

Resilience in the Face of Cultural Genocide: How The Red Power Movement
Challenged Federal Boarding Schools of the Late 19th and Early 20th Century.

Marie Deane

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Table of Contents

I.	Introduction	2
II.	The Boarding School Experience	3
III.	The Fight for Cultural Liberation – The Red Power Movement.....	10
IV.	AIM Survival Schools	11
V.	The First Survival School	15
VI.	More Native Educational Reforms.....	16
VII.	Conclusion	21

I. Introduction

As Leonard Dinnerstein, Roger Nichols and David Reimers noted, Native Americans are ‘the nation’s oldest minority’.¹ From the arrival of Columbus in the fifteenth century, Native American’s have long been the victims of colonial discrimination. The nineteenth and twentieth centuries were no exception to this. This period witnessed the use of Boarding schools in which the Indigenous population were assimilated by Euro-Americans hoping to make them civilised citizens of the country. Federal off-reservation boarding schools were ultimately used to conduct cultural genocide in targeting young impressionable children. Richard Henry Pratt’s phrase: “Kill the Indian and save the Man” perfectly depicted this cultural sacrifice.² However, the activist period of the 1960s and 1970s served to establish a significant move to reverse this atrocity. For Native Americans, the political climate heating led to the Red Power Movement in which indigenous people fought for the identities that had been suppressed through government institutions, in this case, Native boarding schools.

These boarding schools were responsible for causing generational cultural damage and were successful in tearing communities apart. It led to the discontinuation, among some Natives, of the valuable cultural lessons that reflected on the importance of community and indigenous spirituality. The fall in representation of native cultures reflects the damage caused by these Boarding Schools. It was the use of humiliation and severe punishment in these boarding schools that taught children to reject their own cultures, in turn, denying them their Native identities. Though I argue that this backfired into a rise in Pan-Indianism as Natives united together in the fight against further oppression on their culture. The Red Power Movement and establishments that formed as a result reflect this collective battle. This was a period that Neil A. Hamilton considered to be ‘dissidents [shaking] the very foundation of U.S. Society.’³ The governments mistreatment of Native Americans reached a newfound low that sparked social movements among indigenous people.

¹ Leonard Dinnerstein, Roger L. Nichols and David M. Reimers, *Natives and Strangers: Blacks, Indians, and Immigrants in America*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p.231.

² Andrea Smith, ‘Boarding School Abuses, Human Rights, and Reparations’, *Social Justice*, vol.31, issue 4, (2004), pp.89-102, (p.89).

³ Neil A. Hamilton, *Rebels and Renegades: A Chronology of Social and Political Dissent in the United States*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2002), p.232.

In focus on education and its pivotal change in the 1970s, I outline that boarding schools in the late nineteenth, early twentieth century were established to commit cultural genocide. However, the Red Power Movement specifically, led to a radical transformation into a more culturally inclusive education system, self-determined by Native Americans. An attempt to reclaim and recover a culture that has been continually attacked for centuries. Firstly, what went on at these boarding schools must be outlined to determine the radicality of change in Native education in the 1960s and 1970s by the Red Power Movement.

II. The Boarding School Experience

The first concept of assimilating indigenous people originated as far back as in the 1600s. John Eliot established “praying towns” where natives received ‘Christian “civilizing” instructions.’⁴ With time, Euro-Americans understood that the best way to assimilate Natives was through targeting children and controlling their education. It was under President Ulysses S. Grant’s Peace Policy of 1869 to 1870 that ‘the boarding school system became more formalized’.⁵ In 1879, Richard Pratt founded the first off-reservation boarding school: The Carlisle Indian Industrial School. The institutions primary objective wasn’t just to assimilate children but to eradicate their culture. In taking these children away from home, a ‘war [was] waged overtly’ on Native cultures.⁶ Reverend A. J. Lippincott, at a Carlisle Commencement, stated:

“The Indian is DEAD in you. Let all that is Indian within you die! You cannot become true American citizens, industrious, intelligent cultures, civilized until the INDIAN within you is DEAD.”⁷

Lippincott’s statement reasserts this intent to kill Native culture, defining the broad assumption of Native cultures as inferior by Euro-Americans. At a time that was experiencing exponential growth industriously, Natives were considered to add no value to the country in conducting their savage culture. Therefore, the only option was for the culture to die out. According to Euro-Americans, this would make them ideal citizens. The education provided in these boarding school followed this principle and resulted in generational damage and identity loss.

⁴ Andrea Smith, ‘Boarding School Abuses, Human Rights, and Reparations’, *Social Justice*, vol.31, issue 4, (2004), pp.89-102, (p.89).

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Donna Martinez, ‘School Culture and American Indian Educational Outcomes’, *Social and Behavioural Sciences*, vol. 116, (2014), pp.199-205, (p.200).

⁷ Ibid.

K. Tsianina Lomawaima, a professor of American Indian studies, called the ‘boarding school phenomenon... ethnocide’.⁸ Lomawaima, refers to the cultural destruction and demonstrates the governments adoption of cultural genocide. This was considered to be more easily achieved through off-reservation boarding schools.

Off-reservation boarding schools, according to Pratt, were the key to successfully assimilating students and eradicating the culture. He noted:

“[For] the complete civilization of the Indian and his absorption into our national life... the Indian... [must] lose his identity as such, [and] to give up his tribal relations... The sooner the Indian loses all his Indian ways, even his language, the better... To accomplish that, his removal and personal isolation is necessary.”⁹

Off-reservation boarding schools were therefore considered to be the key to solving the supposed “Indian problem”. Isolation of Native children, according to Pratt and others alike, ensured that children were unable to run away and that their ‘efforts to assimilate’ were less likely to be ‘reversed when children returned home to their families’.¹⁰ Therefore, efforts were made by the government to commit cultural genocide.

