

INTRODUCTION

FROM THE MOMENT THEY SET FOOT UPON THESE SHORES, THE EUROPEAN invader-settlers of America confronted an “Indian problem.”¹ This consisted of the simple fact that Indians occupied lands the newcomers wanted for themselves. To be sure, this was not the case for the earliest Spanish invaders of the Southeast and Southwest in the mid-sixteenth century, whose intent was to find treasure and to convert and missionize the tribal peoples they encountered. But in the Northeast, the English, from the early seventeenth century, and then the Americans, as they made their way across the continent, came to understand that broadly speaking, America’s Indian problem permitted only two solutions: extermination or education. Extermination was costly and dangerous, and in time it came to be thought *wrong*.

It then began to appear wiser, as the title of Robert Trewnert’s introduction to a study of the Phoenix Indian School put the matter, for policymakers to proceed according to the assumption that “The Sword Will Give Way to the Spelling Book” (1988 3), thus offering—again to cite Trewnert—an “alternative to extinction” (1975). Educating Native peoples—teaching them to speak, read, and write English; to convert to one or another version of Christianity; and to accept an individualism destructive of communal tribalism, ethnocide rather than genocide, was a strategy that might more efficiently and with fewer pangs to the national conscience free up Native landholdings and transform the American Indian into an Indian-American, uneasily inhabiting if not quite melted into the broad pot of the American mainstream.

In a fine 1969 study, Brewton Berry remarked that so far as the choice between “coercion” and “persuasion” was concerned (23), “Formal education has been regarded as the most effective means of bringing about assimilation” (22). In these respects, Trewnert writes, when the Phoenix Indian School was founded in 1891, it was “for the specific purpose of preparing Native American children for assimilation ... to remove Indian youngsters from their traditional environment, obliterate their cultural heritage, and replace that ... with the values of white middle-class America.” Complicating the

matter, he adds, was the fact that “the definition of assimilation was repeatedly revised between 1890 and 1930” (1988 xi).² Further complicating it well in to the 1960s and beyond was the fact that “white middle-class America” was not generally willing to accommodate persons of color regardless of whether they shared its values or not.

In the *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs* for 1890, the “Rules for Indian Schools” stated clearly that the government, in “organizing this system of schools,” intended them to “be preparatory and temporary; that eventually they will become unnecessary, and a full and free entrance be obtained for Indians into the public school system of the country. It is to this end,” the “Rules” continued, that “all officers and employees of the Indian school service should work” (in Bremner 1971, 2: 1354). Although Native Americans could obtain a “full and free entrance” to all public schools in the United States—as African Americans could not—on those occasions when they availed themselves of that right, they were not always welcomed or well served. Indeed, as Wilbert Ahern has written, “The local public schools to which 53% of Indian children went in 1925, were even less responsive to Indian communities than the BIA schools” (1996 88). And some of the Indian Office’s Catholic schools, from about the 1880s through the 1960s, as we will see, provided their own particular forms of disservice to their Native students.

In her study of the St. Joseph’s Indian boarding school in Kashena, Wisconsin, Sarah Shillinger affirms that “Assimilation was an important, if not a more important goal than education to the supporters of the boarding-school movement” (2008 95). Her conclusion, however, is that the boarding schools’ “results were closer to an *integration* of both cultural systems [Indian and white] than ... to assimilation into Euro-American society” (115, my emphasis). This seems to me accurate, and I will quote other writers on the subject who state roughly similar conclusions in different ways. But the degree to which any single individual could successfully integrate “both cultural systems,” and what it meant to her to do so, varied a good deal. As we will see, some boarding school students had little trouble “living in two worlds,” as the metaphor is often given—a metaphor that is usually unexamined.³ Others found the two “cultural systems,” Native and settler, to be substantially in conflict, so that “bridging the gap”—another largely unquestioned metaphor—was painful and difficult. Further complicating the matter is the fact that one of the “cultural systems” was backed by the overwhelming power of the colonial state.

By the turn of the twentieth century, as David Adams has written, “Those responsible for the formulation of Indian policy were sure of one thing: the Indian could not continue to exist as an Indian.” Indian people, therefore, “had to choose . . . between civilization or extinction” (1995 28), and in order to become civilized, Indians needed to be educated. “By the early 1890s,” according to Ahern, “Thomas Jefferson Morgan, commissioner of Indian affairs, had designed the means to extinguish American Indian cultures by going after the children, pulling them from their homes, and indoctrinating them with ‘American civilization’” (1996 88). To cite Adams once more, “The boarding school, whether on or off the reservation, was the institutional manifestation of the government’s determination to completely restructure the Indians’ minds and personalities” (1995 97). As Superintendent Cora Dunn of the Rainy Mountain School said in 1899, “Our purpose is to change them forever” (in Ellis 1996b xiii). I have adapted her words for the title of this book.



