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Carol Tonnies
Utah State University

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AWAY FROM THE HOMELAND: WHY STUDENTS FOUGHT TO KEEP
INTERMOUNTAIN INDIAN SCHOOL OPEN

By

Carol Tonnies

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of the requirement for the degree

of

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In

History

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In 1971, Lehman L. Brightman, president of United Native Americans (UNA), visited Intermountain Indian School in Brigham City at the request of parents and students. After inspecting the school, he compiled a series of complaints and recommended the immediate closure of the school. His complaints included the use of Chlorpromazine (Thorazine) to treat drunkenness, the conditions of the food and dorms, and the lack of Indian control of the school. He supported filing a law suit against the school on behalf of the students. He recommended, "They must, at all cost be moved out of the heart of 'Mormon country' and be returned to the security of their own people. . . before it is too late."¹

Thirteen years later students were fighting to keep the school open. In 1984 students at Intermountain collected signatures to stop the school's closure, organized a student 24 mile run to the federal building in Ogden, Utah to deliver them, and prepared traditional dances to bring attention to their cause. Gail Nahwahquaw, student body president, delivered a passionate speech on why the school was vital for Indian students.

What accounts for this apparent change of heart? Why were students so ardently defending the school that, in 1971, red power activists had condemned? Intermountain students didn't dispute the criticism but forced their own agenda on the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) school system and met their own goals for education, opportunity and support. They countered BIA assimilation goals and developed a Pan-Indian identity, using their knowledge to serve Native American communities. They made deliberate choices to take advantage of educational and social opportunities at Intermountain. As a

¹ Lehman Brightman, "Intermountain Indian School: A Case Study of Educational Failure," *New School of Education Journal* 2, no. 4 (1973): 56-76.

result, they developed a complex Pan-Indian identity that merged tribal and off reservation worlds to suit their own purposes.

In 2012, during a school reunion in Brigham City, I supervised and conducted a series of interviews with students who had attended Intermountain Indian School (which changed its name to Intermountain Inter-Tribal School in 1974). I expected the interviews to reflect a positive bias. Even so I wanted to learn what made these students so enthusiastic about their boarding school experience, given the historically negative opinion of Native American boarding schools and the condemnation Intermountain received from Brightman. These interviews revealed many factors that contributed to Intermountain students' support of their school. Alumni told me that they enjoyed the educational and extracurricular activities at Intermountain that they did not have at home. At Intermountain, they felt a stronger sense of their identity as Native Americans and they developed strong peer relationships. Attending Intermountain offered them access to support from staff who helped them overcome personal and familial difficulties.

Oral histories can be problematic in historical research because of the faulty nature of memory, the difficulty in making qualitative judgments based on a small sample, and the bias often inherent in the method of obtaining the pool of interviewees. These interviews were no exception. The students interviewed were recalling events that happened between 32 and 55 years ago. Since I interviewed alumni at an Intermountain Reunion, the sample self-selected and cannot be considered representative of the student body as a whole. Despite these limitations the interviews contribute great value to the historical discussion because they give voice to a group that previously were not represented in the historical record. Historian Linda Shopes points out that:

Insofar as oral history interview requires formal engagement with a person outside the scholarly world about matters that are nevertheless historical, oral history is de facto a kind of public history. And insofar as an oral history research project involves more than one narrator, there are built-in opportunities to expand the conversation outward, into a public discussion about history.²

This research contributed to an exhibit, *Outside the Homeland*, that opened at the Box Elder Museum in Spring of 2012.³ The interviews added the perspectives of the students to that project. I used the interviews in making generalizations, but only as back-up sources that supported historical research already done on Native American boarding schools.

Brightman filed a federal law suit in order to get the school shut down. He argued that article VI in the Treaty between the United States of America and the Navajo Tribe of Indians, ratified July 25, 1868, guaranteed Native Americans access to education.⁴ Unfortunately for Brightman and other red power activists, including Richard L. Young from Native American Legal Defense, Inc. and Intermountain student, Teddy K. Austin, who appealed, the judge dismissed their claims. Judge James Emmett Barrett, the presiding judge with the U. S. Court of Appeals, Tenth Circuit. argued that previous United States treaties cannot legally negate present United States sovereignty.⁵

² Linda Shopes, "Oral History and the Study of Communities," in *The Oral History Reader*, eds. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (New York, New York, Routledge, 2008), 268.

³ The exhibit, "Outside the Homeland: The Intermountain Indian School," was curated by Kaia Landon and Katie Conrad. Carol Tonnies and Joanne Penrod helped acquire oral histories from former students of the school. Oral histories with former faculty and staff were completed by Kathy Bradford Box Elder Museum, Brigham City, Utah.

<http://exhibits.boxeldermuseum.org/exhibits/show/intermountain-indian-school>

⁴ Historic Documents: "Treaty Between the United States of America and the Navajo Tribe of Indians," New Mexico State University, <http://reta.nmsu.edu/modules/longwalk/lesson/document/treaty.htm#introduction> accessed August 8, 2016.

⁵ National Indian Youth Council, Intermountain Indian School Chapter v R. Bruce, 485 F2d 97 (10 Cir. 1973).

Meanwhile, Intermountain students drafted the Indian Student Bill of Rights (ISBR), and presented it to the Senate Appropriations Committee on April 11, 1972. The student activists asked for privacy, the ability to maintain their culture and the right to organize. The ISBR became BIA official policy in 1974.⁶ This example of Native American student activism shows how Intermountain students, even though they lost the court case, brought about change in education policy at Native American boarding schools.

Brightman's complaints and the student bill of rights exemplify the kinds of hardships scholars and activists documented in their histories of American Indian boarding schools. In a foundational work on these boarding schools, David Adams chronicles the impact of a system that forced students to travel far from home, stripped them of their native culture, and imposed assimilation goals of white education.

Some of the abuses like lack of food and privacy that Adams notes are echoed by Brightman. Adam quotes Estelle Brown, a teacher for the BIA, who remembered, "I did not know that for 16 years I was to see other children systematically underfed."⁷ Jacqueline Fear-Segal examined how the school newspaper at the first Native American boarding school in Carlisle Pennsylvania infringed on student privacy. He refers to a column, in the school newspaper called "The Man on the Bandstand," which was published anonymously and reported on student behavior. The students did not know

http://judicialview.com/Court-Cases/Constitutional_Law/National-Indian-Youth-Council-Intermountain-Indian-School-Chapter-v.-R-Bruce/17/364801.

⁶ Senate Committee on Appropriations, "Indian Student Bill of Rights and Code of Conduct for BIA Secondary-Level Schools," *Senate Hearings before the Committee on Appropriations, Department of the Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations*, 92nd Cong., 2d sess., April 11, 1972, 3728-3750. As quoted in Melissa Ruhl, *Forward You Must Go: Chemawa Indian Boarding School and Student Activism in the 1960s and 1970s* (Eugene: University of Oregon Press 2011), 55.

⁷ David Wallace Adams, *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995), 115.

who was spying on them and collecting information. Fear-Segal relates, “From his bandstand in the middle of the school grounds, this “man” supposedly watched the children, eavesdropped on their conversations, and then reported what he heard in the pages of the *Indian Helper*.⁸” Students did not know who was watching them and feared that their behavior might be seen and reported. Administrators sacrificed the students’ privacy in order to maintain their control over the school. Native American Rights advocates have been critical of this type of surveillance and the lack of adequate nutrition since the beginning of the boarding school program.