By 1909, ‘25 off-reservation boarding schools, 157 on-reservation boarding schools, and 307 day schools were in operation’.¹¹ In addition, Alexander Dawson emphasised that by 1900, there were, ‘17,708 students in boarding schools’.¹² Furthermore, he notes that ‘a total of 27,361’, by 1926, ‘were being educated in 19 off-reservation boarding schools’.¹³ Although, not all Native Americans attended off-reservation schools, many did, and these institutions were particularly successful in effecting the family dynamic as a result of the separation. The Government inflicted this separation by forcibly taking children from their homes. The generational trauma would arise from the boarding schools education system, designed to make

⁸ Sharon Brunner, *The Aftereffects of the Boarding School Experience for Native Americans in Michigan*, (Masters thesis. Grand Valley State University: 2002), p.21.

⁹ Ernest Stromberg, *American Indian Rhetorics of Survivance: Word Medicine, Word Magic*, (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2006), p.97.

¹⁰ Andrea Smith, ‘Boarding School Abuses, Human Rights, and Reparations’, *Social Justice*, vol.31, issue 4, (2004), pp.89-102, (p.89).

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Alexander S. Dawson, ‘Histories and Memories of the Indian Boarding Schools in Mexico, Canada, and the United States’, *Latin American Perspectives*, vol.39, issue 5, (2012), pp.80-99, (p.82).

¹³ Ibid.

children reject the traditions of their culture, and therefore their families. As a result, parents ‘endured years of separation from their children’.¹⁴ This wasn’t only from the physical act of taking them away. Restrictions were put in place to ensure separation was enforced, especially when it came to visitations.

Often government schools would ‘strictly limit both the frequency and the duration of home visits’ and the transportation costs for parents to visit their children made it ‘an impossibility for impoverished families’ to see them.¹⁵ To ensure they did not see their parents over summer, Pratt created an “outing system”.¹⁶ Native students were placed with white families for the holidays, supposedly, to ‘further learn the “arts of Civilization”’.¹⁷ However, it was largely introduced to continue separation and to ensure cultural genocide would take place.

According to historian, Brenda Child, a “cultural chasm” was created and “many households became setting for dramas involving deep intergenerational and cultural conflict”.¹⁸ The education system of these boarding schools taught children values that completely opposed that of their families and communities. Cultural genocide could therefore occur, as they grew ashamed of their Native cultures, consequently, rejecting them. This led to some languages becoming near extinct, tribal traditions not being taught and the next generation losing their Native identities as well. Dennis Banks, co-founder of the American Indian Movement outlined the dramatic effect boarding school had on his relationship with his mother.

In an interview with Amy Goodman for *Democracy Now*, Banks noted the impact of the federal boarding school’s separation policy on his relationship with his mother. During the early 1940s, Banks attended an off-reservation boarding school. He attended for six years until he was allowed to go home for 30 days and in those six years “they cut off all communication.”¹⁹ Once home, he would ask his mother why she never wrote to him, and she would reply that she had.

¹⁴ Julie L. Davis, *Survival Schools: The American Indian Movement and Community Education in the Twin Cities*, (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), p.40.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Steve Talbot, ‘Spiritual Genocide: The Denial of American Indian Religious Freedom, from Conquest to 1934’, *Wicazo Sa Review*, vol.21, issue 2, (2006), pp.7-39, (p.15).

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Julie L. Davis, *Survival Schools: The American Indian Movement and Community Education in the Twin Cities*, p.40.

¹⁹ *Native American Leader Dennis Banks on the Overlooked Tragedy of Nation’s Indian Boarding Schools*, (2012) <https://www.democracynow.org/2012/10/8/native_american_leader_dennis_banks_on> [accessed 16th April 2019].

Banks went on in Boarding school, and in life, believing that she was dishonest. Decades later, he would find these letters amongst his school records. According to Banks, in one letter to the superintendent of the school, his mother wrote, “Here is \$5. Please send my children – my son back home to me.”²⁰ Unfortunately, this was after she had passed away. Banks recalled that when he buried his mother, “there were no emotions with me” but in reading the letters he was “tearing up.”²¹ Boarding school changed the dynamic of Banks relationship with his mother, and this reflected the detrimental effect that these institutions had on its students. In rejecting their families, they rejected their culture. Although this was not true for Banks, it was true for many others and this led to the vanishing of Native cultures. Nonetheless it was not only its principles of separation that guaranteed this but also the typical treatment of Native students.

Upon arrival at the boarding school, students were ‘forced to abandon their language and cultural traditions, cut their hair, and adopt western clothing and names’.²² If they spoke their native language they were punished. They were taught to ‘stamp out religious practices and traditions’.²³ Treating them harshly and as savages led to shame and resentment towards their Native cultures. The first thing that was changed upon their arrival at school was their appearance. A famous image that demonstrated this transformation was the before and after shots of Tom Torlino.

²⁰ *Native American Leader Dennis Banks on the Overlooked Tragedy of Nation’s Indian Boarding Schools.*

²¹ Ibid.

²² Daniella Zalcman, *Carlisle and the Indian Boarding School Legacy in America*, (2018), <<https://pulitzercenter.org/reporting/carlisle-and-indian-boarding-school-legacy-america>> [accessed 14th April 2019].

²³ Steve Talbot, ‘Spiritual Genocide: The Denial of American Indian Religious Freedom, from Conquest to 1934’, (p.15).

