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Returning to Red Cloud's Vision:
An Analysis of the History of Native American Education on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation

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Requirements for Departmental Honors in English

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Returning to Red Cloud's Vision

Introduction:

In November of 2014, I was approached by Dr. Joyce Rain Anderson and invited to take part in a small study tour to explore the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation alongside herself, Dr. Ben Carson, and a small group of undergraduate and graduate students from Bridgewater State University. Throughout that fall semester as a student in Dr. Anderson's Native American Writing and Rhetoric course, I had been exposed to a number of social, political, economic, and educational challenges facing populations of indigenous peoples in North America, many of which I had never been made aware of throughout my entire academic career. Reading the works of talented Native American writers and hearing the voices of Native peoples themselves speaking on tough issues of ethnicity, culture, spirituality, and relations with the United States government, my interest in indigenous peoples and their unique experiences became sparked in Dr. Anderson's classroom. With all that I had learned in Native American Writing and Rhetoric in mind, I graciously accepted Dr. Anderson's invitation and began anticipating the study tour by formulating questions in my mind about communities of Native peoples which could be answered over the course of my time at Pine Ridge.

The Pine Ridge Indian Reservation is located in the southwestern corner of South Dakota, and is home to breathtaking geological features including vast grassy plains, rolling hills, and rugged Badlands, all contributing to the reservation's immense land area which is greater than

that of the states of Delaware and Rhode Island combined. The reservation has historically been well-known due to the Wounded Knee Massacre of 1890, which took place at Pine Ridge and resulted in the deaths of between 270 and 300 Lakotas at the hands of the U.S. military, during the height of conflict between a number of Native American tribes and the U.S. that initially resulted from the poor quality of life Native peoples were forced to endure on reservations established by the U.S. government. Many of the victims slaughtered at the Wounded Knee Massacre were unarmed men, women, and children (Ostler 123). The massacre at Wounded Knee left people living on the Pine Ridge Reservation in a state of unbearable grief, suffering an immense loss as a community. The Wounded Knee Massacre is just one occurrence of many that have taken place on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation as a result of conflict with the U.S. government. The burial site of many of the victims of the Wounded Knee Massacre, located at the same spot along Wounded Knee Creek where the original incident took place, is a signal that the people of Pine Ridge Indian Reservation are constantly aware of a history of bitter conflict, devastation, and mistrust resulting from relations between tribal peoples on the reservation and the United States government.

It is extremely difficult to determine the population on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation as of today, because U.S. census information on the matter is speculated to be highly unreliable, but the executive director for Oglala Sioux Lakota Housing, Jim Berg, estimates that about 40,000 people currently reside on the reservation. Unfortunately, unemployment rates on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation are extremely high (about 80 percent of residents are unemployed), and just under half of the residents on the reservation live below the poverty line (RedCloudSchool.org). Although various health and financial problems plaguing Pine Ridge

Reservation have made the area a recipient of national attention in recent years, one visit to Pine Ridge is enough to determine that there is truly more to it than meets the eye.

The primary purpose of the trip to Pine Ridge organized by Dr. Anderson was to visit the Red Cloud Indian School (RCIS), a private institution of K-12 education that attracts students from all across the reservation and serves many young people throughout the Lakota community. Under the administration of President Dana Molher-Faria, Dr. Anderson and other faculty members at Bridgewater State University strived to build a lasting relationship with RCIS, in hopes of fostering a cross-cultural, cross-national exchange between students and faculty at Bridgewater State University and K-12 students and faculty at RCIS. The study tour I was invited to be a part of, then, should not be viewed as a solitary event, but rather one small portion of an on-going mutually beneficial relationship between two very different educational institutions, each with something of value to offer the other. Our excursion to Pine Ridge would be the first successful visit of Bridgewater State University *students* to the area, and in summer of 2015 selected students from RCIS would visit Bridgewater and attend writing classes and field trips under Dr. Anderson's direction, keeping the cyclic relationship between the two institutions in motion.

As an aspiring educator of English, the opportunity to visit a school on an American Indian reservation was an opportunity for me to ask questions about the history of education of Native American students, the teaching of Native students in the modern classroom, and how learning about education of indigenous peoples, past and present, affects what we know about working with the general population of students outside the reservation setting. During my time as a student in Dr. Anderson's class, I was fascinated to learn about the role education played in forced assimilation of Native American students around the turn of the twentieth century, well

into the mid-century, not all that long ago. Reading accounts of students' experiences in Native American boarding schools was extremely powerful for me, as was learning about the lasting impact those experiences had on their relationships with the education system, the United States government, and their families and friends. Because of the impression writings about the Native American boarding schools had on me, I began thinking about my trip to Pine Ridge in terms of the unique educational history on the reservation, and the number of ways that history is reflected in the community and its schools and students as of today.

Prior to visiting Pine Ridge, the only thing I had done which could even remotely be considered an experience with "rez life" was read Sherman Alexie's young adult novel *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*. In Alexie's novel, the main character Arnold Spirit, inspired by Alexie himself, lashes out against his teacher at his reservation school and physically injures him, resulting in an unexpected discussion. The dialogue between Mr. P and Arnold that follows Mr. P's injury reveals some harsh truths about the educational practices of the past that were at one time accepted on Arnold's reservation:

"But I do forgive you," he said. "No matter how much I don't want to. I have to forgive you. It's the only thing that keeps me from smacking you with an ugly stick. When I first started teaching here, that's what we did to the rowdy ones, you know? We beat them. That's how we were taught to teach you. We were supposed to kill the Indian to save the child."

"You *killed* Indians?"

"No, no, it's just a saying. I didn't literally kill Indians. We were supposed to make you give up being Indian. Your songs and stories and language and dancing. Everything. We weren't trying to kill Indian people. We were trying to kill Indian culture."(35)

Mr. P's confession to Arnold in Alexie's novel reveals the central conflict I hoped to investigate at RCIS: the conflict between the historical cultural genocide of Native American students in the educational setting and the current, progressive notion that ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and spiritual diversity should be integrated in institutions of education.