Coercive medical care practices, like the use of Thorazine on Intermountain students, were common in other Native American boarding schools. For example, school officials routinely administered inoculations. K. Tsianina Lomawaima quotes a Choctaw woman, who was a student at Chilocco school, “at the beginning of every school year they inoculate you, and they lined us up just like you do in the army, I used to say, like cattle, and I remember I had five inoculations...”⁹ While not as draconian as Intermountain’s use of Thorazine, the military-type administration of health care reinforced students’ vulnerability. The students were treated as if they had no choice and procedures were regulated by the school for school’s convenience.

Historian David Adams argued that the federal government established Indian schools with a number of objectives: to defray the expense of war with indigenous people, to civilize the American Indian, and to spread Christianity. According to Adams,

⁸ Clifford E. Trafzer, Jean A. Keller, and Lorene Sisquoc, eds., *Boarding School Blues: Revisiting American Indian Educational Experiences* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 102.

⁹ Margaret L. Archuleta, Brenda J. Child, and K. Tsianina Lomawaima, eds. *Away from Home: American Indian Boarding School Experiences* (Phoenix: The Heard Museum, 2000), 25.

"[t]he next Indian war would be ideological and psychological and it would be waged against children."¹⁰ The federal government established the first schools for Native Americans on reservations. By 1860 forty-eight of these day schools existed.¹¹ Adams contends the aim was to assimilate Native Americans into white culture. BIA officials claimed education would show the superiority of Euro American culture. Adams declares, "In spite of these claims, policy makers soon became disenchanted with the day school model because it suffered from one overwhelming defect: by itself, it simply was not an effective instrument of assimilation."¹² In response, the BIA developed schools far from the students' families in hopes of overwhelming the influence parents had on their children. Colonel Richard Henry Pratt developed the most well-known Native American boarding school in 1879, in Carlisle in Pennsylvania. As a model for off reservation boarding schools, Pratt's goal was complete assimilation with military-like discipline, changing the student's appearance, forbidding native language or culture, teaching Christianity, and having students work in the local community (called the Outing Program). By removing Indian children from their homes and forbidding anything that would identify them as Native Americans, Pratt hoped to "Kill the Indian, save the man." Removing students from their homes and forcing them to accept Christianity and Euro-American values, Native Americans would become "productive" members of society. Pratt argued that education would produce productive workers and citizens and thus solve the "Indian problem."¹³

¹⁰ Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 27.

¹¹ Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 28.

¹² Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 29.

¹³ Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 52.

After the introduction of Pratt's school in Pennsylvania, off reservation schools continued to grow and the BIA established a common structure and similar procedures. The BIA divided the schools into four levels: day, primary, grammar, and high school. They intended the day and primary schools operating on the reservation to feed into the off reservation boarding schools. High school did not materialize until the 1920s, so off reservation schools served as grammar schools, providing students with an equivalent to an 8th grade education. In 1891, the United States Congress passed a law requiring Native Americans to attend school. Now BIA officials could use any means necessary to register Native American children in BIA schools.

As time passed, many Native Americans no longer spoke their languages because of their boarding school experience. Some did not pass their language on to their children to spare them the humiliation that they faced at boarding schools when they spoke their native tongue. Adams also notes that students had to adjust to "white man's food-and the lack of it."¹⁴ Finally, the Outing Program as operated by Pratt, prepared students to accept their subservient position in the labor market, according to Adams. Pratt developed the Outing Program as another method of assimilation. Pratt arranged for students to live and work Anglo homes for a summer or up to a year so they could learn a trade and the white man's culture. These methods of assimilation continued as standard procedures as boarding schools developed.

The first major policy change in Native American Education developed in 1928 as a response to the Meriam Report.¹⁵ K. Tsianiana Lomawaima and Teresa L. McCarthy

¹⁴ Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 114.

¹⁵ The Meriam Report was commissioned by the Department of the Interior to look at Native American education. The report supports Adam's claims of inadequate facilities, food and health care. It recognizes the desirability of education close to home and the disruption of native

claim that even though the Meriam Report advised promoting native culture, Native American activism enlisted actual changes at boarding schools. Instead of assimilation, the Meriam report advocated supporting Indian desires to "remain Indian."¹⁶ John Collier became the Commissioner of Indian Affairs in the Roosevelt administration in 1933. Despite his efforts to advocate reform, federal paternalism remained. Native Americans fought for the promise of reforms even as old ideas couched in new terms continued to dominate policy. The Outing Program and vocational education remained central to boarding school curriculum. The Meriam Report recommended accreditation for high schools; however, funding for vocational programs dominated. Teaching locally "relevant material" was another recommendation of the Meriam Report.¹⁷ The BIA continued to emphasize vocational training as relevant and did not prioritize accredited high schools within the boarding school system. Indian demands for accredited high schools did make an impact. In 1936 there were thirteen accredited high schools, but by 1940 there were 42 due to Native American advocacy.¹⁸ After the Meriam Report, boarding schools began to change their strict assimilation policy by phasing out military regimentation and uniforms, but they continued to impose white values through character education imbedded in the curriculum.

Esther Burnett, a BIA employee and Shoshone, fought this trend by focusing on Native American values of bravery, generosity, sharing, respect for elders, individual

culture caused by the boarding school experience. Lewis Meriam, et al, *The Problem of Indian Administration* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1928).

¹⁶ K. Tsianiana Lomawaima and Teresa L. McCarthy, *To Remain Indian: Lessons in Democracy from a Century of Native American Education* (New York: Teachers College Press, Columbia University, 2006), 68.

¹⁷ Lomawaima and McCarthy, *To Remain Indian*, 71.

¹⁸ Lomawaima and McCarthy, *To Remain Indian*, 73.

freedom, and respect for the environment in her teaching. Although she would hide her native-based lessons, eventually the BIA presented her with the Distinguished Service Citation.¹⁹ Despite federal paternalism, Natives Americans pushed for their own interests by developing accredited high schools that offered academic courses and curriculum that emphasized Native American values.

In the 1950s, one government solution to the "Indian problem" was to end the protected status of reservations through the policy of termination. According to some congressional officials, Native Americans needed to get off the reservation, become urbanized, and assimilate into the Anglo-American culture. Conveniently, Native American lands that showed potential for profit could be transferred into white hands. Congress passed House Concurrent Resolution 108 and Public Law 280, aimed at terminating federal trust responsibility and Commissioner of Indian Affairs Dillon S. Meyer set about urbanizing Indians. Despite these renewed pressures to assimilate, local native leaders created a Native American centered curriculum.²⁰ For example, Ella Deloria (Dakota), Muthaura Bronson (Cherokee), and Esther Burnett are all examples of Indian Educators who brought their own ideas into the classroom. According to Lomawaima and McCarthy, "Deloria and Bronson taught their students self-respect, pride, and a sense of Indian values." Burnett, a teacher at the Eufaula Boarding School in Oklahoma, claims her inspiration for teaching Indian students came from Deloria and Bronson. For example, she believed in incorporating her students' backgrounds into her teaching. Even though she knew promoting Indian traditions could have severe consequences for her job, she involved herself in their lives. As Lomawaima and

¹⁹ Lomawaima and McCarthy, *To Remain Indian*, 79.

²⁰ Lomawaima and McCarthy, *To Remain Indian*, 91.