Figure 1: Tom Torlino, a Navajo Student at the Carlisle Indian School, 1882 and 1885²⁴



Figure 1 is two photographs taken in 1882 and 1885 by John Choate of Tom Torlino, a Navajo Native Indian who attended the Carlisle Indian Industrial school. We can distinctly see the physical transformation that he underwent. His long hair was cut short, native attire was removed and he was clothed with Euro-American clothing. In addition, the lighting of the two pictures demonstrate the transformation in appearance. It emphasised the difference in skin-tone, projecting this white ideology of what a civilized appearance was. For many, this alteration was a negative experience that left children feeling lost as their identity was removed by the transformation of their outward appearance. This would continue into the early twentieth century and Banks remarked on how this effected his perception.

Dennis Banks wrote in his autobiography, *Ojibwa Warrior*, of his experience upon arrival at Boarding School. He remarks that upon their arrival, staff assumed that they were unsanitary when cutting their hair. He notes how they were ‘dusted... all over’ with DDT; a substance

²⁴ Brenna Farrell, *Before and After Carlisle* (2015), <<https://www.wnycstudios.org/story/photos-before-and-after-carlisle>> [accessed 16th April 2019].

commonly used as an insecticide. It was put in their hair to kill lice. He stated; ‘we didn’t have any lice, but they assumed we did’.²⁵ After which, they cut his hair and Banks ‘felt uncomfortably naked without it’.²⁶ The use of DDT depicts the depleted opinion which staff at these Boarding Schools had of Native people. They assumed they were infected with lice like animals. Furthermore, the cutting of their hair foreshadowed the ill treatment that these children would later suffer from as well. It foretold an institution that was established to make them feel ashamed of their own cultures. This was completed through harsh punishments.

Those who resisted the rules on abandoning their culture were punished, and often this would be severe and humiliating. Children were whipped, and ‘typically’, punishment of boys was more extreme than that of girls.²⁷ Punishments like these were often enforced when children ran away or continued practicing their Native cultures. All were to inhibit and control their perception of their own cultures to ensure that children were taught that Native cultures were inherently wrong. Often this would be through the use of humiliation. Rebecca Peterson noted that those who attempted to runaway were punished with humiliation. They were ‘spanked, locked up in a room, and made to walk back and forth in front of the girls and boys dormitory’.²⁸ Boys were made to wear girls’ clothing and girls were to wear boys attire. These punishments reflected the way in which these Boarding Schools retained control of these children by deteriorating their pride with fear and embarrassment. These punishments were ‘made to make one belittle his, or her self and become less of a person and more of a machine’.²⁹ They administered violent punishments too.

One severe punishment was appropriately titled the belt line. If a student misbehaved, other students would stand in a line while the misfit ‘would have to run down the gauntlet while they beat at him with whips.’³⁰ Those who refused to participate were forced to run the line themselves. Peterson uncovered one case where three eighth grade girls tried to avoid the belt line by running away. Subsequently, ‘they were brought back, roped to the back of a car and

²⁵ Dennis Banks, *Ojibwa Warrior: Dennis Banks and the rise of the American Indian Movement*, (Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004), p.25.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷ Sharon Brunner, *The Aftereffects of the Boarding School Experience for Native Americans in Michigan*, p.24.

²⁸ Rebecca Peterson, ‘The impact of historical boarding schools on Native American Families and Parenting Roles’, *The McNair Scholars Journal*, vol.13, (2012), pp.1-11, (p.5).

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

dragged along the road’.³¹ These extreme measures provoked fear in students making them complicit to what they were taught. Therefore, cultural genocide could be achieved, as children were effectively brainwashed into thinking their own cultures were wrong as they were punished for it. Peterson emphasised that they were forced to say:

“[Boarding schools] Did all they could to teach, and save us, From idle habits and bad ways. And carry us safely through the maze of reading, writing and talking...”³²

This emphasised Federal Boarding Schools as saviours; a system put in place to help Natives become better citizens. Therefore, children were brainwashed into thinking that Boarding Schools were saving them from a savage culture. Humiliating them and punishing them while simultaneously presenting themselves as saviours led to Native cultures diminishing. This is where generational trauma arose. As children were turning away from their cultures, once they were older, they did not pass on their Native identity to the next generation. This led to Native cultures diminishing further. However, this was not always the case.

Not all children turned away from their cultures completely. Some formed alliances with one another, a unity that somewhat foreshadowed attitudes of those part of the Red Power Movement in the 1960s and 1970s. Some children formed friendships ‘that lasted over the period of their lives’.³³ They would write to one another in their native tongue, ‘made fun of the teachers’ and ‘looked after one another’.³⁴ If one child was sent to bed without food the others would ‘sneak him/her food’.³⁵ They were forming connections with one another that strengthened their cultural bond, destroying the curriculum’s attempts to divide them and destroy their cultures. This undoubtedly symbolised boarding schools’ failures, but also indicated the willingness of Native children and the strength they had to contest their repressors. Banks, explicitly, wrote about this concept in his autobiography.

Banks remarked on how he made friends at boarding school. Friends that he would keep for life. He made befriended ‘Indian kids [his] own age’ and become very close with them since

³¹ Rebecca Peterson, ‘The impact of historical boarding schools on Native American Families and Parenting Roles’, (p.5).

³² Ibid.