I wanted to explore the position of students who find themselves in places similar to Alexie's character Arnold. I hoped that visiting RCIS would give me a firsthand look at a real-world situation parallel to Arnold's and Mr. P's situation in the *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* - a situation which finds teachers, students, and community members today coming to terms with misguided educational practices of the past. Through this paper, I hope to reveal how RCIS, formerly an on-reservation boarding school for Native American students named Holy Rosary Mission, managed to make a transition from a site of assimilation of the Indian students into White culture, to a place that not only values, but in many ways prioritizes Lakota culture. Through this project, I explore how the school's campus underwent dramatic changes in its shift from an entirely Jesuit institution to what is referred to today as a Catholic Lakota school, in an attempt to integrate key elements of Lakota art, architecture, and spirituality into the physical environment of the institution. Furthermore, I analyze the school's course offerings and curricular elements in an attempt to understand the difference between education geared towards assimilation of Native students at Holy Rosary Mission and education geared towards cultural empowerment at RCIS. By reflecting on my observations at RCIS, and the historical, biographical, and autobiographical accounts of Native American experiences with boarding schools like Holy Rosary Mission, I will argue that RCIS's initiative to emphasize Lakota culture in an educational setting has a positive impact on Lakota students and community

members, and is a step towards acknowledging and rectifying mistakes of the past, rather than erasing a vital, yet uncomfortable component of history at Pine Ridge.

History:

To fully understand the significance of RCIS as a Catholic Lakota institution today, it is crucial to first have knowledge of the history of the use of education as a tool for assimilation of Native Americans by missionary groups and the United States government. According to *American Indian Education: A History* by Jon Reyhner and Jeanne Eder, Christian missionaries acted as the first European teachers of Indians. The earliest missionaries sought primarily to “Christianize, civilize, and assimilate Indians into European culture. They criticized Indian cleanliness and ceremonies, but they were even more critical of the lack of discipline among Indian children.” Missionaries who worked within tribal societies “rarely studied Native child-rearing practices” and typically failed to comprehend, and therefore appreciate tribal languages and customs (15). It is apparent today that the central focus of early Christian missionaries working with indigenous peoples in North America was to spread European religion and cultural practices, with little attention paid to how Native peoples perceived the world around them and their own spirituality.

By the 1800s, it became apparent to the newly established United States government that “deciding the future status of Indians” was a top political priority, according to David Wallace Adams’s text *Education for Extinction*. Early policymakers were faced with the need to create “a mechanism and rationale for divesting Indians of their real estate,” as the presence of Indian peoples was a major hindrance to westward expansion of the nation (Adams 5). In being forced to think about relations with Indians in order to acquire desired lands, government officials arrived at the following conclusion:

In a word, Indians were savages because they lacked the very thing whites possessed – civilization. And since, by the law of historical progress and the doctrine of social evolution civilized ways were destined to triumph over savagism, Indians would ultimately confront a fateful choice: civilization or extinction. That the race would choose civilized ways over savage ways there was little doubt. (Adams 6)

Because Indian cultures differed so greatly from those of white colonizers in America, there appeared to be a desperate need in the early nineteenth century to distinguish between the Indian way of life and the American way of life by labeling the former “savage” and the latter “civilized.” It was widely agreed upon amongst policymakers that the most effective way to bring the “civilized” ways of white society to Native American peoples was through education. Thus, government officials determined that boarding schools would be the primary vessel through which “civilization” of the Indian would take place, with the ultimate goal being that “the Indian child was to be totally transformed, all vestiges of his former self eradicated” (Adams 24).

The Sioux peoples of the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation where today stands RCIS were heavily impacted by the United States government’s efforts to assimilate Native American students through Indian schools. In 1879, sixty Sioux boys and twenty-four Sioux girls, many of whom were from Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, agreed to leave their homes to attend Richard Henry Pratt’s Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania (Adams 48). Pratt’s school followed an off-reservation boarding school model, designed to completely detach the Native American students from interaction with their cultural practices, languages, and family members. Being the first off-reservation boarding school for Native American students in the nation, Pratt drew inspiration for his educational institution from the Hampton Institute for Negroes in Virginia. Just as the

Hampton Institute's primary goal was to prepare young black men to live and work in the industrialist society rapidly forming around them, one of Pratt's central focuses at the Carlisle School was on teaching industrial skills to Native American students (Lesiak, *In the White Man's Image*). Unfortunately, the industrialization of the United States and its impact on the Native American cultures that existed here before colonization did not always agree with Native ways of life, so Pratt's desire to submerge students in industrialist society often conflicted with students' best interests.

In his famous account of his time spent at the Carlisle Indian School, Lakota Sioux author Luther Standing Bear describes abysmal living conditions for students. According to Standing Bear, teachers at Carlisle forced assimilation on Native students by ordering them to select English names for themselves, forbidding them from speaking Lakota even though many of them had no prior experience with English and were thoroughly ashamed by their inability to speak it, and even by making them involuntarily get haircuts, despite the sacredness of hair within their tribal cultures (Adams 138). Pratt's Sioux students and their families back at Pine Ridge became all too familiar with the harsh practices being used to assimilate Native students at a number of off-reservation boarding schools around the country, and upon their return home from Carlisle, the trauma of their experiences remained and became integrated in their communities.

After their experiences with the Carlisle Indian School, the Sioux served as inspiration, in a number of ways, for the idea that Indian reform through schooling was not only possible, but likely. In 1882, an expedition by Herbert Welsh and Henry Pancoast into Sioux territory led them to report back to policymakers that Indians were "capable of being assimilated into the mainstream of American life," and that "the only barrier to achieving this objective was a lack of sustained political will to do so." Based on the findings of Welsh and Pancoast during their time

spent amongst the Sioux, the Indian Rights Association, the central institution through which the idea of the Indian school came to be, was born (Adams 9). In this way, the Sioux people were involuntarily engulfed in the process of Indian assimilation nationwide, being used as an example of what white reformers considered “successful assimilation” as Indian schools began to gain popularity and appear in more and more places across North America.