McCarthy state, "She used peer tutors among her first and second graders to help the Creek speakers, and she stomp danced with her Creek compatriots from Haskell days, knowing if her superiors found out, she would be fired on the spot."²¹ Even though the Meriam Report recommended aiding Indians in maintaining their culture if they desired to do so, the paternalistic nature of the BIA boarding schools was firmly entrenched and change often had to come from Native Americans themselves.

Despite the culturally destructive goals of off reservation boarding schools, historical studies point out that often Native Americans used the experience to their advantage. Historians K. Tsianina Lomawaima and Brenda J. Child propose, in some cases, rather than eliminating Indian culture the boarding school experience preserved it. They found that Native Americans were often able to use the schools to strengthen their cultural identity and advance educationally.²² Lomawaima and Child observed that ". . . school officials found it impossible to neatly excise subjects of native skills and knowledge from their cultural context and the languages that expressed them."²³ According to Lomawaima and Child, students fought for a more main stream education by rejecting vocational education in favor of accredited high schools. They contend, "[s]tudents at Haskell and Chilocco were outraged that the new plans that resulted in their schools' loss of accreditation and many agitated to transfer."²⁴ Boarding schools became a place where Native Americans imposed their own ideas on the role education would play in their lives. The Intermountain case echoes Lomawaima and Child's conclusions.

²¹ Lomawaima and McCarthy, *To Remain Indian*, 78.

²² Lomawaima and McCarthy, *To Remain Indian*, 90.

²³ Lomawaima and McCarthy, *To Remain Indian*, 63.

²⁴ Lomawaima and McCarthy, *To Remain Indian*, 70.

Students found ways to retain their culture, for example, by cooking their traditional dishes in creative ways. Jennie Begaii recalled:

Well sometimes we'd get food from the kitchen that we would make fry bread or something like that. Some of the boys cooked, and we made some sort of chili thing because everybody had a certain kind of food that they ate most of the time on the reservation. So we made tacos and potatoes and all this stuff and just roll it up and put it in a box. Then at night everybody would get in, they would line up and get their snacks. They like that. Sometimes they would get meat and make stew with fry bread or tortillas. They didn't make things like that in the dining room.²⁵

Mickey Nelson, who ran the craft store on campus for a while, remembered, "The kids would go up in the mountains and get a mountain goat or a sheep and bring it down into the dorms and strip it and do all the stuff so they could eat it."²⁶

The students also adapted to the boarding school in ways that increased their educational opportunities. In 1983, the last school year for Intermountain, Student Body President Gail Nahwahquaw clearly had developed skills as a leader, activist and speaker. In her passionate speech demanding the government keep their school open, Gail said, "Sending us back home means sending us back to schools we have already been unsuccessful at or back to the environment where troubled youth could not receive the help they needed."²⁷ Glenn I. Latham, director of the Exceptional Child Center at Utah State University agreed with Nahwahquaw when he noted, "We have found that 91 percent of the student body at Intermountain School is at either moderate or high risk in

²⁵ Jennie Begaii, interview by Kathy Bradford, June 12, 2009, "Box Elder Museum Oral History Collection," identifier 09.13.1, Box Elder Museum, Brigham City, Utah. <http://collections.boxeldermuseum.org/index.php/Detail/objects/09.13.1>. Box Elder Museum Oral History Collection, accessed 1/13/2016.

²⁶ Mickey Nelson interview by Kathy Bradford, August 12 2009, Box Elder Museum Oral History Collection," identifier 09.15.1, Box Elder Museum, Brigham City, Utah. <http://collections.boxeldermuseum.org/index.php/Detail/objects/09.15.1>, accessed 1/13/2016.

²⁷ Intermountain School Graphic communications class, *Intermountain Run*. YouTube, Video production, 1983, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y108lZbO6rY>.

terms of academic success in virtually any other setting. Fifty-two percent of the students enrolled at Intermountain are there because they were referred there by the courts or some local jurisdiction because there was no local program to meet their needs.”²⁸

Nahwahquaw likely would not have had the opportunity to serve in student government on her reservation in Wisconsin; Intermountain gave her that. She mentioned the limited experiences at home and the push back she got and still gets from her family for leaving her people to seek other opportunities. Reflecting on her motivations for staying at Intermountain, she remembered, “I wanted to be known for something more than just being someone’s sister or cousin.”²⁹ She was president of a school, wrote a speech to save her school, and became involved in the political process. She is now the director of Tribal Affairs for the Wisconsin Health Department.³⁰

Besides educational opportunities, the students enjoyed the extra-curricular activities. The school, as a former military rehabilitation hospital, included one hundred buildings, a pool, a 300 hundred seat theater, four bowling alleys, two gyms, four tennis courts, basketball courts, and a small golf course.³¹ Students enjoyed playing on sports teams and competing with other area schools. There were also school sponsored outings to places such as Lagoon, an amusement park located in Farmington, Utah. Linda Tall fondly remembered Lagoon and other outings: "The biggest and fun memory I have of a

²⁸ Anne Bridgeman, "Plan to Shut Indian School Sparks Outcry," *Education Week*, April 11, 1984. <http://www.edweek.org/e/nw/articles/1984/04/11/05410008.h03.html>. Accessed March 1, 2016.

²⁹ Gail Nahwahquaw, written interview by the author, March 31, 2016 by email. Transcript in author’s possession.

³⁰ Wisconsin Health Department Tribal Resources Directory. <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/tribalaffairs/contacts.htm>.

³¹ Lewis A. Williams, "The Intermountain Indian School" (master's thesis, Utah State University, 1991), 2.

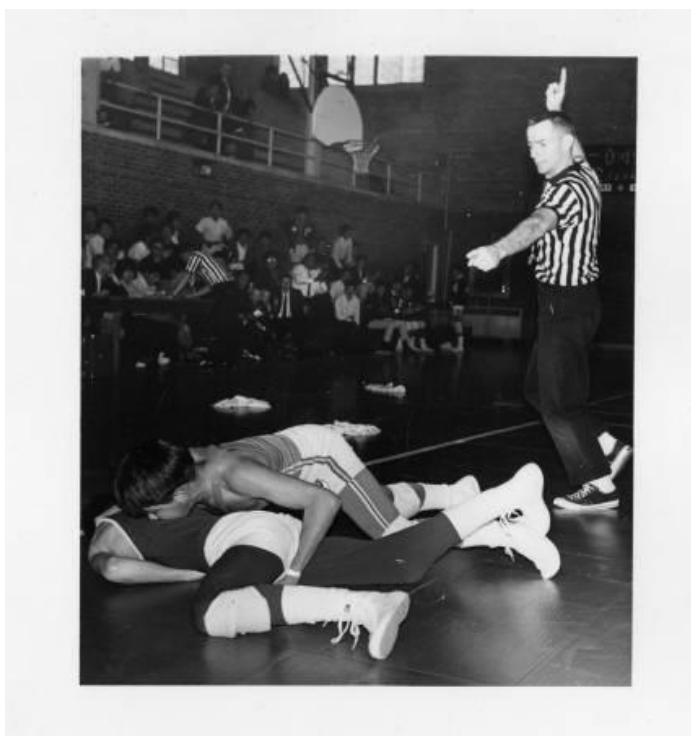
trip was them taking us to Lagoon. It was kind of like an end of the year trip, but because of being on the student council we went to Park City, the ski town."³² The students went there for a leadership conference. Students formed friendships, experienced new places, and developed new skills from the activities outside of the regular school days. When the school closed in 1984, the student body had a surplus of funds from the gift store profits, so they needed to spend or lose it. They used the money to benefit students with trips, t-shirts, and recognition for accomplishments.