³³ Sharon Brunner, *The Aftereffects of the Boarding School Experience for Native Americans in Michigan*, p.24.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

they didn't get visitors either.³⁶ Banks asserted that 'the bond between us was so strong that we are still friends... fifty-three years later'.³⁷ Sharon Brunner emphasised how important these friendships were in establishing a resistance against their oppression. In forming friendships, they 'demonstrated acts of resistance that would be hard pressed to ignore' in the face of 'domination and inequality'.³⁸ Holly Whitfield distinguished that it was 'these children [that] found and maintained forms of solace', 'in spite of the imbalance of power'.³⁹ Their friendships proved a willingness in Native children to fight for their culture. In fact, Banks, along with a boarding school friend, George Mitchell, established the American Indian Movement. A movement that was pivotal in the Red Power Movement that will later be explored more in depth.

Ultimately, boarding schools undoubtedly attacked Native cultures and worked to eradicate it completely. The combination of humiliation and punishment for possessing such a culture did effect children's cultural retention. Although the children did resist through their friendships, irretrievable damage was done. Native cultures were put at risk of extinction, especially when combined with the general misconception of indigenous people as inferior. However, the education system ultimately failed and the Red Power Movement is compelling evidence of how Native culture was later reclaimed and even celebrated.

III. The Fight for Cultural Liberation – The Red Power Movement

Generally, the 1960s was considered 'one of the most contentious decades in living memory'.⁴⁰ It was a period that saw 'the protests of the civil rights movement' that would later lead to 'a wave of activism by students, marginalized communities, and women that continued into the mid 1970s'.⁴¹ For Native Americans, this led to the Red Power Movement. Through this movement, Native Americans fought for their cultures, self-determination and equality. Brian Ward credits the development of the Red Power Movement to 'both centuries of resistance to settler-colonialism and the revolutionary fever of 1968'.⁴² One product of settler-colonialism was the assimilationist federal boarding schools of the late nineteenth and early twentieth

³⁶ Dennis Banks, *Ojibwa Warrior: Dennis Banks and the rise of the American Indian Movement*, p.27.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Sharon Brunner, *The Aftereffects of the Boarding School Experience for Native Americans in Michigan*, p.27.

³⁹ Ibid, p.28.

⁴⁰ *Protesting in the 1960s and 1970s*, <<http://americanarchive.org/exhibits/first-amendment/protests-60s-70s>> [accessed 15th April 2019].

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Brian Ward, *1968: The Rise of the Red Power Movement*, (2018)

<<https://socialistworker.org/2018/08/08/1968-the-rise-of-the-red-power-movement>> [accessed 12th April 2019].

centuries. Native Americans during this period ‘lived either on extremely impoverished Indian reservations or within urban centers’ known as Red Ghettos.⁴³ Indians fed up with the environment they lived in ‘took inspiration from the Black Power Movement’, giving rise to the Red Power Movement.⁴⁴ In terms of education, the Red Power Movement brought up issues of cultural retention.

As established, ‘education was a way to break Indians and teach them white culture’.⁴⁵ Education became a key issue for Native Americans in the 1960s. At the time, US education did nothing to promote Native cultures to children and their relocation policies left Indigenous people displaced. The main objective for the government was to ‘bring Native Americans into the mainstream of American society, and thus destroy any remaining vestiges of Indian power’.⁴⁶ This, much like the federal boarding schools, failed. Troy Johnson emphasises that this in fact led to a rise in Pan-Indianism. Pan-Indianism is where Native American ‘cultures that had suffered collapse due to European pressures and tribal destruction formulated new survival techniques’.⁴⁷ Native Cultures, therefore, continued ‘through intertribal unity’.⁴⁸ The Red Power Movement symbolised this unity by the convergence of Natives through activism, fighting for better education and therefore saved their Native cultures from extinction. One movement that embodied this was the American Indian Movement (AIM).

IV. AIM Survival Schools

The American Indian Movement came to be ‘the organizational expression of the Red Power Movement’.⁴⁹ AIM was built upon the ‘collective, cross-generational [experience] of indigenous people’ and fought against the ‘assimilationist assault on their societies’.⁵⁰ They considered public education to be one assault. When AIM would talk about Native education, Boarding Schools were a frequent topic. They saw them as ‘an agent of cultural loss and as a

⁴³ Brian Ward, 1968: *The Rise of the Red Power Movement*.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Troy R. Johnson, *The Occupation of Alcatraz Island: Indian Self-determination and the Rise of Indian Activism*, (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1996), p.6.

⁴⁶ Ibid, p.13.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Brian Ward, 1968: *The Rise of the Red Power Movement*.

⁵⁰ Julie L. Davis, *Survival Schools: The American Indian Movement and Community Education in the Twin Cities*, p.48.

motivation for AIM'.⁵¹ Clyde Bellecourt, co-founder and leader of AIM accurately described the destruction of these boarding schools. He spoke of the generational loss of cultures, stating:

“When I speak about my mother... I say I’m speaking for every Indian in America. Because *every one of us* – our parents, our grandparents – *every one of them* went through the system. And because of that we’re all suffering today. We lack our language, we lack our culture, our tradition... We’re all crippled today, we’re all handicapped, every one of us Indian people. I don’t care... how smart you are, we’re *handicapped* because we *lack* our spiritual base.”⁵²

Bellecourt outlines that because of boarding schools, their culture has been weakened and therefore they have suffered a spiritual loss for generations. In turn, this makes them weaker. Therefore, he calls for unity in the Red Power Movement to fight against this disability.

Pat Bellanger, another AIM member, noted that those who went through boarding schools would “try and teach their kids what they saw working”, and this was the suppression of Native cultures.⁵³ This led to the deterioration of Native cultures over generations, leading to a lost identity. AIM fought against the education system that boarding schools had triggered and consequently, the survival of their cultures. They did this through survival schools.

