloud maintained his Native language and connections to his reservation community while achieving the highest levels of training in the mainstream American education system. He sought to establish a similar path for his students, expanding Native access to higher education. At the same time, he demonstrated how Native control could transform that educational effort to more directly address the particular challenges facing American Indian people.

In Roe Cloud's absences from the American Indian Institute, his wife Elizabeth had often stepped in and acted as the head administrator for extended periods.⁴ After Henry's death in 1950, her capability as a Native intellectual leader revealed itself even more clearly. She spoke against federal American Indian Termination policy and straightforward assimilation, attempting instead to redirect the energies of interested white Americans toward the persistence of Native identities through programs that placed funds and creative control in the hands of Native community leaders.⁵ In particular, she continued to push for a greater public dedication to increasing Native access to higher

National Missions Dept. of Health, Education and Welfare, [hereafter cited as Records of the AII]; Mrs. S. Thornton Hollinshead, "The American Indian, Life, Morals, Characteristics, Art and Traditions, Why We Should Conserve and Preserve Them," *The Indian Outlook* 1, no. 4 (February 10, 1924), 6; "Indians Played Alto Flutes Long Before Inventions by Whites," *The Indian Outlook* 2, no. 1 (September-October, 1924), 6; "Indians Give Corn to the Western Hemisphere," *The Indian Outlook* 2, no. 5 (January 1925), 4; Rev. Richard H. Harper, "Some Indian Leaders, past and Present," *The Indian Outlook* 3, no. 2 (October-November, 1925), 1, 3.

⁴ Henry Roe Cloud to Mary W. Roe, March 25, 1927, Reel 1, Records of the AII.

⁵ Elizabeth Roe Cloud, "New Frontiers for the American Indian," 1952, Box 68 – Roe Cloud, Elizabeth, National Congress of American Indians records, National Museum of the American Indian Archive Center, Smithsonian Institution [hereafter cited as NCAI records, NMAI]; D'Arcy McNickle and Elizabeth Roe Cloud, "American Indian Development – A Project Sponsored by the National Congress of American Indians: First Annual Report," 1952, Reel 54, John Collier Papers, 1922-1968 (microfilm), Ross-Blakely Law Library, Arizona State University.

education and professional training.⁶ In these ways, Elizabeth Roe Cloud carried forward much of the educational vision that she and Henry had built in the early twentieth century. She also embodied that vision's emphasis on adaptability, forming her rhetoric to face the new challenges of the postwar era, and even making an early argument for American Indian self-determination despite the apparent pressures of Termination.⁷

Elizabeth Roe Cloud's work also overlapped directly with that of D'Arcy McNickle, through the organization and implementation of American Indian Development (AID) in the early 1950s. McNickle had already become an influential figure in the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), and AID's mission to develop community-led programs among Native people was in some ways a result of his frustration with the Bureau during the Congressional push toward Termination.⁸ In this way, McNickle showed his willingness to work within the power structure of the BIA when possible, but to abandon it when it ceased to serve his mission as a Native activist. Like the Roe Clouds, McNickle had long understood Native leadership as most effective and impactful in modern America when it incorporated diverse sources of knowledge and power—tribal and Pan-Indian, Native and non-Native.⁹ By the late 1950s and early 1960s, McNickle

⁶ Elizabeth Roe Cloud, "Indian Affairs Newsletter," July 1952, Box 68 – Roe Cloud, Elizabeth, NCAI records, NMAI, 2.

⁷ Elizabeth Roe Cloud, "New Frontiers," NCAI records, NMAI, 1.

⁸ McNickle and Roe Cloud, "American Indian Development.," Dorothy R. Parker, *Singing an Indian Song: A Biography of D'Arcy McNickle* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), 127-129, 132-136.