Tim Cree recalled,

As far as my sophomore year-I went out for baseball...I played baseball for three years, wrestled for two years. My senior year I made it to finals. I think it was at Utah State, I think it was nine of us that made the team. We went to regional and then went to Utah State. We wrestled here at Box Elder High School for regional, and I took third there and then we went to state. That was an experience!³³

³² Oral History Collection, Box Elder Museum, identifier 2012.14.1. I am changing names of all former students interviewed in the oral history project according to IRB requirements and identifying them by identifier number except for those students whose names appear in published records.

³³ Oral History Collection, Box Elder Museum, identifier 2012.13.1.



Boys wrestling match, Intermountain Indian School in Brigham City, Utah. Courtesy of Special Collection and Archives, Merrill-Cazier Library Utah State University Logan, Utah.³⁴

In this picture a student from Intermountain wrestles a student from another school. When Tim Cree was at Intermountain his wrestling team went to regionals. This experience formed part of his identity, he used the dominate culture's structure to define a part of who he was. Some students at Intermountain noted that they did not have such opportunities at their home schools. For example, Vanessa Paz recalled, "Yes back home on the reservation there was a lot of prejudice going on back there. I almost got kind of pushed aside when it comes to basketball, baseball, track and all that. And it was good because when I came up to the school I was more, I was athletic."³⁵ Although far from

³⁴ Intermountain Indian School Photograph Collection:1955-1970. Special Collections and Archives, Merrill-Cazier Library Utah State University Logan, Utah.

³⁵ Oral History Collection, Box Elder Museum, identifier 2012.25.1.

home, the size of the school, its exclusively Native American student body, and its facilities provided opportunities that were not available at home.

Lomawaima and McCarty define the top down change in Indian education as "zones of safety." They argue that dominant society only appreciates non-threatening aspects of Native American culture. For example, arts and crafts bought on reservations or at the shop at Intermountain by tourist or local residents do not threaten the dominate culture's marketplace. Accordingly, it was not until indigenous languages faced extinction that bilingual education became desirable. Lomawaima and McCarthy claim Native American students were able to use "windows of opportunity" created by increasing zones of safety to promote their desires for education.³⁶

Intermountain was approved by Congress because Senator Arthur V. Watkins wanted to further termination policy, but the students who attended found their own uses for the "windows of opportunity" open to them. First, crafts became popularized; then language restrictions gave way; and finally students increased their control over day to day activities. Intermountain operated a craft store to raise money for school activities. Mickey Nelson, who ran the gift shop from 1978 until the school closed, remembered that, "Some of the parents brought things when they came to see the students and that would pay their way."³⁷ Miss Neff, a teacher at the school, taught the students weaving. Paula Zah, a student at Intermountain from 1973 to 1977, won awards for the weaving she did for Miss Neff. Zah recalled, "I entered my belts in a contest here in Brigham City, and I won first place."³⁸ John Curry a student who attended Intermountain from 1964 to

³⁶ Lomawaima and McCarthy, *To Remain Indian*, 116.

³⁷ Mickey Nelson interview by Kathy Bradford, August 12 2009, "Intermountain Indian School Oral History Collection," identifier 09.15.1, Box Elder Museum, Brigham City, Utah.

³⁸ Oral History Collection, Box Elder Museum, Identifier 2012.23.1.

1969 witnessed the change in language restrictions in his lifetime. As a young student, he remembered that if he spoke Navajo at school he would be reprimanded by his teachers. As an older student he could speak Navajo, but felt restricted in his expressing his opinion. Later, he noticed, students were encouraged to speak their native languages and to express themselves freely. He said, "You know, the Indian power thing has a whole lot to do with the Indian Nation. For a while, the Indian Nation started to speak their mind, like how they really felt. It was not just here, but across the United States."³⁹ And by the 1970s students at Intermountain authored a bill of rights that was adopted by the BIA. Contrary to Senator Watkins' goals, Native Americans used the school to strengthen their identity as Native Americans. Students began to see themselves as part of a larger group and being Native American was no longer just tribe specific. As Curry mentions, Indian power meant adopting a Pan-Indian identity. Patricia Dixon and Clifford E. Trafzer argued that, "Through the schools, students join a new community of Native Americans."⁴⁰

Motivated by a desire to create jobs in Brigham City and to further his termination policies, United States Senator Arthur Watkins, from Utah, used his influence to promote the creation of the school. Brigham City's Bushnell General Military Hospital operated from 1942 through 1946 on the site that was to become Intermountain Indian School. The hospital closed shortly after the end of World War II. The school opened its doors as an Indian boarding school in 1950. Watkins's goals were to assimilate Native Americans into mainstream society and replace the jobs lost in Brigham City by the closure of the

³⁹ Oral History Collection, Box Elder Museum, identifier 2012.21.1.

⁴⁰ Patricia Dixon and Clifford E. Trafzer, "The Place of American Indian Boarding Schools in Contemporary Society," eds. Clifford E. Trafzer, Jean A. Keller, and Lorene Sisquoc (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 236.

hospital.⁴¹ The BIA supported the creation of Intermountain Indian School and President Truman signed the bill allocating the funds May 1949. It was a late arrival to the Indian boarding school system. After World War II, boarding schools were losing favor among some Native Americans and the BIA. Intermountain would open as an all Navajo boarding school and become the largest boarding school in the country with a capacity of over 2000 students.⁴² It was conceived as a school for only Navajos and remained that way for 24 years. Clair Olson believed the reason Intermountain started as a school just for Navajos was "because they were the largest tribe in the United States and had the greatest need for schools."⁴³

Despite the public support for the school, some Brigham City residents remained apprehensive of the influx of Navajo students into their community. Student interviews offer varied opinions on how jobs and local prejudice influenced the behavior of the residents. Linda Tall said, "I remember there were some people that were not very nice a couple of older people might not be, but most people were nice and they didn't keep us from walking into town."⁴⁴ Susan Rodney recalled, "In Brigham City alone I never had any problems with the community. People were very kind always. We'd go over to their houses."⁴⁵ Rodney was involved with a Mormon congregation which may have provided

⁴¹ Kent Ralph Rich, "History of Intermountain School, Brigham City Utah: Part 1, 1968" (Master's Thesis, University of Utah, 1968), 1.

⁴²Bureau of Indian Affairs, Office of Indian Education Programs, "All Indian Study," (Albuquerque: Indian Education Resource Center, 1974), Utah State University, Merrill-Cazier Library, Special Collections and Archives. <http://digital.lib.usu.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/IndSchool/id/3281/rec/1>. Accessed April 4, 2016.

⁴³Clair Olson interview by Kathy Bradford, March 11, 2002, Box Elder Museum Oral History Collection," MS163, Box Elder Museum, Brigham City, Utah.

⁴⁴ Oral History Collection, Box Elder Museum, identifier 2012.21.1.

⁴⁵ Oral History Collection, Box Elder Museum, identifier 2012.17.1.

her with a different experience than other students. Jennie Begaii remembered an article in the local paper that said, "After the school closed one lady said, 'people always said the Indian students stole this and that, well they are not here anymore and we still have that problem.'"⁴⁶ Jean Crow felt that, "Back then it seemed like they didn't want us here. It felt like they thought we were all trouble makers."⁴⁷ Vanessa Paz remembered going into town to purchase materials for her Home Economics teacher. She thought, "They were nice."⁴⁸ As Jean Crow put it "there are good and bad in every group and sometimes they just didn't understand us."⁴⁹ Fran Holt, an Indian from Oklahoma whose dad worked for Intermountain, recalled, "But you know, some of the older people in Brigham City weren't used to Indians, and they were not nice to them."⁵⁰ The students experienced both prejudice and acceptance from the citizens of the town. The students remembered Brigham City residents with mixed feelings. Whether or not Brigham City residents welcomed them, job growth created zones of safety for some Intermountain students and provided them opportunity to expand their educational experiences.