According to John Laukaitis, the ‘guiding philosophy’ behind survival schools was to give ‘full American Indian control’ of their children’s education, allowing Native cultures to be the ‘foundation of the curriculum’.⁵⁴ As stated by Kenneth Bedell, these schools ‘were designed to meet the needs of Native Americans’.⁵⁵ A vast majority considered there to be a ‘misrepresentation of American Indian culture in the classroom’ and this triggered the establishment of survival schools.⁵⁶ Bellanger explained, “all of a sudden, we just, we *had* to, I mean, it was like a *have* to. The only way we could keep our kids within the families was,

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Julie L. Davis, *Survival Schools: The American Indian Movement and Community Education in the Twin Cities* p.48.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ John J. Laukaitis, *Community Self-Determination: American Indian Education in Chicago, 1952-2006*, (New York: SUNY Press, 2015), p.63.

⁵⁵ Kenneth B. Bedell, *Realizing the Civil Rights Dream: Diagnosing and Treating American Racism*, (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2017), p.130.

⁵⁶ John J. Laukaitis, *Community Self-Determination: American Indian Education in Chicago, 1952-2006*, p.63.

they had to go to school. Well, then, lets *have a school!*”⁵⁷ It was a way of continuing an important legacy that kept family cultural integrity together. Thus ‘increasing self-confidence and pride in American Indian students’ completely opposing the humiliation embedded boarding school education.⁵⁸ Two survival schools were therefore founded.

Julie Davis wrote extensively on AIMs survival schools. She understood that ‘In 1972, these elements of AIM’s local work – education, child welfare, and cultural identity – converged in the creation of the Twin Cities survival schools.’⁵⁹ This led to the Red School House and the Heart of the Earth Survival School being established in Minneapolis. Within these schools AIM were able to successfully combine ‘conventional academics with a solid tribal curriculum’.⁶⁰ The objective was to “offer an alternative system to provide [Indian] children and future leaders with tools of survival... and give them a good, relevant education which does not cost them their identity, religion, music, heritage, or pride.”⁶¹ Davis wrote that ‘news of the school spread within the Minneapolis Indian community’ and its popularity grew rapidly. Within a week, ‘the AIM school had fifteen students.’⁶²

These schools revolved around creating and sustaining the Native community. Bellecourt, in a 2003 interview stated, “we were concerned with what was happening right here, in our own families, our own community, and our own children”.⁶³ AIM, along with concerned Native parents, created a force, dedicated to reclaiming Native cultures and correcting generations of miseducation. They dedicated the curriculum to both basic studies and cultural stimulation. At the Heart of the Earth School, ‘Indian Kindergarten students’ were given ‘half hour culture class’.⁶⁴ They were taught to drum, sing and dance to tribal music. In addition, language was also given emphasis to reclaiming Native cultures.

⁵⁷ Julie L. Davis, *Survival Schools: The American Indian Movement and Community Education in the Twin Cities*, p.58.

⁵⁸ John J. Laukaitis, *Community Self-Determination: American Indian Education in Chicago, 1952-2006*, p.63.

⁵⁹ Julie L. Davis, *Survival Schools: The American Indian Movement and Community Education in the Twin Cities*, p.55.

⁶⁰ Thomas D. Peacock and Donald R. Day, ‘Nations within a Nation: The Dakota and Ojibwe of Minnesota’, *Daedalus*, vol.129, issue 3, (2000), pp.137-159, (p.149).

⁶¹ Nicholas Rosenthal, *Reimagining Indian Country: Native American Migration & Identity in Twentieth-century Los Angeles*, (North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), p.146.

⁶² Julie L. Davis, *Survival Schools: The American Indian Movement and Community Education in the Twin Cities*, p. 94.

⁶³ *Ibid*, p.96.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, p.99.

Vicki Howard, a Heart of the Earth teacher and administrator, emphasised the importance of language: “The languages is the heart of our soul, the heart of our spirit, the heart of who we are, as Indian people. Within the language is the *culture*, and the *history*, and the *tradition*.”⁶⁵ Children were taught languages that were lost over generations as a result of the assimilationist system in the United States. This concept was very different to boarding schools, where speaking their own language would result in punishment. These lessons were considered to be profound victories for the Native community under such a repressive system. Jon Reyhner asserted, “indigenous language revitalization is part of a larger attempt by indigenous peoples to retain their cultural strengths.”⁶⁶ Previously, at boarding schools, Native children were punished severely if they spoke their Native language. Dennis Banks recalled that ‘English overpowered anything’ and that he would ‘think in English to avoid being punished’ for speaking his own language.⁶⁷ AIMS survival schools completely opposed this and instead worked to reverse the ‘multigenerational cultural loss’ that nineteenth and twentieth century boarding schools were agents of.⁶⁸ Furthermore, language wasn’t the only focus for the AIM survival school curriculum.

Native children were taught ‘beading and quill work and played traditional games’.⁶⁹ They were ‘exposed’ to ‘traditions and rituals of indigenous spiritual life’.⁷⁰ Like generations before them they ‘discovered the importance of storytelling and oral tradition, and learned the significance of ceremonial objects like pipes, feathers, and drums’.⁷¹ This wasn’t restricted to term time, or classrooms either. During the summer, survival camps were created where Native students ‘participated in a summer-long cultural program’.⁷² Students were given the opportunity to immerse themselves in the ‘seasonal rhythms, physical activities, and conceptual framework of an indigenous way of life’.⁷³ This was particularly helpful for urban Indians as they were able to go to reservations and engage first hand in Native communities. This system taught Native children that their culture was not just a part of history but something

⁶⁵ Julie L. Davis, *Survival Schools: The American Indian Movement and Community Education in the Twin Cities*, p.132.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, p. 131.