In addition to Pratt’s off-reservation boarding school, it was not long before the Sioux people were impacted by the construction of the Holy Rosary Mission School located *on* the Pine Ridge Reservation in 1888 (RedCloudSchool.org). Reservation day school models failed because they were deemed “not an effective instrument of assimilation,” since any efforts made by teachers to “raise up the child during school hours” were coincidentally “obliterated at night by the realities of camp life.” Holy Rosary Mission School, however, followed the model of the on-reservation boarding school instead, which was thought to be an improvement on the reservation day school model because it “established greater institutional control over children’s lives, with students being kept in school eight to nine months out of the year.” The on-reservation boarding school model was expected to impact parents in addition to students, by encouraging them to visit the school or note their child’s or children’s progression towards “civilization” during the summer months. Although parent visits were initially encouraged at reservation boarding schools because of the likelihood that parents would support the school’s mission if they were allowed to view the progress of their children, some educational administrators viewed constant visits from parents as disruptions (Adams 29-32).

On-reservation boarding schools such as those established at Pine Ridge quickly proved to have their pitfalls just as reservation day schools and off-reservation boarding schools did. Adams describes students’ acclimation to becoming homesick as follows:

It took very little, it seems, for students to become infected with a prolonged bout of homesickness. For those students who had already internalized the rhythm and pulse of native society, including the tribe's ceremonial calendar, the sight of smoke on the morning horizon or the faint sounds of ceremonial chants at night were sufficient to trigger emotions and longings uniquely Indian. (Adams32-3)

Being in such close proximity to their loved ones and their beloved tribal practices, students at on-reservation boarding schools experienced a heightened sense of deprivation and both them and their families longed to be together to share in familial and tribal traditions. The homesickness experienced by Pratt's Sioux students at the Carlisle school, therefore, was not necessarily alleviated by the on-reservation boarding school model in Pine Ridge. Furthermore, teaching methods at some on-reservation boarding schools relied on physical abuse, such as those recorded by Lakota journalist Tim Giago who attended Holy Rosary Mission, where students were often forced to deny their Indian language and culture in order to avoid punishment while boarding at school, just as those students at Carlisle had been forced into assimilation through corporal punishment and other cruel means (Reyhner, Eder 124).

Despite the institution's shortcomings, it is important to note that Chief Red Cloud himself advocated for the establishment of the Holy Rosary Mission School at Pine Ridge. After working for some time with men who we referred to as the Sina Sapa, or the "Black Robes," Red Cloud petitioned Washington D.C. to request a Jesuit presence in Pine Ridge to educate youth. Red Cloud's request for a Jesuit educational institution was granted by Washington, even despite the fact that Pine Ridge Indian Reservation had been designated as a territory of the Episcopalians in 1879 (RedCloudSchool.org). Red Cloud's decision to invite Jesuit missionaries to Pine Ridge can best be understood by analyzing the Indian Peace Commission of 1967 and

their involvement with several Plains tribes, including the Lakota. The primary goal of the Peace Commission was to “negotiate treaties with warring tribes,” according to author Jeffrey Ostler in his book *The Lakotas and the Black Hills: The Struggle for Sacred Ground* (59). In addition to granting the government control of lands occupied by Native American tribes, one of the main goals of the Peace Commission was to “force the Lakotas to make a transition from ‘savagery’ to ‘civilization’” (64). In order to get Native American tribal leaders to agree to conditions of treaties established by the Peace Commission, it is believed that often times Native American negotiators were not provided adequate bases for understanding the complex and ambiguous conditions of the contracts, which were produced in English, a language that was new to Native peoples to begin with (66). It becomes easier to understand why members of the Peace Commission sought to negotiate with Chief Red Cloud more closely than other tribal members when we analyze Olster’s description of the chief’s character in his text. According to Ostler, Red Cloud possessed extensive experience in “both diplomacy and war, and though hardly without political opponents, he had significant influence among the Oglalas and other Lakota tribes.” Red Cloud is described as a Lakota man who could “see further into the future” than some of his comrades in tribal leadership, and he recognized the dawning of “a time when the Lakotas might need to make permanent accommodation with the United States” (Ostler 60). According to the Red Cloud Indian School History, Red Cloud envisioned Lakota children being equipped with the skills necessary to walk in both the “white man’s world” and the Lakota world, which must have seemed important to Red Cloud after interacting with the Peace Commission and learning about their motives for establishing a presence at Pine Ridge (RedCloudSchool.org).

For many years, Red Cloud's aspirations for students at Holy Rosary Mission were not fulfilled, as education for assimilation and indoctrination, and the boarding school environment left little room for students to express their Lakota identities as much as they desired. In 1942, however, Holy Rosary Mission closed down its buildings designated for boarding, integrated classes, and constructed a football field, fieldhouses, and parking lots to encourage transportation to and from school and visitation rather than just dorming for students. In the year 1969, Holy Rosary Mission changed its name to Red Cloud Indian School as part of a "re-identification" program. Through its new identity, RCIS was determined to show the community and the world that it was not supposed to be an "organization of cultural imperialism, but rather the product of a lasting bond between groups of two separate cultures who wanted to enhance the best parts of both worlds to serve the people of Pine Ridge Indian Reservation" (RedCloudSchool.org). The change of name and re-identification of RCIS was the first, most significant step towards creating a true Lakota Catholic institution that benefits the students of Pine Ridge and their families in ways Indian boarding schools failed to.