As time went on, curriculum at Intermountain reflected an appreciation for native art, language, and food, but still put Native American students at an academic disadvantage with the emphasis on vocational training rather than academic subjects. Gail Nahwahquaw, valedictorian in 1984, recalled she felt unprepared for college and had to take remedial classes. John Curry, who attended from 1964 to 1969, felt that the

⁴⁶ Jennie Begaii, interview by Kathy Bradford, Brigham City, Utah, June 12, 2009. Intermountain Indian School Oral History Collection, identifier 09.13.1, Box Elder Museum, Brigham City.

⁴⁷ Oral History Collection, Box Elder Museum, identifier 2012.19.1.

⁴⁸ Oral History Collection, Box Elder Museum, identifier 2012.25.1.

⁴⁹ Oral History Collection, Box Elder Museum, identifier 2012.19.1.

⁵⁰ Fran Holt interview by Kathy Bradford, Brigham City, April 20, 2009, Intermountain Indian School Oral History Collection, identifier 09.7.1, Box Elder Museum, Brigham City, Utah.

discipline and focus on vocational curriculum prepared him for the military, and his classmates for work in the trades. He said, “A lot of people I know that have graduated have really good roles. They’ve become really good welders. They’re boiler-makers, they’re pipe-fitters and they’re making \$50 to \$60 dollars an hour.”⁵¹ Although vocational education was still more successful than academics, teachers in the BIA system in produced culturally sensitive materials modeling Deloria, Bronson and Burnett's ideas.

T. D. Allen created a language arts program for the BIA in 1969, centered on Indian culture. While commenting on the need to make curriculum relevant to the students Alan contends "... this discovery is especially important in the BIA schools where too often by accident or implicit decision, the superiority of the dominant American culture has been exclusively taught. The reading of material written by Indians in English classes will valuably declare the truth that literature is the expression of the total human spirit.”⁵² Alexa West, a teacher at Intermountain, used Alan’s ideas in her writing curriculum. She encouraged the students to produce a literary publication based on their writing. The following poem is an example of student writing published in the literary magazine in the 1976-1977 school year:

⁵¹ Oral History Collection, Box Elder Museum, identifier2012.21.1.

⁵² T. D. Allen John Povey, “Writing to Create Ourselves: A Manuel for Teachers of English and Creative Writing In the Bureau of Indian Affairs Secondary School,” *Indian Education Curriculum Bulletin 2* (Washington D.C.: Bureau of Indian Affairs, 1969), xv.

I was born to be Indian
To hear the drums call into the moon
Shine night
To obey my elders like a captured
Feather sewn onto a pipe
To dance in rhythm to firefly
And hear the rain tell of fallen
Stars
To run into snow and feel the
Patterns of frozen sorrow
To look up and see the Nations
Of the world in colors streaking
across a fallen sunset
To feel pride in animals because
They are thoughts of Nature
To feel I am scared because
I am given a form of sparkling
life

Angie Sireech
Northern Ute⁵³

⁵³ James L. White and Dana Jensen, ed. *Spider Webs of Silver* (Intermountain School 1976-77). Utah State University, Special Collections and Archives. Logan, Utah.



Intermountain Indian School Yearbook, 1974.
 Courtesy of Special Collection and Archives, Merrill-Cazier Library, Utah State University Logan, Utah.⁵⁴

By 1974, the yearbook shows students creating native art as part of the curriculum. Students also have longer hair and the regimented appearance and highly structured environment has changed.

⁵⁴ Intermountain Indian School Yearbook. (Brigham City, Utah, 1974), 39. Intermountain Indian School Collection: 1955-1970. Special Collection and Archives, Merrill-Cazier Library, Utah State University Logan, Utah.

Myriam Vuckovic, who studied Native Americans' reactions to boarding schools, found the issue complex. Some students voluntarily choose to attend boarding school, but often those choices were based on economic necessity or lack of other educational alternatives. Some Native Americans thought it was best to assimilate and others fought to maintain their cultural identity. Making analysis even more complex, as Vuckovic points out, accommodation and resistance could exist in the same person.⁵⁵ Donald Fixico describes one of the differences between white men's education and native belief is the value of individual accomplishment in conflict with the "... native belief...contains a devotion to family community such as the 'individual' is de-emphasized."⁵⁶ Nahwahquaw expressed this conflict when she wrote "...most tribes truly value extended family relationships...But for high school I wanted to be my own person, make my way and not be 'so and so's' little sister."⁵⁷ Native American students have to make decisions about accommodation versus resistance as they negotiate the educational choices available. Nahwahquaw could see that going away to school would disrupt family relationships, but her desires to extend her experiences beyond those confines also pulled at her.

Instead of finding the school culturally destructive, many students found their culture reinforced by attending the Intermountain Indian School. Although the cultural experiences promoted by the school were significant, students seemed to gain the most by simply attending a school where they were in the majority population. In public schools

⁵⁵ Myriam Vuckovic, *Voices From Haskell: Indian Students Between Two Worlds, 1884-1923* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2008), 156.

⁵⁶ Donald Fixico, *The American Indian Mind in a Linear World: American Indian Studies and Traditional Knowledge* (Binghamton, The Hawthorn Press, Inc., 2003), 94.

⁵⁷ Gail Nahwahquaw, written interview by the author, March 31, 2016 by email. Transcript in author's possession.

they were often in the minority. At Intermountain, students felt less conspicuous. Sara Park remembered that in her public school, she was one of, "only about six other native students there."⁵⁸ Although at home she felt isolated socially, the large numbers of Native American students who attended Intermountain gave Park a sense of belonging she did not find in her small town in Washington.

Intermountain students embraced the opportunity to participate in teen culture. With the development of compulsory education and segregation by age groups teenagers in America turned more to their peer group for acceptance and validation. According to John L. Rury "[a]s the size and numbers of high schools grew after 1950, they brought teens from all backgrounds together in one institution for the first time in history. The rise of youth culture coincided with the movement to consolidate and expand high schools across the country."⁵⁹ Students at Intermountain experienced this same phenomena of large graded schools. They were removed from familial support at boarding school which made them more dependent on peers. Rury concludes that, "[s]chool size, it turns out, appears to have contributed to the formation of a distinctive youth culture."⁶⁰

Intermountain, with combined factors of size (at a capacity of over 2000 students) and distance from home was the ideal setting for the development of a youth culture. In the Intermountain student interviews, students reflected on how their separation from home heightened the importance of their peer groups. Students I interviewed described Intermountain as their home and expressed that they felt anxious about returning to their families for summer break. The students dramatically demonstrated their fondness for

⁵⁸ Oral History Collection, Box Elder Museum, identifier 2012.22.1.

⁵⁹ John L. Rury, *Education and Social Change: Contours In The History of American Schooling* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 205.

⁶⁰ John L. Rury, *Education and Social Change*, 205.