It was in 1879 that the bright light and pre-eminent model of the boarding-school movement, the off-reservation Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Pennsylvania, was founded by Captain Richard Henry Pratt. First established in 1751 as a munitions depot prior to the American Revolution, Carlisle had later become a stop on the Underground Railroad for slaves fleeing the South, and then a Civil War battleground as part of the 1863 Gettysburg Campaign. Jacqueline Fear-Segal notes that in 1871 it “became the U.S. Army Cavalry School, where young recruits were trained to fight Indian tribes out west” (2004 129); then, when the Cavalry School was moved farther west, the Carlisle Barracks became available for Pratt’s purposes.⁴

Pratt was a complicated man and much has been written about him. The early, nearly hagiographic biography by Elaine Goodale Eastman called him “the Red Man’s Moses,” a term first applied to him, she observed, in a 1900 commencement address given by Indian Commissioner Merrill Gates (Eastman 1935 219). More recently, Ward Churchill’s revisionist account of Pratt presents him as founder of a genocidal policy (2004), a charge to which I will return. Pratt also wrote his own story.⁵ Dr. Martin Luther King is said to have remarked that the white South loves individual black people but hates the race, while it is the reverse in the North. Pratt would seem to



1 Superintendent Richard Pratt (center) with members of the Carlisle staff, a group of students, and—probably—a few staff children, about 1900. Courtesy of the Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Collection, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.

have had the South's view of Indians. He got along well with a great many individual Indians, at first some of the Kiowa, Cheyenne, and Apache prisoners of war at Fort Marion, in Saint Augustine, Florida, where he was in charge in the 1870s; and over the years he showed affection for many of his Indian students, a number of whom clearly reciprocated that affection. Yet as Jacqueline Fear-Segal (2007 18–19) and Jacqueline Emery (2017) have observed, Pratt had established Carlisle on a carceral model, whether consciously or not—he was neither highly educated nor an intellectual. In Emery's words, "The containment and seclusion of the fort [Fort Marion] provided what Pratt believed were ideal conditions for civilizing Native Americans," and "he would later recreate this model at the Carlisle Indian Industrial School" (2017 15).

But Pratt genuinely liked Indian people, while—so far as he knew them—he detested Indian cultures. His often-quoted motto was, "Kill the Indian and save the man!"⁶ and the regimen at Carlisle sought—sometimes

aggressively and sometimes only half-heartedly—to do just that. For all the violent determination of the slogan, in hindsight it was a vain and naive oxymoron, lacking all imagination, and was even programmatically unnecessary: all of Pratt's students learned English and engaged with American dress and religion while remaining proudly Indian. But, again, what it meant for each of them in his or her time to be Indian is a complicated matter. In some cases it might accurately be said, as Genevieve Bell has written, that Carlisle was “a site at which to promulgate a certain kind of new *Indian* identity” (1998 vi, my emphasis). But then, if that new Indian identity was that of an “American (Indian) *citizen*” (38, my emphasis), as Bell also wrote, in what exactly would a parenthetical “Indianness” consist? In many ways, as Timothy Braatz has written, “Carlisle was itself a contradiction: a place to acculturate Native children, but in a segregated setting that affirmed their Indianness” (2010 vii).

Although a great many Native people who attended Carlisle, worked at Carlisle, or otherwise engaged with Pratt had much good to say about him, his reputation today is roughly that of Custer. There are, however, a number of Pratt's Indian students on record with a far more positive assessment of the man. At Arlington National Cemetery where Pratt is buried, his private memorial reads:

VETERAN OF THE CIVIL WAR
FRIEND AND COUNSELOR OF THE INDIANS
FOUNDER AND SUPERINTENDENT OF
THE CARLISLE INDIAN SCHOOL (1879–1904)
ERECTED IN LIVING MEMORY BY HIS STUDENTS AND OTHER INDIANS

At Carlisle students took half a day of very basic instruction, mostly in literacy and simple arithmetic, along with half a day of manual instruction for the young men and some form of “domestic science” for the women.⁷ There were offerings in art and music, along with a range of sports and athletic activities. The Carlisle football team and its star Jim Thorpe were nationally celebrated, and Carlisle competed against—and sometimes beat—some of the best American college teams. That team was for the most part made up of college age men (or older), but Carlisle was in no way a college, offering no more than a ninth grade education. (Many of the boarding schools did not go past the sixth grade.) Students who wished to stay on and go further would enroll at nearby Dickinson College.