It is clear that experiences of the Lakota Sioux peoples of Pine Ridge with off-reservation Indian boarding schools like Carlisle and on-reservation Indian schools such as Holy Rosary Mission have left many community members distrustful of educational institutions. The traumatic experiences of many Sioux students are not forgotten, as many survivors of Indian boarding schools live in Pine Ridge today and share their stories with community members and with the world through writing. If one thing is certain, however, it is that the history of Indian education at Pine Ridge cannot simply be swept under the rug and ignored, but must be recognized and learned from so that history is not given the opportunity to repeat itself. RCIS has used recent decades to make up for lost time and implement changes which have helped make

the school better for the Lakota youth in Pine Ridge and their families who remember the pain their brothers and sisters endured at Indian boarding schools. Students at Red Cloud exist during a unique time in their tribe's history – between the era of total contempt for public education and the current times in which RCIS proves to be a beacon of light in a dark history, offering Lakota youth what an institution of education ought to offer culturally, ethnically, and linguistically unique populations.

The Campus:

The closure of dorming facilities at RCIS which began in the 1960s was completed in 1980, as all boarding of students officially ended, creating obvious changes in the layout of the school's campus. Prior to closing all dormitories on school property, RCIS opened a brand new high school building in 1979. Today, RCIS has an elementary school, a junior high school, and a high school all located on its main campus, and the institution also runs a sister school named Our Lady of Lords in Porcupine, which prepares students in grades K-8 for high school at RCIS (RedCloudSchool.org). In recent decades, RCIS as an institution has used art and architecture strategically to give old buildings on campus a new purpose which reflects the school's Lakota identity, and to ensure that newly constructed buildings honor and celebrate Lakota culture, something Holy Rosary Mission failed to do at times in the past.

One old building, used by Holy Rosary Mission as a dormitory for many years, became the Heritage Center at Red Cloud Indian School in 1982. The Heritage Center was founded under the direction of Brother C.M. Simon, S.J., and was established to “collect, preserve and exhibit Native and Lakota art.” Today, the Heritage Center at RCIS houses over 10,000 pieces of Native art from the past and present, and serves as an outlet for Red Cloud students and indigenous peoples on and off the reservation to express themselves. Each summer, the Red Cloud Indian

Art Show attracts crowds eager to learn from Native artists and commend them for their achievements (RedCloudSchool.org). The Heritage Center at RCIS and the exhibits and programs supported by the Heritage Center send a message to Lakota youth and the entire indigenous community that their cultural experiences are worth sharing through art. The encouragement of expression of cultural identity through art was not something always present in the educational experiences of many Lakota peoples and their ancestors, but in our meeting this past spring with the former director of the Heritage Center at RCIS, he described the center as one way the school is “returning to Red Cloud’s original vision” by bringing Lakota heritage to the forefront of the institution.

The art on display in the Heritage Center at RCIS is just a portion of the art found on the school’s campus at large. Author and artist Bently Spang writes about the differences between the art of Western European cultures and descendants of Euro-colonial settlers in the United States and the art of Indigenous peoples of North America in his article titled “The Process of Self Definition Within the Native North American Art Movement.” Spang states that “Historically speaking, art by Indians has fulfilled a variety of functions Western art discourse has taught us to expect. Indigenous art was never held away from life as the art of European culture has been and continues to be; rather, it was fully integrated into all aspects of Native existence” (53). The integration of art into daily life described by Spang is prevalent on RCIS’s campus in the presence of gorgeous murals found on the interior and exterior walls of buildings, and the intricate craftwork and quilting on walls in hallways and classrooms. Our group was often captivated during our tours of the school buildings by the magnitude and beauty of wall paintings, elaborate designs made of tile, and stunning displays of students’ artwork. The prominence of art not only in the school’s Heritage Center, a building set apart from students’

daily academic and extracurricular activities, but also in school buildings where students, work, play, and socialize, is an example of RCIS's attempt to recognize the crucial connection between art and daily life which Spang says exists in Native cultures, and which Native American boarding schools failed to appreciate.

In the common area of the high school building on the RCIS campus, a gorgeous image of the White Buffalo Calf Woman in a field of buffalo is displayed for all students and visitors of the school to view. In her article "Menstruation and Reproduction: An Oglala Case," Marla Powers describes the importance of the buffalo in Oglala Lakota culture because of the tribe's historical use of the animal as a source of food, cloth, shelter, and warmth. Powers also suggests the importance of the White Buffalo Calf Woman herself as a symbol of fertility and a bringer of sacred ceremonies (61). By showcasing the image of the Buffalo Calf Woman, RCIS places an emphasis on the Lakota mythology and tradition that students in Native American boarding schools were once instructed not to participate in.

Another image found on the RCIS campus is of Chief Red Cloud himself, and demonstrates the school's desire to highlight the Lakota way of life more than American Indian educational institutions attended by the Sioux in the past. The image of Chief Red Cloud serves as a symbol of the original reason Jesuit missionaries were invited to Pine Ridge Reservation – to help Lakota peoples adjust to the changing world around them, increasingly influenced by Euro-colonial powers, but also to respect Red Cloud's wish that Lakota peoples still maintain their cultural identity. The image of Chief Red Cloud on the campus is a constant reminder to the students, workers, and visitors of RCIS that despite offenses committed against Lakota culture in the past, today Chief Red Cloud's vision for the original Holy Rosary Mission is the driving force behind the school's continuation serving the people of Pine Ridge. Furthermore, being a

mural on a wall of the high school building, the image of Chief Red Cloud serves as yet another indicator of RCIS's modern understanding of the integration between art and daily life in Lakota culture. Just as Spang wrote that art and existence are viewed as inseparable to indigenous peoples, the image of Chief Red Cloud is not able to be taken from the high school's exterior wall, but rather is contained literally *in* the school itself. It is appropriate that Chief Red Cloud's legacy lives on through artistic imagery on the RCIS campus, because his final resting place is a gravesite located high on a hill directly overlooking RCIS. The gravesite is often visited by students and faculty members, and is typically decorated and adorned with items by Lakota community members, demonstrating that Chief Red Cloud and his immense impact on Pine Ridge Reservation truly do remain (RedCloudSchool.org).