⁹ D'Arcy McNickle, "Four Years of Indian Reorganization," *Indians at Work* 5, no. 11 (July 1, 1938); D'Arcy McNickle, "What Do the Old Men Say?" *Indians at Work* 9, no. 4 (December 1, 1941), 24-26; D'Arcy McNickle, "Toward Understanding," *Indians at Work* 9, no. 9 (May-June, 1942), 4-7; D'Arcy McNickle, "We Go On From Here," *Indians at Work* 11, no. 4 (November-December, 1943), 14-21; D'Arcy McNickle, *They Came Here First: The Epic of the American Indian* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1949).

began to infuse this fundamental understanding of Native leadership into an effort to reshape the relationship between Native students and the American system of higher education. Through the Workshop on American Indian Affairs in Boulder, McNickle joined others like Cherokee scholar Bob Thomas in challenging young Native students to utilize their college education in ways that directly impacted their reservation communities and Native people nationally.¹⁰

The Boulder Workshop in turn fueled the foundation of the National Indian Youth Council (NIYC), which in the early 1960s dedicated itself to expanding a discourse on the need for change in systems of schooling for American Indian students.¹¹ Throughout the 1960s, as this discourse grew, it involved researchers, teachers, students, and tribal leaders in ways that highlighted particular community issues as well as systemic problems in American Indian education. Over time, the conversation increasingly focused on the argument for Native control in schooling as a necessary measure in addressing some of the factors that prevented Native students from reaching and excelling in higher education.

One of the most pivotal voices in this 1960s discourse came from Jack Forbes. Forbes personified the hub of a growing discourse that became at once local and national. He corresponded directly with the directors of the Boulder Workshop, the founders of the

¹⁰ Rosalie H. Wax, "A Brief History and Analysis of the Workshops on American Indian Affairs Conducted for American Indian College Students, 1956-1960, Together With a Study of Current Attitudes and Activities of Those Students," October 1961, NCAI records, NMAI; "Education for Leadership: The Indian People See the Future in Their Children," 1961, MSS 703 BC, Box 1, Folder 12, Records of the National Indian Youth Council, Center for Southwest Research, University Libraries, University of New Mexico [hereafter cited as Records of the NIYC, CSWR].

¹¹ Gerald T. Wilkinson to John Carlson, April 5, 1971, MSS 703 BC, Box 3, folder 35, Records of the NIYC, CSWR. Wilkinson, as NIYC's Executive Director, related that in the early years NIYC was "interested primarily in educational problems."

NIYC, and the leaders in tribally-controlled education projects like the Rough Rock Demonstration School and Navajo Community College.¹² He also put immense effort into developing his own proposal for an intertribal university, and sought to link Native intellectual activism with community-led grassroots projects. Forbes did eventually achieve his goal of founding a unique center of Indigenous higher education, but his project also appeared in conjunction with a larger tribal college movement that impacted students both on and off reservations. Forbes, like the others, made his own distinct impact, but in ways that complemented and added layers to the decades-long work of a diverse body of Native activists.

This history did not take shape in a vacuum. Throughout this work, one of the central goals has been to display Native activists in their own words, and to reveal how vibrant their discourse was. In so doing, I have privileged a particular chorus of leading voices, but it is important to recognize that these individuals were also often supported and joined by countless others who worked in tribal councils, reservation schools, and off-reservation organizations.¹³ Furthermore, in addition to the web of discourse they created throughout Indian country, these Native voices were also intimately bound to the broader realm of changing forces in America. At each stage, the leaders examined here

¹² Sol Tax to Dr. Jack D. Forbes, January 3, 1965, Box 2 – Jack Forbes: Correspondence, Jack D. Forbes Collection, University of California – Davis, Special Collections [hereafter cited as Forbes Collection, UC Davis]; Melvin D. Thom to Dr. Jack Forbes, September 14, 1965, Box 2 – Jack Forbes: Correspondence, Forbes Collection, UC Davis; Jack D. Forbes to Robert Roessel, June 26, 1967, Box 4 – Jack Forbes: Correspondence, Forbes Collection, UC Davis.

¹³ For examples of reservation-based discourse see Peter Iverson, *For Our Navajo People: Diné Letters, Speeches, & Petitions* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2002). For urban context see Donald L. Fixico, *The Urban Indian Experience in America*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2000).

were forced to grapple with powerful trends in the dominant discourses shaping modern American cultural and political life.