Pratt had been a soldier and he ran the school like a military academy; students marched, saluted, drilled, wore uniforms, and were punished for disciplinary infractions.⁸ Corporal punishment, typical of the late nineteenth century, was employed, and Carlisle also had a jail—one in which, as we will see, the eminent Lakota chief Spotted Tail (Sinte Gleska) was enraged to find a young family member. Genevieve Bell reports that Carlisle had “three different lock-ups in its history” (287), but that these were used only for serious infractions, and used only once with any given malefactor. A student who had been incarcerated, Bell notes, would be expelled for any further infraction of the rules (288). Carlisle’s program of regimentation and discipline served as a model for most if not all of the off-reservation boarding schools and played a major part in the effort to change Native people forever. It was not until the mid-1920s that reforms were introduced, and not until the 1930s that Commissioner of Indian Affairs John Collier “ended the military system for all Indian boarding schools” (Gram xiv), at least officially.

The young men also learned gardening, farming, and the proper handling of livestock. Carlisle’s industrial programs taught them carpentry, blacksmithing, harness-making, and tinsmithing.⁹ The “domestic science” young Indian women studied at Carlisle, as also at the other boarding schools, consisted in such things as how to set a table and how to use stoves, irons, and washing machines—most of which, at least in the early decades of the school, would be absent, rare, or largely disapproved of once they returned home.

Important to Pratt’s program at Carlisle was what he called the “placing-out,” or simply the “outing” system, something he had begun to develop at his prior posting at Hampton Institute under General Samuel Armstrong, its superintendent.¹⁰ Pratt’s outing program at Carlisle sent a number of young Indian men and women to live for a time with local white families, to whom they provided labor or domestic service in return for their board and some very modest pay. This was not compulsory; students had to request or agree to an outing assignment, although it is not clear that all of them understood they had a choice in the matter. Most of the families to whom Native students were “outed” were farm families living not far from the school. The theory was to expand these young people’s experience of white ways beyond the school grounds and to make them appreciate the jingle of a couple of quarters in their trouser or apron pockets. In practice, however, the outing system for the most part provided cheap labor for the host families with lessons primarily in subservience for the guest Indians. Although it soon

became clear that the outing system was “a way for white families to obtain cheap servants” (Reyhner and Elder 2004 139), and that it “did more than any other [boarding school practice] to reinforce the concept of the suitability of Indians for menial labor” (Child 1998 81–82), it was nonetheless practiced by those off-reservation boarding schools whose location made it feasible. It should also be said that many students found their situation congenial and asked to stay on, working and attending the local school, when they might have returned to Carlisle. Pratt usually granted permission.

Carlisle students—and students at the other boarding schools—were supposed to leave school and return home as substantially Americanized individuals who would become workers and farmers, wives and mothers, in approximately the same way as their working-class, non-Native contemporaries. There is no accurate tabulation of how many did this or of the degree to which they did this. The school did, however, make a consistent effort to check up on the condition of its returned students, regularly mailing them to ask what and how they were doing and receiving a good number of replies. There were many who did not reply, and it is impossible to say why they did not. Some of them had surely “returned to the blanket,” in the disparaging phrase of boarding-school proponents, referring to the fact that they had gone back to speaking their Native languages rather than English, abandoned the Christianity upon which the schools insisted, and did not live in the “civilized” manner that had been imposed upon them. In this regard, it is interesting to note that some Carlisle students participated in the Ghost Dance revitalization movement of the 1890s.

For example, among those who made the trip south in the last decade of the nineteenth century to meet Wovoka, the Paiute “Messiah” and instigator of the Ghost Dance, were three former Carlisle students. In the spring of 1891—(interest in Wovoka and the Ghost Dance did not cease after the 1890 massacre of Lakota people at Wounded Knee)—a delegation of Cheyennes and Arapahos traveled “to visit the messiah in Nevada and bring back the latest news from heaven,” and “Arnold Woolworth, a Carlisle student, acted as interpreter” (Mooney 1973 900). Woolworth, an Arapaho whose Indian name was Big Tall Man, had been at Carlisle from 1881 to 1886. Later, in August 1891, another Arapaho delegation traveled to see Wovoka. Among them were Grant Left Hand and Casper Edson. Edson had attended Carlisle—not continuously—for no fewer than ten years, entering at the age of twenty in 1880 and leaving in 1890, by which

time he had reached the sixth grade. Grant Left Hand was the son of Left Hand (Niwot or Nawot), the principal chief of the southern Arapahos, and he too had been to Carlisle. He bizarrely appears in the school records as U.S. Grant, having entered in 1879 and left because of poor health in 1881. James Mooney, the great chronicler of the Ghost Dance, wrote of him that “notwithstanding several years of English education, ... [he] is a firm believer in the doctrine and the dance, and the principal organizer and leader of the auxiliary ‘crow dance’ in his own tribe” (Mooney 1973 1038).

