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# CONFLICT, TENSION, STRENGTH: THE HISTORY OF ST. PAULS MISSION, ST. LABRE INDIAN SCHOOL, AND ST. STEPHENS INDIAN SCHOOL, 1884—PRESENT'

Donna Peterson

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**CONFLICT, TENSION, STRENGTH: THE HISTORY OF ST. PAUL'S  
MISSION, ST. LABRE INDIAN SCHOOL, AND ST. STEPHENS INDIAN  
SCHOOL, 1884–PRESENT**

**by**

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DISSERTATION

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of

**Doctor of Philosophy  
History**

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Albuquerque, New Mexico

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LABRE INDIAN SCHOOL, AND ST. STEPHENS INDIAN SCHOOL, 1884–

PRESENT

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ABSTRACT

“Conflict, Tension, Strength,” explores the longevity of three separate Catholic Indian missions in the West: St. Paul’s Mission in Hays, Montana; St. Labre Indian School in Ashland, Montana; and St. Stephens Indian School in St. Stephens, Wyoming. These mission schools, in part, possess two common traits: they have all reached the 125-year milestone and they are all located on or adjacent to reservations that serve two distinct Indian tribes. St. Paul’s Mission is on the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation, home to the Gros Ventre and Assiniboine tribes. St. Labre Indian School serves students from the Northern Cheyenne and Crow reservations. St. Stephens Indian School is on the Wind River Indian Reservation, shared by the Northern Arapaho and Eastern Shoshone tribes. Although these schools share a rocky legacy founded on assimilation and Catholicism, their efforts at cultural revitalization after Vatican Council II and Indian self-determination legislation warrant attention. By following this long trajectory, a true sense of adaptability and preservation emerges. Over the course of time, these three

schools have intertwined themselves into the fabric of the community. Catholic Indian missions are not a relic of the past, but a part of the evolution and current story of Indian education.



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## **Introduction**

### **A Journey**

On 8 August 2004, I embarked on a new adventure with three complete strangers. Arriving in Portland, Oregon, by way of New Jersey, Washington, Illinois, and New York, the four of us formed the new group of Jesuit Volunteers (JVs) travelling to the isolated town of Hays, Montana, on the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation. Our new home was an old convent nestled inside the reservation, but we were not training to become nuns. Rather, we had chosen to volunteer as teachers. For one year, we would live off government commodities and a stipend of eighty dollars a month. Despite these financial limitations, the experience was extremely rewarding and completely changed our lives.

I had agreed to teach kindergarten in Hays, Montana. Before I left for my new position, I searched for material on the Gros Ventres and Assiniboines to familiarize myself with the two tribes of the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation, but I had trouble finding even a brief synopsis of them. St. Paul's Mission Grade School does not have a website and online searches offer very little information about the school. As an incoming teacher, I sought access to background information on the school and community. However, my pursuit was in vain. Despite the lack of data, I had just graduated from college and I knew that I wanted to experience the West firsthand before pursuing my doctorate, so I anxiously started this new venture. I made one of the best decisions in my life when I chose to volunteer for a year and then sign on for an additional year of service at St. Paul's.

Although all first-year teachers find themselves overwhelmed, the new teachers at St. Paul's, including myself, felt encouraged and welcomed by the Dominican sisters—

Sr. Helen Durso, Sr. Chris Ferrar, and Sr. Nora McCarthy—remarkable women in charge of the K–6 school. The current school remains in operation today largely because of their drive and determination, their dedication and commitment. Their no-nonsense demeanor and capable reputation bring credibility to the school and provide an atmosphere conducive for teaching. During my time in Hays, I met such magnificent people—the mission staff, tribal members, and even my husband, who was teaching at the high school. My coworkers were superb and the students were amazing. Teaching in Hays gave me a greater appreciation of the simpler things in life. Most of all, the students were a joy and I treasure my time with them. Although this was a detour in my grand plan to attend graduate school, it would have a profound legacy. Once I began working on my PhD in history, I instantly gravitated to researching on a topic I had fallen in love with—St. Paul’s Mission Grade School.