In addition to the images of the White Buffalo Calf Woman and Chief Red Cloud found on RCIS's campus, other paintings and a number of quilted pieces adorn the walls of the institution's interior buildings. According to the book *The Hidden Half: Studies of Plains Indian Women* by Patricia Albers and Beatrice Medicine, quilting is the second-most common form of decorative art practiced by Sioux women, after beading (126). Of the many geometric designs used by Sioux quilters, the star, according to Albers and Medicine, is the most prevalent (127). Albers and Medicine explain the significance of the star design in Sioux women's quilting as follows:

Today, the Sioux clearly attribute the star quilt's design to decorative and symbolic traditions surrounding the morning star. The morning star, which appears in the East in early April, has always been an important symbol in their myth and ceremony. It represents the direction from which spirits of the dead travel to earth, and by extension, it signifies a continuing link between the living and the dead (129).

Because of the star quilt's meaning in the Lakota community and its representation of deceased loved ones, it is used by RCIS for decorative purposes to show honor to Lakota peoples, present and past, and is often worn by students for ceremonial purposes such as graduation. Interestingly enough, the prominence of the star quilt in RCIS's décor and events is not only a reflection of the establishment's desire to respect Lakota culture in ways Native American boarding schools could not, but is in fact a product of Euro-colonial teachings, as quilting was first introduced to Sioux women by government and church agencies who were attempting to "educate the Sioux in the ways of white people" (Albers, *Medicine* 126). The star quilt on the Red Cloud School campus today and in the school's ceremonial procedures is therefore a symbol of the survivance (a combination of survival and resistance) of indigenous peoples who adapted Euro-colonial practices to their own cultural views, as well as RCIS's ability to accept Lakota interpretations of the teachings of Holy Rosary Mission and other Native American boarding schools.

Aside from the implementation of works of art on the RCIS campus in recent decades to assist in Holy Rosary Mission's "re-identification" process, the institution has also made efforts to honor Lakota culture more than Native American schools historically have through architectural designs and floorplans in newly constructed buildings. In 1998, after a fire destroyed the historic mission church on RCIS's campus, the Church of the Holy Rosary was built in its place. The new church "reflects the importance of both Lakota and Catholic traditions and beliefs" by "incorporating the shape of a medicine wheel into elements of its design" (RedCloudSchool.org).

The circular shape of the medicine wheel being implemented in the Church of the Holy Rosary's design is a massive step towards appreciation of Lakota conceptions of space that the design of Native American boarding schools never took. Adams writes that Sioux students who

attended boarding schools like Holy Rosary Mission had a hard time adjusting to “a world of lines, corners, and squares,” in which “Rectangular dormitories and dining rooms were filled with beds, tables, and desks – all carefully arranged in straight rows” (113). Adams reiterates the impact of linear surroundings on one Lakota student, for whom “the essential touchstones of cultural reality – the sky, the sun, the moon, the teepee, the sundance lodge, and the ‘sacred hoop’ - were all circular phenomenon,” as follows:

Thus, an old Lakota, Black Elk, would tell John Neihardt in 1931: ‘You will notice that everything the Indian does is in a circle. Everything that they do is the power from the sacred hoop.’ But now, Black Elk would lament, his people were living in houses. ‘It is a square. It is not the way we should live . . . Everything is now too square. The sacred hoop is vanishing among the people . . . We are vanishing in this box’ (1130.)

The words of Black Elk in Adams’s text demonstrate the danger of the massive cultural differences between White and Lakota perceptions of space. The architectural layout of boarding schools attended by Sioux students on and off of reservations was damaging to young people who were raised to view their surroundings in terms of roundness, and who considered circular objects in the world around them to hold sacred meaning. RCIS’s determination to integrate circular elements into the structural design of the new Church of the Holy Rosary’s design signifies the institutions willingness to respect the Lakota worldview and improve upon the building designs of Holy Rosary Mission and other Native American boarding schools of the past that favored White perceptions of surroundings.

In its effort to bring the medicine wheel and its circular shape into the construction of the new Church of the Holy Rosary, RCIS created a Lakota Catholic church with features impossible to find in a traditional Catholic place of worship. The cross that sits atop the Church of the Holy

Rosary's steeple is surrounded by a hoop, giving the piece the literal shape of a Lakota medicine wheel, which consists of a circle encompassing the four directions which hold sacred meaning to the Lakota people. Inside the Church of the Holy Rosary, pews are curved and are arranged in a semi-circle around an altar, which further demonstrates Church of the Holy Rosary's willingness to defy Christian conventions in favor of Lakota perspectives of spirituality and existence, something unheard of in the traditional Native American boarding schools. To further integrate Lakota culture with Catholicism, the Church of the Holy Rosary contains paintings of the Stations of the Cross done by Lakota artists in ledger art style that reflects the Native American aesthetic, and the church also has a circular stained-glass window positioned above the altar, creating an appropriate marriage between traditional Catholic conventions of beauty in church and Lakota cultural values.

The Curriculum/Teaching Methods:

The Native American boarding schools attended by Native students from the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation taught only the content and curricular elements which were believed to assist in efficient destruction of Native culture and assimilation into White civilization. In its efforts to re-identify itself in recent decades, Holy Rosary Mission has integrated Lakota language, spirituality, and history into its traditional American Catholic school curriculum. Reyhner and Eder write that in 1987, renowned anthropologist George Spindler stated that the main reason Indian schools historically failed was because "educators did not recognize and build on the tribal heritage of students" and failed to call for "culturally appropriate teaching methods and materials, including instruction and materials in students' Native languages" (8). The integration of Native culture in pedagogy which Spindler argues is necessary in education of American Indian students was widely frowned upon by Native American boarding schools that worked

with populations of Lakota students such as the Carlisle School and Holy Rosary Mission.

Today, however, the RCIS has undergone an evolution in its curriculum and teaching practices since its opening as Holy Rosary Mission and is now focused on enriching students' educational experiences by weaving Lakota language and culture into courses and methods of instruction.