Achieving a certain notoriety in the aftermath of the Ghost Dance and Wounded Knee was another returned Carlisle student. This was Plenty Horses (Carlisle records also list him as Plenty Living Bear), a Lakota, who had entered first grade at the school at the age of fourteen in 1883, leaving in 1889, by which time he had completed the fourth grade. Returned home to the Rosebud reservation, he “donned blanket and moccasins ... wore his hair in long braids” (Utley 1974 17), and participated in his People’s Ghost Dance ceremonies. He was not present at Wounded Knee Creek on the Pine Ridge reservation at the end of December 1890, when the Seventh Cavalry massacred Big Foot’s band of Minneconjou Sioux, but he was near enough to hear the guns and then to engage in skirmishes with U.S. troops. On January 8, 1891, he was in the vicinity of a council between army officers and several Lakota chiefs convened to discuss arrangements for peace. The participants included, on one side, Red Cloud, Bear Lying Down, and He Dog and, on the other, Lieutenant Edward Casey and several emissaries of General Nelson Miles. At some point Plenty Horses, from horseback, fired a single rifle shot and killed the mounted Casey. He was arrested for murder just over a month later. At trial his lawyers offered in his defense the fact that a state of war had existed between the Sioux and the U.S. at the time Casey was killed, and therefore Plenty Horses, regardless of the circumstances of his act, could not be prosecuted for killing an enemy combatant.

This meant that to obtain a guilty verdict against Plenty Horses for murder, the government would have to claim that no state of war had existed between the Indians and the United States at the time of the shooting. But if no state of war had then existed, the soldiers who had earlier participated in the killings at Wounded Knee would also have to be tried for murder. The trial ended in a deadlocked jury. A second trial was held, at which testimony by General Miles was entered into the record. Miles stated emphatically



2 Plenty Horses with his father and others around the time of his trial in 1891. Top row, standing, left to right: Rock Road, White Moon, Bear Lying Down, and Broken Arm. Seated, left to right: He Dog, Jack Red Cloud, Plenty Horses, and his father, Plenty Living Bear. Plenty Horses is the only one wearing a blanket and moccasins (his father may also be in moccasins).

that at the time his troops had engaged at Wounded Knee, a state of war between the parties had existed, nor had it ceased to exist at the time Casey was killed. On the basis of Miles's testimony, the judge halted the trial and instructed the jurors to find for the defendant. Plenty Horses was acquitted.

Why had Plenty Horses shot the army lieutenant? Valentine McGillicuddy, former Indian agent at Pine Ridge, was the foreman of the jury that acquitted Plenty Horses. In a biography of her husband, *McGillicuddy, Agent: A Biography of Dr. Valentine T. McGillicuddy* (1941), his widow Julia reported her husband quoting Plenty Horses as follows: "Five years I attended Carlisle and was educated in the ways of the white man. When I returned to my people, I was an outcast among them. I was no longer an Indian. I was not a white man. I was lonely. I shot the lieutenant so I might make a place for myself among my people. I am now one of them. I shall be hung, and the

Indians will bury me as a warrior” (272). Plenty Horses was not hanged. He responded to a 1910 questionnaire sent out by Carlisle, writing that he was then a farmer at Pine Ridge. He died in 1933.



Pratt was dismissed from Carlisle in 1904 and the school closed for good in 1918, near the end of the First World War. Ten years later, the 1928 government survey *The Problem of Indian Administration*, generally known as the Meriam Report, appeared and was intensely critical of the boarding schools. The report contained this noteworthy passage: “The position taken... is that the work with and for the Indians must give consideration to the desires of the individual Indians. He who wishes to merge into the social and economic life of the prevailing civilization of this country should be given all the practicable aid and advice in making the necessary adjustments. He who wants to remain an Indian and live according to his old culture should be aided in doing so”¹¹ (86).

In 1929, a year after the Meriam Report’s publication, Indian Commissioner Burke “issued circular #2526 ... forbidding corporal punishment altogether at Indian schools” (Trennert 1989, 603). Shortly afterward, under John Collier’s tenure as commissioner of Indian Affairs (1933–45), some of the boarding schools were closed, others were substantially altered, and some became public high schools. Collier ended the military system and made religious observances for students voluntary; also, the curriculum now might include elements of Native culture and history, and materials were developed to teach some Native languages. Despite the shift in official policy, however, the changes were not always implemented. For example, corporal punishment, although forbidden, continued at a great many schools throughout Collier’s tenure as commissioner. Carole Barrett and Marcia Britton observe that although schools differed in their practices, the English-only language policy was not actually “eliminated from many schools until the late 1960s” (1997 22).