Intermountain in their fight to keep the school open in 1983. Linda Tall recalled, "one of the girls said to me that when she came back, she thought she was coming home. It always feels like that because when we'd come through here we always stopped."⁶¹ Many of the former students mentioned their life at school as their best years. It was a place that always holds a special place in their hearts. Some never returned to their families.

Intermountain students stressed the importance of friendships much like other students during the 1950 post war era.⁶² Tandy Fox who attended Intermountain from 1976 to 1979 recalled, "We hung out all year. We would meet at a certain area when school was out, and then after school, we all hung out. . . . Whenever we wanted to go out to eat, we all met together at a certain time and a certain area."⁶³ Jim Yonk who was there during the 1974-1975 school year, remembered helping other students. He said, "Intermountain was a good place, not only to be associated with other kids, but it was a good experience, and I felt I could help other kids. A lot of them would come up to me and say 'I've got a problem.'" He recounted an experience when a girl threatened to kill herself over a boy. She had made some slash marks on her arm. She went to Yonk's dorm and said, "If you don't help me I'll go back to what I was doing." He talked to her until 3 o'clock in the morning. As an adult, she wrote Yonk and thanked him for the help. She is now married and is the mother of two children.⁶⁴ Yonk found himself in the position of helping other students because they were far from family and looking for peers who could take on the role of an older, wiser family member. Susan Rodney, who attended

⁶¹ Oral History Collection, Box Elder Museum, identifier2012.14.1.

⁶² John L. Rury, *Education and Social Change*, 176.

⁶³ Oral History Collection, Box Elder Museum, identifier 2012.15.1.

⁶⁴ Oral History Collection, Box Elder Museum, identifier 2012.16.1.

Intermountain from 1977 to 1984 described the environment as “one big happy family.”⁶⁵ Students developed relationships at school which substituted for traditional family interactions such as eating together and crisis counseling. Even more extreme than their public school counterparts, these schools became home for the students interviewed. Those alumni who attended the reunion recalled their experience as positive at Intermountain. They felt like they belonged. Without families to monitor their behavior, the students participated in a youth culture, as Rury describes. Indeed, the boarding school structure intensified their attachment to their peers. Students at Intermountain had the opportunity to be more involved, find others who could understand their experience as Native Americans, and be with other students who shared their political beliefs. Jim Yonk met up with students he had known when he was involved in the American Indian Movement. He recalled, “We would go to places like Wyoming to these various pow wows, so they knew me by the nickname “Catfish.” When I came to Intermountain, I ran into a lot of those kids I knew from the Montana area, and that was fun.” Yonk came to the school because of legal difficulties. When he appeared before the juvenile court judge he was prepared with a solution.⁶⁶

We were all young kids and we were kind of finding ourselves getting into trouble. There were a handful of us, my cousins and a handful of friends. We lived in a part of Utah where the Ute tribe was located. I found myself getting into trouble with a juvenile judge, and she asked me what plans I had for the coming year. I told her, 'Well they're interested in signing up students who want to go to a school called Intermountain.' The judge said, "that sounds like a good plan. I want to see you go to school and finish that goal." My friends talked to her and said the same things too, and so they were all obligated to go and get that schooling.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Oral History Collection, Box Elder Museum, identifier 2012.17.1.

⁶⁶ Oral History Collection, Box Elder Museum, identifier 2012.27.1.

⁶⁷ Oral History Collection, Box Elder Museum, identifier 2012.27.1.

Stephan Kent Amerman argues that Native American students held diverse opinions about their education. Their perspectives varied based on alternative schools available to them and how they used the boarding school system to fit their needs. Some students preferred boarding schools because they provided things that the local schools could not. Native Americans could expect a high dropout rate, isolation, and inferior educational materials in public schools. According to Amerman, "In the boarding schools, teachers and administrators knew they had Indians in their classroom. In the schools of Phoenix, they did not. As a result, they did little to address the unique concerns of urban Indian students."⁶⁸ This lack of awareness left Native American students without the resources they needed to be successful.

When asked about what they learned at Intermountain, the former students responded: "responsibility." They talked about chores and learning to make a bed or fold underwear. Several students said the school prepared them well for the military, a path some of them subsequently pursued. Whether they realized it or not, they were talking about assimilation. John Curry remembered that his assimilation into white society began in boarding school. His military experiences helped him to blend in even more. He did not see this process as negative. He was glad that the military taught him to fit in to the dominate culture. In fact, he expressed distress about his grandchildren's education. He said they do not speak Navajo or English well. Because of his boarding school experience, he is fluent in both. He felt he made a successful life for himself. He is still a Navajo cowboy who raises and breeds horses. His children have grown up to be good

⁶⁸ Stephen Kent Amerman, *Urban Indians in Phoenix Schools, 1940-2000* (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2010), 179.

kids, his youngest is in college and his oldest works for a college.⁶⁹ He see himself as an example of blending the white world with a his identity as Navajo.

Some students attended Intermountain to improve their educational and familial situations. Students found school at home difficult or unrewarding. They were escaping domestic violence or overburdened households. Others saw boarding school as a way to avoid mischief or to join older siblings or cousins who were attending Intermountain. Regardless of their reasons, students I interviewed were convinced that coming to the Intermountain was better than staying home, either for themselves or others.

Schools available to students on the reservation were often inferior or not responsive to the student's needs. Speaking of her school on the reservation in Southwest Arizona, Intermountain student Linda Tall said, "School there was not as challenging . . . because I couldn't tell I was learning anything. It was a long bus ride."⁷⁰ Elizabeth Mendoza who attended Intermountain from 1978 to 1980, remembered a similar experience. She stated, "We had to be bussed off the reservation to a public school where I had some trouble getting along, so some of my cousins said, 'Why don't you go to Intermountain School?'"⁷¹ Vanessa Paz, who enrolled in 1976, explained, "Back home on the reservation there was a lot of prejudice going on. I come from a big family of thirteen and we just had a small home and I was glad I had my own bed, my own bedroom, my own dresser drawers you know. I liked that."

Rose Ortiz also saw school as a way to improve her living situation. She did not like her home life. She explained her reasons for not going back home after graduation:

⁶⁹ Oral History Collection, Box Elder Museum, identifier 2012.21.1.

⁷⁰ Oral History Collection, Box Elder Museum, identifier 2012.14.1.

⁷¹ Oral History Collection, Box Elder Museum, identifier 2012.26.1.

Well somehow I didn't really get along with my parents, and I didn't want to go home. I've never been able to talk to my parents about anything. My mom-she acted like she scared a lot of her life. She was a quiet lady. My dad was always drinking and fighting with my mom. My mom was always having more kids, and I had to go home and babysit. We always had to herd sheep. My grandmother and my father were always fighting. It was just a lot of things you didn't want to go home to. The reservation is not a very good place to be.⁷²

In some cases, students saw going to a boarding school as a way to improve their own situation and others felt it would ease the burden of someone at home. They felt they were a drain on family resources. They lived in large families. Many depended on grandparent guardians, or even siblings to raise them. Students sometimes felt that it would be better for those at home if they left. Zaira Grob recalled, "One of the main reasons I came up here was because I was with my Grandma, and I didn't want to burden her because I was still young." Gwen May agreed, "I was being raised by my grandparents and just felt that they were overwhelmed with responsibility and everything, so I decided to come to school here."⁷³

Lloyd Wyatt wanted to ease burdens at home, but also found himself getting into trouble with the law. He remembered, "I ran into some truancy problems back home. I got expelled. I got a call from my Indian councilor. He said, 'Since we just opened up a new boarding school in Utah, would you be interested in attending?'" Wyatt also related:

At the time, I had been an orphan for probably six years. . . my older brother was taking care of me. He was only five years older than I, and he took us in when he was 22 years old, he took me and my brother and took care of us the best he could. We were 15 and 16 at the time. I didn't want to be a burden on them.⁷⁴

⁷² Oral History Collection, Box Elder Museum, identifier 2012.27.1.