⁶⁷ Dennis Banks, *Ojibwa Warrior: Dennis Banks and the rise of the American Indian Movement*, p.33.

⁶⁸ Julie L. Davis, *Survival Schools: The American Indian Movement and Community Education in the Twin Cities*, p. 48.

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, p.132.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, p.133.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, p.132.

⁷² *Ibid*, p.134.

⁷³ *Ibid*.

ongoing, allowing them to carry these practises into their daily lives. However, AIM was neither the first nor the only group to set up schools of this kind.

V. The First Survival School

The first survival school, Rough Rock Demonstration School, was established in 1966, approximately five years prior to that of AIM. Allen D. Yazzie, ‘Chairman of the Navaho Tribal Education Committee’, along with various Navaho leaders, understood that Indian education required ‘unique needs’.⁷⁴ Early in the 1960s, they comprehended that the federal education system neglected ‘several important areas’ concerning Native cultures.⁷⁵ As a result, alongside the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Navaho people established an institution ‘to correct a hundred years of Native American miseducation’.⁷⁶

Rough Rock ‘attracted hundreds of visitors each month’ and soon ‘symbolized the advent of the American Indian self-determination movements in education’.⁷⁷ Similar to AIMs survival schools, they incorporated a culturally inclusive curriculum that promoted teaching Native cultures. The school put a significant emphasis on the importance of bilingual education. Teaching both Native languages and English. Oswald Werner understood that Rough Rock served as an excellent demonstration of the ‘promising techniques of bilingual education’.⁷⁸ This type of education for Native students led him to believe that Rough Rock exhibited ‘some of the best instruction we have seen anywhere...’⁷⁹ The school offered a fundamental education that other schools could not in terms of teaching Native cultures. Although, Rough Rock did face criticism.

The Office of Economic Opportunity produced a report by Donald Erickson and Henrietta Schwartz in 1969. John Collier noted that generally, the report ‘criticized the school’ and that it was ‘unrealistic’.⁸⁰ However, this has been interpreted as a lack of understanding of what exactly the school was trying to achieve. In total, Collier deduced that although Rough Rock

⁷⁴ Robert A. Roessel, Jr, ‘An Overview of the Rough Rock Demonstration School’, *Journal of American Indian Education*, vo. 7, issue 3, (1968), pp.22-14, (p.2).

⁷⁵Ibid.

⁷⁶ John Collier Jr., ‘Survival at Rough Rock: A Historical Overview of Rough Rock Demonstration School’, *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, vol.19, issue 3, (1988), pp.253-269, (p.253).

⁷⁷ John J. Laukaitis, *Community Self-Determination: American Indian Education in Chicago, 1952-2006*, p.63.

⁷⁸ John Collier Jr., ‘Survival at Rough Rock: A Historical Overview of Rough Rock Demonstration School’, (p.264).

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

faced criticism, it was a significant step in reclaiming Native education and in turn Native cultures. He emphasised that the institution triggered ‘five other charter schools built on the Rough Rock model’ making it ‘politically difficult to phase out Rough Rock’.⁸¹ The 1970s, in particular, saw a significant transformation in the approach to Native education and cultural retention and AIM were not exclusively the crusaders of such a cause.

VI. More Native Educational Reforms

The late nineteenth and twentieth century boarding schools overtly sought to conduct cultural genocide. The 1970s era proves time and again to be an era that sought to actively retrieve Native culture that had been attacked by an education system that was inspired by these Federal Boarding Schools. So far, the establishment of survival schools by AIM and the Navaho people has been outlined. Although, the extent of Native lost identity due to such systems of repression reached a far wider context than just these two accomplishments. The Red Power Movement was a nationwide hunt for cultural freedom of expression, and some were fortunate enough to be funded by grants. The Milwaukee Indian Community, for example, set up a school that pursued the retainment of Native cultures. They ‘maintained an “Indian core” that included visiting instructors from local reservations and classes in five Native languages.’⁸² The school was so successful that by 1976, ‘a total of 102 students had attended the school’ and ‘six of the nine teachers were of Native descent.’⁸³ They had Native teachers taking control of Native students education, establishing a connection between them and their endangered cultures.

Little Big Horn School was another alternative for Native American students established in Chicago in 1971. They received a federal grant of \$250,00 and were able to enrol eighty students with a staff of five.⁸⁴ Los Angeles also had its fair share of Native cultural awareness activity. In 1972, Tribal American Consulting Corporation established Tribal American Preschool in California. Tribal American’s curriculum strongly ‘emphasized active learning, with a particular focus on developing an awareness of Indian culture and its contributions to American society’.⁸⁵ A Cherokee Indian; Glenna Amos, recalled:

⁸¹ John Collier Jr., ‘Survival at Rough Rock: A Historical Overview of Rough Rock Demonstration School’, (p.266).

⁸² Nicholas Rosenthal, *Reimagining Indian Country: Native American Migration & Identity in Twentieth-century Los Angeles*, p.146.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, p.147.

“[Tribal American] had a cultural van that would come and the kids could either do tutorials or cultural activities, depending on whether they were behind in school and needed help with reading or math, otherwise they could do cultural activities... The kids really looked forward to that because they got a snack and they got to do their beadwork or grow a plant or whatever they were doing, it meant a lot to them.”⁸⁶

Amos outlines that Tribal American took a mobile approach to spreading knowledge of Native cultures. They would extend the importance of Native identity to a larger audience, strengthening the drive for Native self-determination and adequate education. Explicitly, we see Pratts failure in killing the Indian within. Instead the 1970s saw the growth of Indian culture. Tribal American reasserts the impact of Pan-Indianism within the period. This strengthened both Native pride and consequently culture. Native Americans across the nation were driven to retain the cultural identity and it was not just restricted to certain schools in certain areas. Native newspapers contributed to this collective ideal.