That was partly because Collier’s liberal commitments began to be reversed after his resignation as commissioner in 1945, the year the Second World War ended, and the year President Franklin Roosevelt died. After Collier’s departure, “In the late 1940s, conservative critics across the country launched attacks against progressive education” generally (Watras 2004

99), and specifically against Collier's commitment to pluralism at the Indian schools. Having become president upon Roosevelt's death, Harry Truman appointed William Brophy to succeed Collier and to reverse his policies. Hampered by ill health, Brophy and his like-minded successors, Acting Commissioner William Zimmerman, and Commissioner John Nichols, served only briefly. But in 1950 Dillon Myer became commissioner of Indian Affairs. Myer had administered the Japanese internment camps during the war—two of them on Indian reservations—and strongly opposed allowing cultural differences among any minority populations in the United States. He ordered broad, regressive changes in the Indian schools, leading overall to an "Erosion of Indian Rights," as a critique by Felix Cohen in the *Yale Law School Journal* termed it.¹² These were the years, as we will see, when Lydia Whirlwind Soldier, Walter Littlemoon, and Mary Crow Dog suffered terribly in their South Dakota boarding schools.

In her interviews with former boarding school students at Saint Joseph's Indian Industrial School, Sarah Shillinger found that "a theme that runs through the students' remembrances is physical abuse" (2008 14). As I have said, this occurred widely in the schools even when federal policy forbade it, and it is a subject that comes up frequently in the narratives I examine. But it was only in the 1990s that some of the darkest aspects of the boarding schools began to be brought to light. That the schools often provided inadequate nutrition, hygiene, and health care had been clear for some time and was abundantly evidenced in the Meriam Report. But even that extremely critical 1928 account did not look into the matter of sexual abuse at the schools. For example, Basil Johnston, a Canadian Ojibwa, in his 1989 autobiography of more than 250 pages, *Indian School Days*, mentioned no molestation or sexual abuse at St. Peter Clavier's Indian Residential School in Canada, which he attended. But in 2007, in a moving foreword to Sam McKegney's *Magic Weapons*, Johnston told of having suffered these things regularly. Tomson Highway's autobiographical novel, *Kiss of the Fur Queen* (1998), graphically detailed the sexual abuse of young boys by teaching Brothers at the Catholic Residential School in Canada that Highway and his brother attended.¹³

Here in the U.S., the Navajo poet Berenice Levchuk's recollections of her boarding school experiences at the Fort Defiance School include the memory of "a nine-year-old girl [who] was raped in her dormitory bed during the night," and "a certain male teacher who stalked and molested girls" (1997

184). The accounts of Lydia Whirlwind Soldier and Mary Crow Dog also include their observation and experience of sexual abuse at Saint Francis Mission School, as does Tim Giago's account of his time at the Holy Rosary Mission School (1978). Several of the Catholic boarding schools as well as the Catholic dioceses have repeatedly been sued, and the legal briefs including allegations of abuse suffered by the Indian students of those schools are both abundant and horrifying. It was also the case, as Johnston noted, that older boys sexually abused younger boys, something to which Giago attests as well, and something that is strongly hinted at in Jim Northrup's brief account of his time at the Pipestone Indian School.

Historians of the boarding schools have recorded these things, and they have been careful to note as well that the history is not exclusively one of victimization and suffering. Diana Meyers Bahr found that among graduates of the Sherman Institute in Riverside, California, "Even alumni whose memories are depressing or ambivalently fond and regretful retain an undeniable attachment to the school" (2014 3). Generally, as Myriam Vuckovic writes, Haskell's "indigenous students' reactions ranged from complete rejection to enthusiasm, and most felt ambivalent about their boarding school years" (2008 2). Irene Stewart (see volume 1) and Esther Burnett Horne (this volume), both of whom attended Haskell in the mid-1920s, were among those who viewed their time there very positively.

Lawney Reyes, who attended the Chemawa School in Oregon for two years in the early 1940s—Chemawa had been the second federal boarding school to be opened—wrote, "Chemawa may have succeeded in 'civilizing' me, but it did not separate me from the Indian culture. It did the opposite. Chemawa introduced me to my culture ... by enabling me to meet and get to know several Indian boys my age.... This," he continued, enabled him "to learn, appreciate, and differentiate between several Indian cultures. It would have been impossible to do this back home" (134). As Michael Coleman concluded, "No Hopi or Navajo or Sioux response to the schools emerged" (1993 94); individual young Indian people experienced their boarding-school education in very different ways.