⁷³ Oral History Collection, Box Elder Museum, identifier 2012.11.1.

⁷⁴ Oral History Collection, Box Elder Museum, identifier 2012.23.1.

Life on the reservation was hard for the students, and for their caretakers.

Like Wyatt, other students found themselves getting in trouble at their former schools. Jean Crow believed that what was happening to her at home would not lead her where she wanted to go. She recalled, "Back home I used to go to public school [and] everyone would get into trouble, there were probably only about six other Native kids that went there that I was related to. Most of them were dropping out of high school, and so I felt I needed to do something with my life. That's why I chose Intermountain."⁷⁵

Family also influenced enrollment by encouraging other siblings or family members to attend as Tim Cree recalls:

My brother was here. He was here the year before, so he was a sophomore the year when I came. He was the one who kind of talked me into coming up here. He came home, and we were out mending the fence in the pasture. He said, "where are you going to school next year? Locally?" I said, I don't know. He was telling me about the school and all the friends he made, people he met. I thought about it, and I said, "Let's ask mom and see what she says."⁷⁶

Even with the advantages former Intermountain students reported, the experience at the school could be negative. Students interviewed emphasized positive memories, but, they confirmed some of the problems Brightman articulated in his 1971 report. One of Brightman's complaints against the school was its use of Thorazine, an antipsychotic drug, to control drunk students. In the *Ogden Standard Examiner*, Lawrence Capps, the principal in 1971, defended the school's use of the drug. He believed administering Thorazine was valid because it was "...only used in cases where students are violent and

⁷⁵ Oral History Collection, Box Elder Museum, identifier 2012.19.1.

⁷⁶ Oral History Collection, Box Elder Museum, identifier 2012.13.1.

might hurt themselves." It was also administered by the health department and not school personal, according to Capps.⁷⁷

Other difficulties show up in court records. According to court documents, in 1970, six boys took advantage of a power failure during a basketball game to enter the girl's dormitory. While there they dragged two girls from under their beds, where they were hiding, out to the school grounds and raped them multiple times.⁷⁸ The boys challenged their conviction on the grounds that school officials, who took their confessions, did not inform them of their rights. The court denied their appeal stating that school officials were not subject to Miranda restrictions. Although the crimes were horrendous, as juvenile offenders far from home and without access legal advice they were at a disadvantage legally and remained jailed for their crime.

Tension increased at the school as the make-up of the student body changed. School officials admitted new tribes. Students with behavior issues, according to BIA policy, were given priority in the admission process. Clair Olsen, who taught at Intermountain from 1957 to 1984, described the criteria used by the BIA to determine eligibility at Intermountain. She notes that Intermountain catered to students who did not have schools available to them. Those who suffered from social and familial dysfunction were given priority in the admittance process. Students who failed at other schools or struggled with drug, alcohol and legal problems, followed. According to Olsen, the

⁷⁷ Georgia Sullivan, "Principal defends Navajo School, Says Drug Used," *Ogden Standard Examiner*, April 21, 1971.

⁷⁸ Plaintiff and Appellant v Harrison Largo, Harry Tsosie, Clarence Peter, Chavez Whitehorse, Reid Barber and Mose Clark, 473 P.2d 895 1970.
<http://www.plainsite.org/dockets/1zaqod41i/utah-supreme-court/state-v-largo/> accessed 4/20/2016

enrollment criteria included students who “experienced a troubled lifestyle which created moderate to severe behavior problems.”⁷⁹

In February 1975 the school experienced wide spread fighting between tribes. Jean Crow describes what she experienced:

I can tell you for experience... The campus shop where it was at we had the riots going on. I was in one of the riots. I was one of the Ute girls that had all those Navajo girls on me. They had me down, they had my hands. I hate to say this on recording, but I had a big old pipe. I was scared, I was small. And I thought *God, these girls are coming after me*. And so I just swung. Come to find I cut three girls head. It was sad but when they are coming at a little person what can you do. They had my hands, they had my legs. All I could do was kick, kick. I busted fifteen girls’ nose; having them come at me. That's the riot that I was in. And it was scary, because they had me down, and I thought that, oh man, here's these cowboy boots you know, all the way through, kicking up and down. I was in that riot; I can tell you. I was glad, you know, I thought I was gone. Dead, you know. After all these, I felt like I had a shield over me. I got up and nothing happened. I wasn't hurt, nothing. I can say that on this because it was true. It happened.⁸⁰

According to Jim Yonk, the fight started between two girls:

Even though it was open, and they all were aware of that, they [Navajo] didn't want us to stay because they felt “It's our school.” There was misunderstanding between two girls. That's how it started. Then you's get their two sides. Our tribe, the Utes, was the largest group with kids from Utah, Colorado, and I was walking right there and saw these two girls who looked exactly alike but couldn't get along with each other. One was from Alpine California. She was one of my best friends. The other one is from California now, but she was a Ute girl. They were exactly alike, but you can't get two cats together in the same area without them fighting. It was those two girls who started it, and it just sort of incited that kind of a fighting atmosphere and as different people jumped in the fighting escalated.⁸¹

⁷⁹ Clair Olson interview by Kathy Bradford, March 11, 2002. “Box Elder Museum Oral History Collection,” MS163, Box Elder Museum, Brigham City, Utah.

⁸⁰ Oral History Collection, Box Elder Museum, identifier 2012.25.1.

⁸¹ Oral History Collection, Box Elder Museum, identifier 2012.16.1

The fight mostly consisted of Navajos and some Apaches against students from other tribes. Students mentioned injuries they caused and witnessed. After the altercation the Navajo students stayed at the school and the students from other tribes were told by school officials to return home until things settled down. Most of the students returned to school after two weeks and there were no more campus wide student fights. Despite these conflicts, many students found that the benefits of attending Intermountain outweighed its problems. In part this was because of the support of staff.

Lloyd Wyatt was grateful for the teachers who helped him cope with the outcome of the violence. Wyatt and his friend Oscar Warley participated in the fighting at the school in 1975. When the police showed up, they arrested the pair and took them to Cache County jail. When they got out of jail, Warley suggested that they lay low in Ogden. Unfortunately, a misunderstanding in Ogden resulted in both boys being shot and Warley dying in Wyatt's arms, on the way to the hospital. Wyatt recollected, "When this happened to him, I made a promise to him that I wouldn't waste my life. Mr. Reeder, Mrs. Williams [referring to teachers at the school], you could go down the list of everybody that was there and they all cared."⁸² In an online article about the 2012 reunion Mr. Hal Reeder that Wyatt mentioned, told the same story from his perspective:

Wyatt and Warlie [sic] had gotten into trouble, and decided to forget their troubles with a weekend in Ogden. They approached a Hispanic man to ask for spare change, and were confronted by the man's son -- who had a gun. Warlie [sic] was shot in the chest. Wyatt took four bullets; one grazed his skull, but a belt and buckle given to him by his brother took the impact of the others. Warlie died in Wyatt's arms. He says, "Mr. Reeder, they're going to expel me, but I can have a representative at the expulsion hearing. Would you come and represent me?" And I said, "Yeah, if you'll promise me you'll go to school, you won't be tardy, you won't be involved in any fights" He says, "I'll do it."