Henry Roe Cloud presents a clear example. He emerged from a boarding school system that quite explicitly sought to erase forms of Native identity on an intimate level, only to preserve his Native language and pursue an effort to cultivate Native intellectual leadership on a national scale. His American Indian Institute arose as a center of this leadership, supporting demonstrations of Native identity in a time when ideas of “100 percent Americanism” gained strength in the public discourse. At Haskell Institute, he brought a similar vision but was constricted by policy changes in the face of the Great Depression.

Other Native leaders interacted with the trajectory of American history in similar ways. Elizabeth Roe Cloud and D’Arcy McNickle attempted to utilize the promise of the New Deal in John Collier’s BIA, but eventually faced a powerful Congressional push for Indian Termination that in many ways reflected a larger shift toward cultural assimilation in immediate postwar America. In the 1960s and 1970s, ideas of multiculturalism, self-actualization, and self-determination gained renewed strength, allowing McNickle, Jack Forbes, Ruth Roessel, and others to take advantage of opportunities for Native leadership, especially in higher education. In every phase, these leaders sought to bend and shape the esteemed elements of American cultural and political life to serve their cause of greater Native access to and control of higher education and leadership training.

Viewing the intimate connections between this Native history and the larger trajectory of American history helps us better understand the actions and reactions of Native people in particular eras. Doing so in a long-term framework can also provide a

more nuanced understanding of some under-studied aspects of Native activism. Specifically, this story helps reveal how Native intellectual activism not only survived the strongest pushes toward American Indian Termination, but how certain core themes of that activism were carried through with remarkable continuity. This story thus helps de-emphasize the idea of a “pendulum” of federal policy alternating between support for and attacks on American Indians’ tribal identities and trust status. Instead, this work focuses on the Native individuals and their advocates who maintained networks of personal and philosophical connections while continually adapting their activist efforts to the unique challenges of each era.

From the 1970s onward, there has been an explosion of tribal colleges and universities throughout the country. There are now 37 TCUs serving over 20,000 students in the United States—not to mention tens of thousands of additional reservation community members—and they have displayed a remarkable degree of continuity with the goals and philosophies of the early movement toward tribal control in education.¹⁴

One main branch of this continuity is revealed in the mission statements and curricular goals in publications by TCUs over the past several decades. At Bay Mills Community College in Michigan, for instance, the mission has been “to integrate traditional Native American values with... general education as a way of preparing students to assume responsible roles in their respective communities.”¹⁵ More evidence of

¹⁴ Higher Learning Commission, *Distinctive and Connected: Tribal Colleges and Universities and HLC Accreditation—Considerations for HLC Peer Reviewers* (Chicago: Higher Learning Commission, 2013). See also AIHEC.org.

¹⁵ Bay Mills Community College, as quoted in D. Michael Pavel, Ella Inglebret, and Susan Rae Banks, “Tribal Colleges and Universities in an Era of Dynamic Development,” *Peabody Journal of Education* 76, no. 1 (2001), 54.

this sentiment comes from Sisseton Wahpeton Community College in South Dakota, chartered in 1979 and accredited in 1990. Their “guiding philosophy” has included the goal that students “participate with competence in both the Indian and the non-Indian worlds, and to appreciate the merits of both.”¹⁶

Today, scholars of American Indian higher education continue to emphasize the importance of these themes. For example, Gregory Cajete (Santa Clara Pueblo), Stephen Sachs, and Phyllis Gagnier (Algonquin) have argued that the most pressing issue in American Indian education remains the need to create a “contemporized, community-based education process that is founded upon traditional tribal values, orientations, and principles but that simultaneously utilizes the most appropriate concepts and technologies of modern education.”¹⁷ These statements—from several distinct voices in distinct contexts—all align with the original guiding vision of the tribal college movement. That vision begins with the basic philosophy of self-determination in schooling, and seeks to aid Native communities by balancing the protection of Native culture and identity with educational training adaptable to the realities of modern America.

In addition to their continued dedication to these principles, tribal colleges and universities have also demonstrated a significant and tangible socioeconomic impact on their communities. While the presentation of hard data in this vein has been sporadic, it has also been encouraging. The limited research displays both qualitatively and

¹⁶ Sisseton Wahpeton Community College, as quoted in Pavel, Inglebret, & Banks, 57.