The *Akwesasne Notes*, in 1970, reported that Native Indian volunteers taught native languages. Mary Gilmour conveyed that in Hogansburg, New York, there were children being taught the Mohawk language. She writes that they struggled ‘under pitiful conditions’ and ‘in near-freezing temperatures’ to ‘learn the Mohawk language and culture’.⁸⁷ One instructor, Mrs Ann Jock, described the importance of these lessons. She confided that “Mohawks are losing their language” and that “by starting these classes last year, we have tried to revive the Indian way of life.”⁸⁸ In addition, she expressed that “school history books... depict Indians as savages” and they hoped to teach true Native history and identity.⁸⁹ This exposes the continuation in education in the United States, teaching children that Native cultures were inferior; a system that Boarding Schools ran on. These volunteers taught a program that ‘encompass[ed] Mohawk language, culture, history, crafts and dancing.’⁹⁰ This encouragement of Native pride was not exclusive to children either.

⁸⁶ Nicholas Rosenthal, *Reimagining Indian Country: Native American Migration & Identity in Twentieth-century Los Angeles*, p.147.

⁸⁷ Mary Gilmour, ‘Children Taught Mohawk Language, Culture by Unpaid Volunteers, Huddle Around Stove’, *Akwesasne Notes*, 1st April 1970, p.48.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

Nicholas Rosenthal illustrated that University students took a newfound pride in their Native identity. UCLA, in particular, saw a rise in activity among its Native students in the 1970s. The American Indian Student Association, specifically, ‘provided peer counselling, sponsored Indian speakers and musicians, and organized an Indian Culture week, every May.’⁹¹ Rosenthal noted that ‘such activities were essential for nurturing and retaining Indian students’ as it gave them a sense of community.⁹² It encouraged them to take pride in their cultures. James Monroe, a native student at UCLA recalled:

“[When I enrolled as a student at UCLA, it was] the first time that I really can remember relating to Indians, as something that, I don’t know how you would say it... as an identity... The Indians in Cut Bank [near the Blackfeet reservation in Montana] that I would talk to, play sports, whatever, we didn’t really talk about our Indian heritage that much. At UCLA I took some Indian culture classes, some Indian history...”⁹³

Monroe demonstrated that UCLA possessed an inclusive curriculum and an environment that benefitted Native cultural awareness. It produced elevated pride in a culture that students, like Monroe, had little knowledge of. Like Native children, they were gaining an education in something that had been repressed for generations by systems such as the Native boarding schools. It allowed them to reclaim their identities and no doubt added to the political movements that arose during the 1970s. In fact, many students took part in the Red Power Movement.

Occupations were becoming more popular among young Indians as a form of protest against the inequality that Natives faced. The Occupation of Alcatraz in 1969 was profound in gaining cultural awareness. It was so infamous that it today ‘remains a strong symbol of Indian activism, self-determination, and a rallying point for unified Indian political activities’.⁹⁴ Troy Johnson credited this ‘new campus activism and unrest... [to]manifestations of centuries of mistreatment of Indian people’.⁹⁵ As Monroe outlined, there was a growing awareness of

⁹¹ Nicholas Rosenthal, *Reimagining Indian Country: Native American Migration & Identity in Twentieth-century Los Angeles*, p.149

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Troy Johnson, ‘The Occupation of Alcatraz Island: Roots of American Indian Activism’, *Wicazo Sa Review*, vol.10, issue 2, (1994), pp.63-79, (p.77).

⁹⁵ Ibid, (p.65).

Native identity and pride that created an intolerance towards unequal climate present at the time. Consequently 'young urban college students' claimed Alcatraz by "right of discovery".⁹⁶

Alcatraz was an important island as many remembered the history behind it. For 10,000 to 20,000 years, Alcatraz 'had played a significant role' in Natives lives until the arrival of European colonists.⁹⁷ Native Americans came to see Alcatraz 'serve as a symbol of everything they had been promised but never received from the government'.⁹⁸ In taking it back, these activists were claiming what they believed was theirs by right, labelling themselves the 'Indians of All Tribes'.⁹⁹ They 'called for the establishment of an American Indian University, an Indian Cultural Center, and an American Indian Museum'.¹⁰⁰ In essence, they were staking their claim to their own culture, identity and self-determination. These issues were conveyed in their proclamation.

Upon arrival, the Indians of All Tribes released a proclamation stating how much they would take Alcatraz for, why they felt it was their right and interconnected how Alcatraz reflected reservation life. It is fair to say that the Proclamation was a very satirical piece of literature aimed at exposing centuries of inhumane treatment conducted by the government. For example, they stated they would pay '24 dollars in glass beads and red cloth' as this was what colonists paid them, which was ultimately colonists exploiting indigenous people.¹⁰¹ They were stating that they would purchase the island back for relatively nothing, as this was what they were given. In addition, they reflect on the assimilation process that indigenous people went through. In helping any white people on the island, they vow to teach them their education, religion and way of life 'in order to help them achieve our level of civilization'.¹⁰² They hope to 'raise them and all their white brothers up from their savage and unhappy state'.¹⁰³ This was exactly what the government tried to do with Boarding Schools. They forced their Christian religion and colonial traditions onto Native children to save them from uncivilized ways. In occupying

⁹⁶ Troy R. Johnson, *The Occupation of Alcatraz Island: Indian Self-determination and the Rise of Indian Activism*, p.1.