⁸² Oral History Collection, Box Elder Museum, identifier 2012.23.1.

Reeder told the audience that Wyatt was true to his word. Reeder's wish, he said, was to see Wyatt again someday. "I stood up, and he just broke down in tears," said Wyatt. "It was a powerful moment." Wyatt had been hoping to see Mr. Reeder as well.⁸³ In the 1974-1975 yearbook there is a picture of Warley and a poem dedicated to him.⁸⁴ After he graduated from high school, Wyatt returned to Intermountain and trained at the police academy that operated on the Intermountain campus for older students. He is now the second highest ranking official in his Washoe tribal government. Although the death of his friend was a tragic incident, Wyatt sought out a teacher who would help him stay at school, came back to receive training as a policeman, and used his education to take an active role in his tribal politics.

⁸³ Becky Write, "Outside the Homeland': Folks look back fondly on time spent at the Intermountain Indian School," *Standard Examiner*, May 6, 2012. <http://e.standard.net/stories/2012/05/06/outside-homeland-folks-look-back-fondly-time-spent-intermountain-indian-school>. Accessed May 10, 2016.

⁸⁴ Intermountain Indian School Yearbook. (Brigham City, Utah, 1974), 39. Intermountain Indian School Collection: 1974-1975. Special Collection and Archives, Merrill-Cazier Library, Utah State University Logan, Utah.

IN MEMORIAM

William "Oscar" Warley

IT'S COMING

Reach out and touch me, my friend
 The gray clouds seem to be
 closing in
 The air this night; it reeks of
 doom
 A roaring hum, it fills your
 brain
 Death, it seems to scream your
 name
 The time has come to leave.
 No time for all the planned
 goodbyes
 For someone now begins to
 die.
 A weeping sadness fills the
 room
 Leaves you feeling impending
 doom.
 The air is still and thick with
 waiting
 Satan and his traps he's
 baiting
 But still that deadly
 waiting
 There upon the post outside
 A raven with its silent eyes
 Oh, touch me now, my silent friend
 Death, it seems, is coming in.

Bill "Oscar" Warlie
 Paiute

Intermountain Indian School Yearbook, 1974-75.

Courtesy of Special Collection and Archives, Merrill-Cazier Library, Utah State University Logan, Utah.⁸⁵

Staff members were influential in student retention and helped them feel less homesick. Rosie Begay described a conversation with her guidance counselor after a difficult call from her family:

I'm going home, Mr. Quayle. I'm going home. I need to go home and take care of my family. He reasoned with me. He said, "Rosie, I know how you feel, and what is going on at home is between you and your family. When you go home, what are you going to do? What part of that is yours?" I got mad and stomped out of his office. So that is what really

⁸⁵ Intermountain Indian School Yearbook. (Brigham City, Utah, 1974). Intermountain Indian School Collection: 1955-1970. Special Collections and Archives, Merrill-Cazier Library, Utah State University Logan, Utah.

helped me to think and we have our own responsibilities. We have to be able to look in the mirror and say, "What part of that is mine, and what part is somebody else's?" It's easy to get into somebody else's business; it's easy to get evolved in somebody else's problem if we allow ourselves to. But we have to take care of ourselves first before we can help others.⁸⁶

Other students felt they got help from the teachers and staff at the school.

Warned by other students about Mrs. Pohmajevich, Jean Crow found:

With her you could always get an A+, but you had to do extra work. ...She was the one who made me realize, Hey I can really do it! I went to see her after we graduated. She was in her room. I walked in there and she smiled at me. I told her, Thank you. And she knew exactly what I meant."⁸⁷

Students found support in emotionally difficult times and help with school as they negotiated the challenges that came up living far from home. In some cases, they felt like teachers and staff helped them fulfill their dreams.

Intermountain students wanted their school to stay open for many reasons. They felt a strengthening of their identity as Native Americans, and they participated in educational and extracurricular activities they did not have at home. They developed strong peer relationships and enjoyed support from the staff at Intermountain. Even though they may have experienced problems at Intermountain, many found the school a better choice than living at home. Many of them made their opinion clear in their fight to keep the school open. In 1983 Intermountain Students in the Graphic Communications class made a video to record the efforts of students to keep their school open. The video shows students running the 24 miles from the school to the federal building in Ogden. The runners, cross country state champions, hoped to raise public awareness and support

⁸⁶ Oral History Collection, Box Elder Museum, identifier 2012.29.1.

⁸⁷ Oral History Collection, Box Elder Museum, identifier 2012.19.1.

to keep the school open.⁸⁸ Students ran along the highway, lined in snow, followed by vans of supporters. In their hands, some of them carried petitions with signatures from across the country to support keeping the school open.⁸⁹ At the federal building, costumed dancers performed traditional dances. Gail Nahwahquaw, the student body president, gave a speech and offered a spirit stick to federal representatives. She told them, if they kept the school open, the officials could keep the stick. If the school closed down, the students expected the legislators to attend the final commencement services and face the students they let down. She said they would expect the return of the spirit stick. Nahwahquaw asks “What is the education of a person worth? What is the value of a human soul worth? When we consider that the rocket boosters of the space shuttle that sank in the ocean cost 50 million dollars, it makes us wonder if shooting rockets around this world is more important than education of us Indians?”⁹⁰ Although they attracted a sizable crowd, no representative from the government was there to hear the students' pleas or accept the spirit stick.⁹¹ The students were passionate to keep the school open because it provided opportunities they needed that could not be found on the reservation.

Students confronted an inherently prejudicial system and created a space where instead of losing their culture, many of them came to value their place in the world as Natives Americans. They were able to feel validated when surrounded by others who had

⁸⁸ Gail Nahwahquaw written interview by the author, Logan, Utah March 31, 2016, in author's possession.

⁸⁹ Gail Nahwahquaw written interview by the author, Logan, Utah March 31, 2016, in author's possession.

⁹⁰ Gail Nahwahquaw speech at the Ogden government building, Intermountain School Graphic communications class, "*Intermountain Run*." Video production, 1983, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y108lZbO6rY>.

⁹¹ Intermountain School Graphic communications class, "*Intermountain Run*" Video production, 1983, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y108lZbO6rY>.

to struggle with what it means to be Indian. Some learned to take on leadership roles; solving conflicts, petitioning governments and counseling other students. Assimilation has often had a negative connotation, but denying students the chance to experience other ways of being is just as condescending as forcing them to adopt the dominate culture. These students often had failed at their home schools and got the chance to experience many things at Intermountain. In some ways they assimilated, but students mentioned how they kept a part of being Indian. For one it was raising horses; for others using the leadership skills to help their tribes. In the end some students felt passionate enough about their school to fight for it and most students interviewed said they wished the school still existed so they could send their own kids there.

I first became interested in doing this research when I saw the "I" painted on the mountain above Brigham City. I found out that the "I" was for an Indian school and I wondered what had gone on there. As I looked into the historical record, there were no student voices and I wanted to hear them speak. At the 2012 reunion I met them, talked to them and recorded their stories. Students at the reunion wanted to remember; they repainted the "I" and celebrated Intermountain and its place in their lives. A system conceived of as a way of destroying Native American culture, in the hands of many of the students strengthen their identity as Native Americans and individuals in a complex process of resistance and acceptance.

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