¹⁷ Gregory Cajete, Stephen Sachs, and Phyllis Gagnier, “The Spiral of Renewal: Appropriate Indian Education,” in *Re-Creating the Circle: The Renewal of American Indian Self-Determination*, edited by LaDonna Harris, Stephen Sachs, and Barbara Morris (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2011), 323.

quantitatively the benefits TCUs have made and continue to create for Native people. One of the most important qualitative results of TCUs is that they “have turned the balance of power” in favor of Native administrators, educators, and their communities.¹⁸ With greater control in tribal colleges and universities, Native leaders can “create educational curricula that simultaneously allow them to build their community infrastructures and to promote participation in the larger... society of the United States.”¹⁹ For example, Little Big Horn College in Montana recently collaborated with the Australian-American Energy Company to offer programs for students to work on earning certificates or associate degrees while simultaneously gaining skilled training geared toward energy industry jobs paying six figure salaries.²⁰ Many TCUs also partner with non-reservation colleges and universities, combining to develop shared programs that address economic interests such as tribal gaming or cultural interests like Indigenous studies and Native languages.²¹ These partnerships indicate possibilities for true collaboration with non-Native entities, rather than a dependence solely on the basic labor demands of outside economic forces. These efforts also align with the broad goals of self-determination as defined by Comanche writer and activist LaDonna Harris, who emphasizes “living well in [Native] communities while partnering with neighbors, the nation, and the world for mutual advancement.”²²

¹⁸ Pavel, Inglebret, & Banks, 60.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Jennifer Gonzales, “Tribal Colleges Offer Basic Education to Students ‘Not Prepared for College,’” *Chronicle of Higher Education* 58, no. 32 (2012), A25-A26.

²¹ Cajete, Sachs, & Gagnier.

²² Harris, Sachs, & Morris, vii.

While these recent glimpses signal some of the positive impacts that tribal colleges and universities have made for Native people, critics still point to the persistent struggles that many reservations experience with poverty and high unemployment. Even communities with TCUs do not quickly or easily escape these deeply-rooted problems.²³ This reality raises important questions regarding the role of TCUs and their ability to enact meaningful change.

One recent opinion piece, written by a politician from a state with several TCUs, illustrates how pervasive and negative the rhetoric surrounding these schools and their communities can be. In an editorial, Montana State Representative Tom Burnett contrasted TCUs with “actual universities,” and suggested that “spending on tribal colleges has proven to be a dubious investment.”²⁴ In contrast to the evidence from the bulk of sources examined here, Burnett argued that the schools “give little weight to helping students increase their earnings or contribute to economic development.”²⁵ This negative appraisal of the goals and impacts of TCUs may be a minority opinion, but it nevertheless represents one that Native leaders and their advocates are forced to grapple with, especially when delivered by someone with political influence.

²³ Deborah His Horse Is Thunder, Nate Anderson, and Darlene G. Miller, “Building the Foundation of Success: Case Studies of Breaking Through Tribal Colleges and Universities,” report for American Indian Higher Education Consortium, 2013, http://www.aihec.org/our-stories/docs/2013_BuildingFoundationForSuccess.pdf (accessed January 8, 2017).

²⁴ Tom Burnett, “The Tragedy of Tribal Colleges: Government-Subsidized Colleges for Native Americans Spend Lavishly but the Results Are Poor,” The John William Pope Center for Higher Education Policy Web site, June 9, 2013, <http://www.popecenter.org/commentaries/article.html?id=2858#.U84JZ-NdXJD> (accessed January 8, 2017).

²⁵ Ibid.