Thus when K. Tsianina Lomawaima interviewed former Chilocco Indian School students about a Miss McCormick, a particularly harsh head matron, she found that "the range and disparity within student responses to this one individual indicate the difficulty of making generalizations about key facets of boarding-school life" (1994 48). Lomawaima wrote that in terms of

morale, the Chilocco Indian School “falls somewhere between the depiction of boarding schools as irredeemably destructive institutions” and the opinion of one of the former students she interviewed that Chilocco “‘really was a marvelous school’” (1994 164). Kim Brumley’s recent compilation (2010) of the recollections of twenty-nine Chilocco students, from the class of 1933 to the class of 1980, is in accord with this finding. Sally McBeth’s study of “the boarding school experience of west-central Oklahoma Indians,” found the schools to be “a concrete and definite topic of conversation” among them, and one “perceived by the Native community as an important topic” (1983 4). The boarding schools were remembered, on the one hand, as emblematic of oppressive “*government control* of Indian people” but, on the other, as representative of “*government obligations* to Indian people” (1983 117, italics in original). The former students McBeth consulted were mostly women, and among them, “The Indian boarding schools seemed to foster a sense of belonging and eventually became acceptable symbols of an Indian ethnic identity” (1983 114). For them, she writes, “the memory of the boarding school experience operates as a symbol of group solidarity and identity. Even the few people who consider the boarding school experience as essentially harmful still may respond to it as responsible for stimulating group consciousness and contributing to group survival” (1983 142).

In *Boarding School Seasons* (1998), and in subsequent publications, Brenda Child has also been scrupulously careful in presenting the many different responses of former students to the schools. Nonetheless, what is currently taken to be “true” about the boarding schools is that they were an unmitigated disaster. There has developed, as Child has written in an important essay, “a tension between history and memory,” between the historical record and the “way in which American Indian people remember [boarding-school] experience.”¹⁴ So great is this tension that, as she has observed, “Learning of happy students and satisfied parents—Indians who liked boarding school—can be mystifying, even troubling to Indian people today” (2014 275). For many Native communities the boarding schools, to cite the subtitle of an essay by Michael Kenny, have operated as “The Interface between Individual and Collective History” (1999).

Indeed, as Child writes, the boarding school has come to serve as “a useful and extraordinarily powerful metaphor for colonialism”; it has become “symbolic of American colonialism at its most genocidal” (Child 2014 268). The schools now serve as “an adaptable metaphor Indian people ... use to

describe and encapsulate many different forms of colonialism and historical oppression" (279). Further, "Boarding school is now the ancestor in a genealogical line of terrible offspring—alcohol abuse, family and sexual violence, and other dysfunction" (268). Serving as "the primary explanation for social dysfunction and adverse conditions on the reservation" (271), the boarding schools are often cited as a major source "of historical trauma and unresolved grief" (271).

Michael Kenny has observed that the Holocaust suffered by European Jews as a result of the Nazis' attempted genocide has sometimes "become a model for construing the histories of other disadvantaged and 'traumatized' groups" (Kenny 1999 420–21). Among American Indian people, "Holocaust memories have become a paradigm," Kenny writes, "as has the rhetoric of genocide" (426). Thus we find Ward Churchill's study of Pratt and the boarding schools called *Kill the Indian, Save the Man: The Genocidal Impact of American Indian Residential Schools*. For Churchill the boarding schools were akin to what Kenny, with reference to indigenous Australian commentary, has called an "aboriginal Auschwitz" (Kenny 1999 436). In similar fashion, the Ziibiwing Center of Anishinaabe Culture and Lifeways, established in 2004 by the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe of Michigan, published "A Supplementary Curriculum Guide" titled *American Indian Boarding Schools: An Exploration of Global Ethnic and Cultural Cleansing*.¹⁵ Berenice Levchuk also wrote of Carlisle and the boarding schools generally as a "phase of our Native American holocaust" (1997 185), while Tom Gannon, who suffered beatings at the Holy Rosary Mission School, titled "a talk on [his own] Indian Boarding School experience 'A Holocaust of the Mind'" (2014 114–15). Child has cited Canadian authors referencing "an aboriginal holocaust" (2014 270).