In his book *Americanizing the American Indians*, Francis Prucha presents a report produced in 1868 by the so-called "Peace Commission" made up of a number of men including the Commissioner of Indian Affairs at the time General Taylor, which states that "Schools should be established, which children should be required to attend; their barbarous dialect should be blotted out and the English language substituted" (199). According to Prucha, the widely accepted belief amongst policymakers and establishers of Indian schools was that "To teach Indian school children their Native tongue is practically to exclude English, and to prevent them from acquiring it" (203). The negative attitudes towards Native languages in Indian education presented by Prucha were dominant in Native American boarding schools attended by Sioux students from the Pine Ridge Reservation. Recalling his own experiences at the Carlisle School, Luther Standing Bear describes being forced to change his name, a central component of his identity, to a name more commonly used in the English language immediately upon his arrival at school. Adams's book includes an autobiographical piece by Standing Bear in which he recalls feelings humiliated and embarrassed while being forced to repeatedly read an English paragraph aloud in front of his class until he could orate the passage to his instructor's satisfaction (138). Reyhner and Eder include in their book the experiences of Lakota Tim Giago, who attended Holy Rosary Mission in the 1940s and recalls a classmate telling him the following about punishment he endured for using his Native language:

One time I was given enough demerits so I had to miss two movies in a row for speaking my native Lakota language . . . Missing two movies was bad enough, but this prefect also made me bite down on a large rubber band and then he stretched the rubber band to its limit, and let it snap back against my lips. It was very painful. All of this punishment for speaking my Lakota language (125).

Adams, Reyhner, and Eder provide in their works just a few examples of how Native American boarding schools were willing to put forth extensive efforts to make students ashamed of their languages of origin and to instill fear into those students who dared to defy the English-only policies of American Indian schools.

RCIS's first major rebellion against traditional Indian school policies which discouraged use of Native languages occurred in 1967 when the school, which still went by the name Holy Rosary Mission at the time, began offering Lakota language classes to students. More recently, in 2007, RCIS launched its revolutionary Lakota Language Program, to ensure that more than 600 Red Cloud School students in grades K-12 receive instruction in Lakota language every school day. Through the Lakota Language program, Lakota language and culture are promoted and revitalized in "curriculum development, community engagement, and culturally-relevant education" (RedCloudSchool.org). It is no easy task to reintroduce Lakota language through education to a community damaged by educational practices of the past that prioritized English and devalued Native tongues, but the initiative of RCIS demonstrated through the implementation of the Lakota Language Program is a healthy steps towards providing indigenous students with motivation to speak the language of their ancestors in an academic setting. Reports conducted by RCIS indicate that the Lakota Language program has served its purpose, as "67% of students reported using Lakota more at home as a result of the LLP curriculum" and "77% of

parents and grandparents reported that their students have an increased awareness of Lakota traditions as a result of the LLP curriculum” (RedCloudSchool.org). During my own personal observations of classrooms at RCIS, I was delighted to see students actively engaging with the Lakota language even in casual conversation with their peers and instructors, and it was difficult to ignore the certain air of excitement and intrigue that students felt as a result of studying and using the Lakota language. It is truly a remarkable feat for an education-based language program to produce impressive results in and out of the school setting in a place like the Pine Ridge Reservation where students and their family members have been scarred by assaults on their Native American languages by educational institutions of the past.

The Lakota language was not the only aspect of Lakota culture denied students at American Indian boarding schools. Lakota history was also presented to students at Indian schools in a biased light, and Lakota spiritual practices were frowned upon by missionaries who aimed to convert students to Christianity. In Reyhner’s and Eder’s text, Tim Giago writes about his experiences with Lakota history and religion at Holy Rosary Mission:

We can recall attending classes in American history and being taught that our ancestors were blood-thirsty savages with no higher ambition than to rage, pillage, and kill the white settlers. We were taught that the religions of these heathens were paganistic. The clear implication was that if we did not embrace Catholicism, we would be doomed to the same destruction as our ancestors (125).

Giago’s account of his own experiences highlights the desire of instructors at American Indian boarding schools to impose Euro-colonial views of the world on Native youth through one-sided representations of history and religious salvation which did not align with the prominent teachings of Lakota tribal members.

Today at RCIS, the Lakota Studies program uses an educational setting to introduce students to the unique histories, treaties, and conflicts that have impacted the Lakota people in particular, rather than create barriers to students' access to historical occurrences as they were experienced by members of the Lakota tribe. Classes titled Lakota Studies and Indian Wars expose students to histories previously ignored by Indian schools attended by many Sioux children, and the presence of Lakota instructors in these courses provides modern students with a Lakota voice and perspective that traditional Native American boarding schools lacked. RCIS is making huge strides, through the Lakota Studies program, towards presenting history to its students as it is actually interpreted and appreciated by Lakota peoples, not just as it is recalled through Euro-colonial perspectives.

Other components of the Lakota Studies program at RCIS include courses such as Lakota Rites and Comparative Native Religions. Despite being an institution established and led by Jesuit missionaries, Red Cloud School today handles spirituality delicately, leading students to understand the spiritual beliefs of Lakota peoples and Catholics alike. While at RCIS, I had the opportunity to sit in on a wellness talk organized by the school's administration in response to the alarming amount of teen suicides which occurred on Pine Ridge over the course of just a few months between January and March of 2015. At the wellness talk, one speaker, a Lakota woman who is a practicing Catholic, described her connection to Catholicism and the way that spiritual connection guided her through difficult times to emerge happy, healthy, and successful. During the same exact wellness talk, another speaker discussed his Lakota spirituality and how Lakota religion was an outlet for him during dark, depressing times to overcome personal struggles. Students were reassured throughout the talk of the importance of finding their own spiritual path and following it. There was no sense during the talk or at any point during my time spent at

RCIS that speakers, teachers, or administrators desired to convert unwilling students to a particular religion, but rather it seemed overtly apparent that personal choice and an individual belief system play critical roles in students' formation of their spiritual identities.