As Burnett and other outspoken critics rely on data that emphasizes the frustrating persistence of low retention in schools and high poverty on reservations, it remains as important as ever for these communities to demonstrate the positive impact that does come from Native control in higher education. The temptation in the face of such criticism and hardship may be to abandon one plan and reach for another. American history has taught us that the shapers of federal Indian policy have frequently attempted to do just that, while Native people have instead often displayed a firm perseverance and a greater trust in long-term frameworks and solutions. A study at the turn of this century indicates the potential merits of that approach, suggesting “a positive relationship between the number of years each tribal college [has] been in existence and most of the income measures” used to study reservation economies.²⁶

While TCUs remain committed to both long-standing intellectual principles and a search for adaptable strategies to reach students and their communities in tangible ways, the level of available funding has never matched these ambitions. As noted by Ruth Roessel in the first years of the TCU movement, tribally-controlled schools on reservations do not receive state or local funds. This aspect has not changed, leaving TCUs primarily dependent on federal funding.²⁷ The federal funding authorized under the Tribally Controlled Community College Assistance Act (TCCCA Act) currently provides

²⁶ American Indian Higher Education Consortium and the Institute for Higher Education Policy, *Tribal College Contributions to Local Economic Development* (Alexandria, VA: American Higher Education Consortium, 2000), 17. Specific income measures include improved median income and reduced levels of poverty for reservations with tribal colleges.

²⁷ Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development, *The State of Native Nations: Conditions under U.S. Policies of Self-Determination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 212.

for funding at a level of approximately \$8,000 per American Indian student.²⁸ However, “Congress actually funds TCUs far below the authorized amount.”²⁹ Recently, “TCU operating funds amounted to \$5,235 per full-time Indian student, with no funding for the non-Indian students that compose about 20 percent of all TCU students.”³⁰ As a comparison, “the only other minority-serving institution in the nation that receives its basic institutional operating funds from the federal government is Howard University,” an Historically Black College/ University (HBCU) in Washington, D.C.³¹ Congress “funds Howard University at... approximately \$19,000 per student.”³² Combined, these factors indicate that tribal colleges and universities lag behind the funding standards at comparable types of educational institutions.

A counter-argument to this comparison might hold that Howard University deserves greater funding because it has become a nationally-recognized educational center, serving a greater number of students on a higher academic level than the community college model that most TCUs embody. Indeed, most tribal colleges still largely focus on two-year degrees, vocational programs, and tribally-specific issues. In that sense, they may not immediately appear to contribute to the type of national Native leadership that Henry Roe Cloud and others pursued so strongly. But TCUs undoubtedly expand Native access to and control of higher education, and thus represent at the very

²⁸ “Tribally Controlled Community College Assistance Act of 1978,” Public Law 95-471, *U.S. Statutes at Large* 92 (1978), 1325-1331 [hereafter cited as “TCCCA Act of 1978”]; Higher Learning Commission, 9.

²⁹ Higher Learning Commission, 9.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *His Horse Is Thunder*, Anderson, & Miller, 2.

³² *Ibid.*

least a formalized, concrete step in a sequence toward greater intellectual leadership. Additionally, much of the knowledge they protect and disseminate is crucial to Native identity and cultural practice. Finally, an off-reservation site like Haskell Indian Nations University might have been—and might still be—the perfect setting for an intertribal university operating on an elite academic level, much as Roe Cloud or Jack Forbes had envisioned.

Unfortunately, Haskell too has been hamstrung by its funding structure.³³ Unlike Howard University, Haskell Indian Nations University does not have an endowment, and receives all of its funding from one federal source—the Bureau of Indian Education.³⁴ While Howard is similarly federally-chartered and funded, it has an endowment of over \$600 million, and utilizes grants and donations as a cornerstone of its budget—sometimes over 50 percent of its overall revenue.³⁵ Howard has taken on its own significant financial problems in recent years, but the combined flexibility and long-term strength of its financial structure has provided some cautious hope for Haskell administrators and alumni who see it as a potential model for their own school.³⁶ Haskellites are thus striving to bring about an even greater level of Native control in higher education, carrying

³³ Sara Shepherd, “Haskell Formally Resolves to Gain More Autonomy from Federal Government, Create Endowment Association,” *Lawrence Journal-World*, October 8, 2015; “Haskell Indian Nations University Funding Falls Flat,” Native Times Web site, October 11, 2015, <http://www.nativetimes.com/index.php/life/education/12229-haskell-indian-nations-university-funding-falls-flat> (accessed December 12, 2016).

³⁴ Shepherd.