Earlier, noting that Indian boarding-school experiences were being compared to experiences of "the Holocaust, Hiroshima, slavery, and imprisonment," Robert Warrior argued that "the boarding-school experience . . . is in and of itself irreducible to any other experience" (2005 118). This is a useful warning against careless comparisons as I develop the matter further. But to compare the boarding-school experience to the other human tragedies Warrior references is not to reduce it to or equate it with any one of them.¹⁶ Significant individual and communal events are both historically unique—different in their specifics and particularities—and in some measure comparable. For example, in that the definition of "holocaust"—lower case

“h”—is destruction or slaughter on a mass scale, intentional and systematic or not, one can indeed speak of the colonial history of the United States as having produced a “Native American holocaust.” Nonetheless, it is mistaken to speak of the boarding schools as an “aboriginal Auschwitz.” This is to say that while it would have been deplorable if Auschwitz had been established to turn Jews into good Germans, that was not its purpose. Its purpose was to exterminate the Jews. The boarding schools, however, *contra* Ward Churchill, simply were not committed to genocide; and to insist on that fact is to make no excuse for the ethnocide to which they were committed. Nonetheless, memory of the schools has given rise to what Kenny has called “survivor syndrome” (1999 422). With reference here to Canada, he writes that rather than “reconstruct history as it actually was ... what emerges instead is the history of Native Canadians as metaphorical Jews.” He continues, “Native people who endured the schools have a story to tell, but only lately has a space been opened up for the story to be not only told, but heard, and not only heard but perpetuated in the collective memory” (431).

These stories, sometimes passed on by persons with no experience or little knowledge of the schools themselves, now constitute a body of survivor discourse that I suggest has become a genre of the oral tradition. The stories that constitute it have been passed down, not since ancient times, to be sure, but for a long time, from the late nineteenth century to the present: so the elders have said—at least so far as communal memory is concerned. To these stories has accrued the authority of the oral tradition. Used as a metaphor for all the worst abuses of colonialism in exactly the manner described by Child, and marshalling the authority of what has become oral tradition, boarding-school survivor discourse may be deployed in the service of what Kenny has called the contemporary “ethnopolitics of the disadvantaged” (1999 421)—or, more plainly, of the oppressed and colonized.

Nonetheless, despite the fact that the now traditional narrative, embodying the communally agreed-upon memory of the past, has come to have a certain historical truth, it should be said again that not all of it is historically factual. Carlisle was not Auschwitz, nor was a single one of the other off-reservation boarding schools, destructive though they were, engaged in the systematic murder of Indian people. A considerable number of former boarding school students, as we have seen and will see further, have stories to tell that are quite unlike any that could be told by those who survived the death camps. As the historians have found and the present study shows, the

narratives written by former boarding-school students themselves present a range of responses.



The earliest studies of the boarding schools worked largely from the perspective of the government—although many involved in teaching at or administering the schools were themselves extremely critical of that perspective, none more so than some of the young women who entered the Indian Service to teach at the schools.¹⁷ In the last twenty years or so, that perspective has been supplemented by attention to what the Indian students, communities, and families themselves felt and said about the schools. Thus, in the third edition (1999) of her 1974 book *Education and the American Indian*, Margaret Connell Szasz writes that “between the late 1970s and the late 1990s [she has] been moving away from an earlier focus on policy to a more recent focus on the Indian community itself” (xi). The recent work of Brenda Child, Amanda Cobb, Clyde Ellis, Tsianina Lomawaima, Sally McBeth, Clifford Trafzer, Myriam Vuckovic, and others has indeed turned to the “Indian community itself,” examining letters from and engaging in interviews with a great many former boarding school students.

A quarter century ago Michael Coleman observed: “We still know relatively little about how Indian school children themselves saw things” (1993 194); we know a bit more today, but there remains much to learn. One way to do this is to look closely at what “Indian school children themselves” had to say in a range of autobiographical texts. (Coleman’s study, it should be noted, was based on autobiographical texts.) It is in these texts that we may hear “the thousands of Indian voices who spoke the breath of boarding school life” (Lomawaima 1994 xii). As Jeffrey Ostler has observed, “Only the most resilient children later wrote their experiences, whereas those who suffered deeper damage did not” (2004 154), and of course the children who rest in the boarding-school cemeteries did not live to tell their stories. Ruth Spack has claimed that “the dearth of accounts reveals that the overwhelming majority of students remained silent” (2002 109). But “the dearth of accounts” she speaks of is only a relative dearth; the written record left by the boarding-school students, only a minority of them, to be sure, is very rich—far richer, as this study shows, than has so far been recognized.

These “Indian voices” speak of a range of experiences, and they reference a number of what I call *scenes of initiation* or *initiatory loci*, and also

a number of *topoi* as they are encountered by boarding-school autobiographers. Thus, for example, the dining room is an initiatory locus—new and strange things happen in this place—while food—its kind and quality or lack thereof—is a topos. In view of the large quantity of oatmeal of widely varying quality and preparation that they were served, some of the students gave the generic name “mush” to the strange and often unpleasant foods they encountered. Discipline, predominantly in the form of corporal punishment, is a topos, but one that has no particular locus in that it might be administered in the classroom, in a teacher’s office, in the dining room, or almost any other place—perhaps a jail—at a given school. The topos clock time, or what Myriam Vuckovic has termed “Living by the Bell” (2008 59), is also encountered everywhere: the dormitory, the dining room, the classroom, with movement to each and in each regulated by the bell or whistle or bugle—sometimes a triangle that was loudly struck. In each of these loci students woke, ate, studied, marched, or played according to the clock.