Aside from providing courses entirely devoted to Lakota history, culture, language, and religion, through the Lakota Studies program, RCIS promotes recognition of Lakota cultural values, beliefs, and practices in *every* classroom. Teachers at Red Cloud School are encouraged to incorporate elements of the Lakota culture in their classroom environment and in their daily lessons. Many instructors make use of “language, dancing, hand games, symbolism, traditions, handicrafts, and food” in their day-to-day classrooms in order to provide Lakota students with a culturally competent education (RedCloudSchool.org). Many of the classrooms I visited while at Red Cloud School had desks arranged in a circle or semicircle to honor the appreciation Lakota peoples have for roundness and openness in their surroundings. A number of classes I visited also burned sage at the start of class, an act which holds ceremonial meaning within the Lakota culture. Signage in classrooms and in common areas of RCIS is also a way the institution uniquely expresses pride in Lakota culture and language, as bathrooms are marked in Lakota and some bulletin boards and posters in the hallways are published in Lakota. It was truly an experience for me, personally, to be smudged at the beginning of each class I observed, and to learn about Lakota traditions, customs, and practices from respected tribal members alongside students who attribute these teachings to sacred Lakota ways.

Even outside of the classroom, Lakota students at RCIS participate in extracurricular activities and ceremonies which foster bonds between their academic and cultural identities. While at Red Cloud School, for example, I was fortunate to have the opportunity to attend a pep rally for the girls' basketball team, which concluded with everyone in the entire gymnasium

forming a series of circles around the team captain and singing and dancing to Lakota drum beats. Even non-athletic extracurricular programs focus on different aspects of Lakota culture, with one after-school club which I had the opportunity to visit being dedicated to traditional Lakota hand games. Musical clubs focus on helping students improve their knowledge and abilities in Lakota singing and drumming. Powwows are not only held at RCIS throughout the year (such as prior to graduation of the senior class at Red Cloud High School) but are promoted to students, teachers, and community members through the school even when taking place off campus.

Through practices and programs both in and out of the classroom, the Lakota Studies program at RCIS aims to involve Lakota students in their ‘rich cultural heritage,’ while simultaneously assisting them in “overcoming negative stereotypes and developing a strong and ethical identity rooted in their traditions that will help them become the Lakota leaders of tomorrow’ (RedCloudSchool.org). Red Cloud School’s strong emphasis on helping students express their identities as Lakota is a stark contrast to the practices of boarding schools attended by Sioux children in the past that were designed to completely strip Native American students of any signs of their tribal identities. Adams’s text, for example, describes Luther Standing Bear’s experiences at the Carlisle Indian School where he and his classmates were “summoned” to a barber’s chair by school officials to have their long hair cut off. Being a Sioux tradition to cut hair short in times of mourning, the hair-cutting at Carlisle Indian School led to screams of terror across the school campus from horrified students, according to Standing Bear, and is one example of not only the school’s desire to erase all visible signs of students’ Lakota identities, but also an example of how little the school administration understood about the cultural practices of Sioux students. Students at Native American boarding schools on and off of

reservations also experienced a loss of ability to express their cultural identities through clothing, as it was common for students to wear a standard school uniform at such institutions (Adams 103). Through the Lakota Studies program at RCIS, the assault on Sioux cultural identity committed by Native American boarding schools of the past can be prevented from ever occurring again, as courses, activities, and teaching methods promoted by the program are designed to help students view their cultural identities with pride rather than shame.

Correlating with changes to the curriculum and teaching methods deemed acceptable for RCIS and its unique student body was a significant change in administration in the year 1979, when Red Cloud School constructed a bicultural school board “including two Franciscan sisters, six Jesuits, and eight Native Americans” (RedCloudSchool.org). As many missionary schools and government boarding schools focusing on Native American education were previously administered by White Christians alone, Red Cloud School’s establishment of a bicultural school board played a massive role in the institution’s re-identification process by making a Lakota-friendly curriculum more of a likelihood. Lakota presence in administration and instruction at RCIS is still prominent to this day, as Robert Brave Heart, Sr. became the school’s first Lakota superintendent in the year 2003, and a number of staff members who are local Lakota community members and are well-educated in Lakota language, culture, history, and traditions are on staff at the school to provide students with authentic, valuable Lakota perspective in the classroom (RedCloudSchool.org). RCIS’s faculty and management is a demonstration of the institution’s utilization of Lakota peoples to assist in creating culturally relevant and appropriate educational and extracurricular programs for Lakota students which in no way resemble the culturally damaging courses and teaching practices of Native American boarding schools previously attended by Sioux youth.

Conclusion

Nobody can describe the positive impact RCIS has had on the families of Pine Ridge reservation better than those who have attended the school and their close relatives. In the documentary film *Jesuit and Lakota: Graduation at Red Cloud*, director Jeremy Zipple chronicles the final days of a group of Lakota students and interviews them and their family members to gain a better understanding of how RCIS has changed as an institution since its establishment as Holy Rosary Mission. The film reveals a number of ways Red Cloud School provides students and community members with opportunities for success as both well-educated and culturally aware Lakota peoples – something Native American educational institutions previously attended by Lakota community members never could do.

One student in Zipple's film describes attending RCIS as "the best decision of [his] life," because the institution "helped [him] venture off into the Lakota way of life and learn those virtues." Other interviewees of Zipple express gratitude towards RCIS for its emphasis on Lakota culture in academics, school functions such as graduation, and religious ceremony. One young man in particular in Zipple's film describes the school's Catholic and Lakota values as being "interwoven and hand-in-hand with each other," referencing the fact that the school has not always been that way. Not surprisingly, Red Cloud School students' commentary in the film demonstrates their gratitude for having had the opportunity to interact with Lakota language, culture, and spirituality in an educational setting with Lakota community members acting as mentors and advisors. The words of the RCIS students in Zipple's film serve as proof that Red Cloud School's introduction of the Lakota studies and Lakota language program had and continues to have a positive impact on students, showing us that attempts of boarding schools in

the past to strip Sioux students of their linguistic and cultural identities were not in the students' best interests.