³⁵ Tanya H. Lee, “Haskell: A Great School, and Needs More Money to Stay That Way,” Indian Country Media Network Web site, December 3, 2015, <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2015/12/03/haskell-great-school-and-needs-more-money-stay-way-162538> (accessed January 9, 2017); Marcia Davis, “Is This Howard University’s Tipping Point?” *The Washington Post Magazine*, April 28, 2016.

³⁶ Davis; Shepherd.

forward a long tradition of intellectual activism even as they approach a new era. Unless these types of changes are pursued, the contemporary funding relationship will continue to make daily maintenance of TCUs difficult, while also hampering research on promising programs that might improve retention and overall educational fulfillment.³⁷

I hope this history can contribute not only to the historical scholarship on Native intellectualism and activism, but to these contemporary discussions of American Indian policy issues. A key aspect of American Indian history and American Indian studies today is the effort to not only advance scholarship about Native people and their communities but to serve those people and their communities. I hope my work will offer a useful tool in that effort—by revealing the deep history of continuity and innovation from the work of Native intellectual activists like Henry Roe Cloud to the still-relevant effort toward American Indian self-determination. As a recent report from the University of Pennsylvania Center for Minority Serving Institutions makes clear, the tribal college effort to build on those deep intellectual foundations while seeking future innovation will surely advance.³⁸ Educators and researchers at TCUs recognize their continuity with the past in terms of their missions even as they understand that many of the challenges in American Indian education persist as well.

³⁷ For example see Iris HeavyRunner and Richard DeCelles, “Family Education Model: Meeting the Student Retention Challenge,” *Journal of American Indian Education* 41, no. 2 (2002), 29-37.

³⁸ Center for Minority Serving Institutions, “Redefining Success: How Tribal Colleges and Universities Build Nations, Strengthen Sovereignty, and Persevere Through Challenges,” 2015, from University of Pennsylvania CMSI Web site, https://www2.gse.upenn.edu/cmsi/sites/gse.upenn.edu.cmsi/files/MSI_TBLCLLGreport_Final.pdf (accessed September 16, 2015).

These challenges—from calls for forced assimilation and Termination, to a stubborn lack of funding for Native-driven projects, to internal debates about the future direction of Native-driven education—have been significant, as have the frustrations they produce. Part of the value of the sources employed in this history has been the ability to capture Native intellectual activists in those moments when the challenges became toughest. It must have been difficult, for instance, for Henry Roe Cloud to pen thank you letters for five- and ten-dollar donations when by the 1920s his American Indian Institute required \$1500 per month to operate.³⁹ Similarly, Jack Forbes' weariness and fatigue in the late 1970s seemed to leap from the page as he admonished, "isn't it clear that we need to support an Indian-controlled university?"⁴⁰ These examples echo what Lucy Maddox has observed—that even the most eloquent Native leaders have struggled to bend modern American discourses and political forces to their needs, and have suffered "difficulties and frustrations that, in hindsight, can seem unavoidable and even predictable."⁴¹

The sources utilized in this history, though, have also captured Native intellectual activists in moments of unbridled optimism, and it is crucial to understand that that optimism was—and is—no less warranted than the frustration. I hope this history sheds light on that optimistic energy not simply for the sake of a feel-good story about the underdog. Rather, I hope it reveals how that energy in many distinct instances brought

³⁹ Henry Roe Cloud to E. E. Olcott, January 10, 1923, Reel 1, Records of the AII; Henry Roe Cloud to Mary S. E. Baker, April 17, 1923, Reel 2, Records of the AII.

⁴⁰ Jack D. Forbes, "The Development of a Native American Intelligentsia and the Creation of D-Q University," 1980, in Hartmut Lutz, ed. *D-Q University: Native American Self-Determination in Higher Education* (Davis, CA: Department of Applied Behavioral Sciences/ Native American Studies Tecumseh Center, 1980), 83.

⁴¹ Lucy Maddox, *Citizen Indians: Native American Intellectuals, Race, and Reform* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005), 166.

about real change for Native communities and individuals; how that energy can still serve many of its original goals even as it innovates; and how that energy, with greater investment and commitment from advocates, can still do much more to realize those goals in the future.

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