Naming—that is, the de-individuating bestowal of Tom, Dick, Harry, and Sally to replace the highly distinctive names each student brought—is a topos,¹⁸ along with what I call the cleanup: the scrubbing and, in particular, the hair cutting that took place almost immediately upon each student’s arrival. The dormitory is the locus for the students’ nightly rest and also on occasion for the *topos* sex. But sexual relations among the students (or with others at the schools, when they occurred) certainly do not only take place in the dormitory. The *topos* outing labor might have a family farm as locus—that was its rationale, based upon the substantial farming community around Carlisle—but Native student workers might have a variety of tasks assigned to them—like, for example, Luther Standing Bear’s unique summer outing in the John Wanamaker department store in Philadelphia. Identity is an important and complex topos but what one can say about it for any particular student depends on shifting loci of home, family, school, and other matters, all of these varying over time. It is important to emphasize that not a single one of the many boarding school students considered in this book ever entirely abandoned a sense of being Lakota, Ojibwe, Kiowa, or Arapaho, although they understood their tribal identity in a variety of ways. For some, an active reclamation of national and cultural identity, as we will see, was a major step in healing the damage done by the schools’ assault on being Indian.



Along with an introduction, this second volume of *Changed Forever* consists of three parts and two appendices. Part I examines seven Dakota autobiographies that deal with the boarding-school experiences of their authors—three of them well-known. Within each part, the studies are arranged chronologically by date of birth of authors (with two exceptions that I will note). Part II offers readings of six Anishinaabe—Ojibwe or Chippewa—boarding-school autobiographies, one of them a book-length account of its author's "Life in an Indian Boarding School," and another a record of its author's time not in an Indian boarding school but in a residential institution for dependent children, somewhat like the boarding schools. Part III, "A Range of Boarding-School Autobiographies," considers the experiences of Native people from different tribal nations in boarding schools around the U.S., along with a single brief Canadian example. This volume and the one that preceded it are intended to call attention to a great many texts, the majority of them not well known, although I make no claim to have "covered" or fully "surveyed" what turns out to be a wide field. Especially for the texts that are not well known, my discussions here, as I noted as well in volume 1, in some measure offer annotated critical editions that I hope will be useful to both teachers and students.

I had intended to close this book with a fourth section to be called "The Legacy of the Boarding Schools in Native American Literature." This was projected as a study of drama, fiction, and poetry by Native American authors, from just past the turn of the twentieth century to the present, that referenced the boarding schools or dramatized events taking place in those schools. It might have begun with Francis LaFlesche's *The Middle Five* (1900), continuing to Louise Erdrich's representation of her characters' experiences of Catholic boarding schools. As for drama, in addition to some other plays, we have two by N. Scott Momaday set at boarding schools. A study of boarding-school poems—nineteenth-century to 1920s—might begin with the "Boarding School Poems" Robert Dale Parker included in his anthology *Changing Is Not Vanishing*, and then go on to a consideration of verse by Louise Erdrich, Luci Tapahonso, Laura Tohe, and others. But this is the second volume of this study, it is already long, and even were I to extend it further, it would be impossible to do justice to the legacy of the boarding schools in Native American literature in this book.

My subtitle "American Indian Boarding-School Literature," was chosen on the assumption that this book would indeed include readings of Native American poetry, fiction, and drama—obviously literary genres—in which

the boarding school played a part, and I have taken Amelia Katanski's observation that "Boarding school narratives have a significant place in the American Indian literary tradition" as one of the epigraphs for this book. Believing that nonetheless to be true even when the narratives considered are all autobiographies, I've retained the subtitle—rather than altering it to, say, "American Indian Boarding-School Autobiography." I mean to insist upon the fact that these autobiographies are indeed literature and that they are treated here as literature. To do this, and to present some of "the thousands of Indian voices who spoke the breath of boarding school life," in order to understand better just "how Indian schoolchildren themselves saw things," is the aim of this study.

Consistent with this aim are the two appendices. The first reprints a letter from a returned boarding-school student that has been out of print for more than 130 years. The second lists the names, tribal affiliations, and schools attended for all the Indian students mentioned in volume 1 and 2 of *Changed Forever*: of the many who have been forgotten, may these names live in memory.