Parents of RCIS students interviewed by Zipple also claim to notice the benefits of the school's initiative to bring Lakota culture and language to Lakota youth through education. One mother of a student at Red Cloud School explains how the Lakota language program at the school has impacted not only her children who attend the school, but the community as a whole, when she states: "And the one thing that's coming back is our language with our young people, and it's amazing to hear . . . hear them talk and sing and text in our language. It's like – wow! And sometimes I'm asking her 'What's this word? Tell me what this word is because I've never heard it.'" The mother's response in Zipple's film provides reassurance of the fact that RCIS's efforts to acquaint youth with Lakota language and culture are beneficial not only to them but to their family members who they can share new words and information with that they pick up through the Lakota Language Program. At the graduation ceremony shown in Zipple's documentary, students offer thanks and praise to community elders and their family members for their support and their willingness to pass Lakota wisdom down to younger generations. Native American on-reservation and off-reservation boarding schools that previously worked with populations of students from Pine Ridge Reservation made it their mission to separate students from community members as much as possible to prevent interaction with tribal practices, but it is clear through Zipple's film that students thrive off of learning through and alongside elders and ancestors surrounding them.

Native American boarding schools were built on the foundational idea that American Indians should learn to adjust to a world dominated by White, Christian values, which totally disregards the importance of those cultural experiences and beliefs which were important to

indigenous peoples of North America prior to European colonization. RCIS, however, shows us that today it is possible to educate Native American students in a way that allows them to be successful within their own sovereign nations and as strong tribal leaders. One graduating student in Zipple's documentary states that his plans for his future beyond Red Cloud include helping his reservation get out of debt, practice sovereignty, and build its economy, while another expresses her desire to go to college and return to Pine Ridge Reservation to run for tribal presidency. The aspirations of the students interviewed by Zipple reveal a truth that Native American education for students living on reservations like Pine Ridge can be a positive experience, while still encouraging young people to live, work, and dream in an Lakota-majority society, rather than teaching them that assimilation into White culture is the only way to live a meaningful life as Native American boarding schools did to many Native students at one time.

Having been historically put through so much pain and devastation as a peoples with educational institutions and their culturally destructive practices, the Lakota Sioux of Pine Ridge Reservation have every right to be distrusting of educational institutions. How can a parent trust a system for their child, when they heard stories from their own parents about schools that practiced physically abusive forms of discipline, taught culturally and religiously biased content, and ignored Lakota students' rights to maintain their cultural identities? How can a student learn of the historical use of education as a method of assimilation and still believe that a place like RCIS, once named Holy Rosary Mission, actually intends to help them succeed? How can community members show support for an institution, the people running it, and the students attending it, when a number of tribal members have shared their own personal negative experiences with that very institution, and still to this day discuss the trauma they endured while a student there?

Red Cloud School itself, given the attitudes of the people of Pine Ridge resulting from negative experiences with Holy Rosary Mission and other schools in the past, might have had every right to shut down when education laws became more progressive and called for culturally competent and linguistically beneficial teaching of Native students. How can an educational institution entirely re-claim its identity and shift from a strictly Catholic model of instruction to a model that honors the Lakota way of life? How can a school prove its value in a community that has been scarred by educational institutions that separated families, disregarded students' perspectives of the world, and cut vital cultural ties between Native students and their tribes? Is it even possible for an educational institution on Pine Ridge to rectify mistakes of Native American boarding schools of the past and heal an entire community's wounds?

History is not something meant to be forgotten or neglected. If it were, so many administrators, teachers, students, and community members who interact with RCIS would simply ignore the impact of early Native American education on the Lakota people of Pine Ridge Reservation and go about their lives as if education for Native peoples is the same as education for any other student. Yet, in my short time spent at Red Cloud School, the institution's history was acknowledged by many people I came in contact with, and was nowhere near being considered erased from memory. Red Cloud School's history instead drives the institution forward, inspiring leaders and students to reflect on the past as a learning experience for Pine Ridge Reservation, and acting as an incentive to deliver a culturally competent education to Lakota students (and in turn the entire Lakota community) that works for their way of life, and appreciates their understanding of the world – an education that should have been provided to Native students all along.

Unfortunately, the experiences of students at RCIS today are not the experiences shared by all Native American students elsewhere on and off Pine Ridge Reservation. By studying places like Red Cloud School, however, and analyzing the ways the institution managed to overcome its regrettable history to become a place of innovation, positivity, and cultural expression for Lakota peoples, other educational institutions that serve Native American students can understand what programs, curricular elements, and teaching practices work best for them. As a future educator myself, visiting Pine Ridge and meeting the amazing teachers and students at RCIS has made me question my own philosophy of teaching in terms of working with culturally, ethnically, and linguistically diverse populations of students. My observations at RCIS and my interactions with amazing students and community members in Pine Ridge have led me through a long process of reflection on my own thoughts about the importance of cultural sensitivity in the classroom. As an educator, I hope to be able to create a learning environment that empowers every student and places all learners on an equal playing field, regardless of historical feelings passed down through culture, personal connections to certain cultural practices or beliefs that impact education, and linguistic boundaries that exist between students and course material in many American public schools. Having the chance to experience alternate cultural realities in education at Red Cloud School gave me the opportunity to witness exactly how culturally competent education of diverse students is properly implemented, which is something I will cherish throughout my entire career as an educational professional.

The transformation of Holy Rosary Mission into RCIS and the many ways that transformation benefited Lakota peoples is a prime example of a modern institution of education that drives the population it serves towards success in the modern world while still demonstrating respect for cultural individuality. Holy Rosary Mission's metamorphosis into RCIS is also an

example of something else, though – an example of a group defined by Red Cloud Students themselves as a people of “determination,” “will,” and “strength.”

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