⁹⁷ Troy R. Johnson, *The Occupation of Alcatraz Island: Indian Self-determination and the Rise of Indian Activism*, p.2.

⁹⁸ Ibid, p.1.

⁹⁹ *Alcatraz Proclamation*, <http://www.foundsf.org/index.php?title=ALCATRAZ_Proclamation> [accessed 9th April 2018].

¹⁰⁰ Troy R. Johnson, *The Occupation of Alcatraz Island: Indian Self-determination and the Rise of Indian Activism*, p.1.

¹⁰¹ *Alcatraz Proclamation*.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

Alcatraz and producing this proclamation, they were acknowledging the ill treatment that they had experienced at the hands of the government.

Richard Oakes, a Mohawk leader, took the role of spokesman for those on Alcatraz Island. He reinstated that they occupied Alcatraz “to liberate ourselves for the sake of cultural survival”.¹⁰⁴ Therefore acknowledging the assimilate system forced upon Natives in their proclamation, he reflects upon the cultural damage they were exposed to. As a result, it becomes their mission to reverse this to ensure the survival of their culture. Lastly their proclamation outlines that Alcatraz is perfect for Native Americans, as everything about the island reflects the current situation in reservations. They assert that it is ‘isolated from modern facilities’, ‘has no fresh running water’, has inadequate sanitation facilities, ‘no oil or mineral rights’, ‘no industry’, ‘no health care facilities’, ‘non-productive’ land and ‘no educational facilities’.¹⁰⁵ Effectively, Alcatraz was an adequate land for Native people because it lacked basic resources. The hope was that in occupying Alcatraz, they would be creating awareness of these issues. Oakes noted that he hoped they were “instrumental in bringing awareness [to] young people” and not only of the struggle but also the “good in the traditional aspect of life”.¹⁰⁶

Regarding education, the activists hoped to establish self-determination within Native education, and this was demonstrated in their own establishments on the island. They had the fear that in “ten years from now, there may not be anybody out on the reservation to retain our culture, and to be able to relate to it”.¹⁰⁷ So it was important that when they founded their own school on the island, that it embodied cultural lessons in the curriculum. Similar to that of AIM, Rough Rock, Little Big Horn, Tribal American and even UCLA was the same concern over educating Native cultures. This combined with the growing number of children on the island the Big Rock School was created.

Margaret Goldstein emphasised that ‘increasingly, children were coming to live on Alcatraz’.¹⁰⁸ Adam Fortunate Eagle and Tim Findley described that there were ‘kids

¹⁰⁴ Mary Gilmour, ‘Children Taught Mohawk Language, Culture by Unpaid Volunteers, Huddle Around Stove’, p.48.

¹⁰⁵ *Alcatraz Proclamation*.

¹⁰⁶ Mary Gilmour, ‘Children Taught Mohawk Language, Culture by Unpaid Volunteers, Huddle Around Stove’, p.48.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*.

¹⁰⁸ Margaret J. Goldstein, *You are Now on Indian Land; The American Indian Occupation of Alcatraz Island, California, 1969*, (Minneapolis: Twenty-First Century Books, 2011), p.86.

everywhere’ and ‘adults knew some sort of structure needed to be established’.¹⁰⁹ Both went on to highlight that establishing a school argued their case in ‘trying to make Alcatraz... an Indian educational center’.¹¹⁰ Subsequently, the Big Rock School was born. This was considered especially good since the island inhabited students ‘familiar with the neglect of true American history and cultural history in their own studies’.¹¹¹ Additionally, some were products of Indian boarding schools ‘where part of the intention of education was to make them forget their own history and their own languages’.¹¹² Therefore, the determination to create an inclusive curriculum was stronger.

Roughly twelve children enrolled and most were in grades one to six. Coinciding with the schools already outlined, they taught a standard education and added Indian history and culture. Eagle and Findley noted that, much like the boarding schools, the schools then ‘still held their mission to be partly that of stifling tribal tradition... and “aboriginal” culture’, and often this would include the use of physical punishment.¹¹³ This kind of punishment was considered to be ‘barbaric’.¹¹⁴ Education provided at Big Rock sought to allow children freedom of expression and was ‘given a perspective on history and the times that reflected their own cultures’.¹¹⁵

VII. Conclusion

Overall, federal off-reservation boarding schools of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries failed in conducting cultural genocide. They did, however, cause vast amounts generational damage. They tore families apart, led to the near extinction of some Native languages and the loss of cultural identity of so many. The punishment and humiliation that children were subjected to at these institutions allowed children to believe their cultures were inferior and erroneous. When all these factors are combined, the downfall of Native cultures undoubtedly was inevitable. However, the Red Power Movement of the 1960s and 1970s symbolised the survival of Native cultures and therefore the ultimate failure of off-reservation

¹⁰⁹ Adam Fortunate Eagle and Tim Findley, *Heart of the Rock: The Indian Invasion of Alcatraz*, (Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 2014), p.142.

¹¹⁰ Adam Fortunate Eagle and Tim Findley, *Heart of the Rock: The Indian Invasion of Alcatraz*, p.142.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

boarding schools. The numerous establishments determine how Pan-Indianism led to a revolt against the US education system. A system that neglected Native culture and consequently a continuation of the boarding school scheme. The newfound political climate symbolised Native Americans as a collective, reclaiming their cultures through self-determination and perseverance. A concept that Richard Pratt, and those alike, would never have seen coming. Even the participation of Native students at university served as a pivotal point in creating awareness of Native American issues and the importance of continuing their cultures. Consequently, the establishment of Native run education ultimately symbolises that even after a century of miseducation triggered by these boarding schools, Native cultures still survive.

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