As a white teacher on the reservation, I struggled with my role. Was my presence continuing the policy of assimilation? I reconciled my doubts because the parents and children supported the school, the nuns, and even me, an inexperienced teacher from New Jersey. Once I entered graduate school, I continued to ruminate over my previous role as a teacher and its impact on the identity formation of the students. At St. Paul’s Mission Grade School, my kindergarteners began the school day by reciting the Pledge of Allegiance—I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands: one Nation under God, indivisible, with Liberty and Justice for all. Yet, these American children live on the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation, and in order to honor their heritage they continue the morning routine by saying the Gros Ventre pledge—No bean ha, ne ne ana ha bate da, ne de nah no beat da woo, be dan be dat dow,

oh ne pe e nan nick gion; followed by the Assiniboine pledge—Nay te chay wak nung, nay nee naa ah wa beta, ma coach a nay wakan tonga, tay use a no, ee u ha washday onk oombe.<sup>1</sup> Further, the children recite a Catholic prayer, such as: Two little eyes to look to God; Two little ears to hear His Word; Two little feet to walk in His ways; Two little lips to sing His praise; Two little hands to do His will; And one little heart to love Him still. This pattern continues throughout the child's attendance at St. Paul's Mission, although the prayer becomes more sophisticated, until the student graduates from sixth grade.<sup>2</sup> The constant repetition of these words must have some impact on the impressionable young children as they form their identity. The school system reinforces the concept of multiple identities. The children are American, Indian (specifically Gros Ventre or Assiniboine), and Catholic; yet what if these identities conflict? Does the school environment help to merge these distinctive traits? And how do the children hold on to their unique tribal identity?<sup>3</sup>

Although I cannot provide concrete answers to these questions since each child experiences school differently, I can demonstrate in the dissertation that all three components—federally-mandated curriculum, Native culture, and Catholic values—existed throughout the history of the school's educational program. More importantly, I follow the trajectory of the school from its inception to the present, well after the passage of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975. Since the 1970s, the school's emphasis on strengthening and honoring its students' Indian identity has

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<sup>1</sup> *Thematic Approach Curriculum of the Assiniboine/Gros Ventre: Hays/Lodge Pole Schools K-12 Grade*, 39.

<sup>2</sup> I taught kindergarten at St. Paul's Mission Grade School from 2004–2006. I was instructed by the principal, Sr. Helen Durso, to teach the children the Pledge of Allegiance, the Assiniboine Pledge, the Gros Ventre Pledge, and the proper way to pray. From personal experience, I know that the other teachers followed the same morning routine. Also, in fifth grade the students learned to say the Our Father in the Gros Ventre language.

<sup>3</sup> I will use the terms Indian, Native American, and Native interchangeably.

grown. St. Paul's Mission is not just a relic of the boarding school era. Presently, St. Paul's Mission Grade School is a vibrant school supported by the Native community. Its story, along with the stories of St. Labre Indian School and St. Stephens Indian School, deserves to be told.

My dissertation explores the underlying tensions that characterize three separate Catholic Indian missions in the West: St. Paul's Mission in Hays, Montana; St. Labre Indian School in Ashland, Montana; and St. Stephens Indian School in St. Stephens, Wyoming. I discuss the convergence of different tribal traditions and belief systems within the three schools. I have selected these mission schools, in part, because they have shared one common trait: they are all located on or adjacent to reservations that serve two distinct Indian tribes. St. Paul's Mission is on the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation, home to the Gros Ventre and Assiniboine tribes. St. Labre Indian School serves students from the Northern Cheyenne and Crow reservations. St. Stephens Indian School is on the Wind River Indian Reservation, shared by the Northern Arapaho and Eastern Shoshone tribes.

My research pursues the relationship between changing federal Indian policy and the schools. It explores the interaction between Catholic educators and Indian pupils, as well as the tribal differences between the students. At St. Stephens, for example, the Arapahos are predominantly Catholic because of the mission's presence, while the Shoshones remain Protestant. Further, I address the enduring strength and perseverance that has led these tribes to maintain their own culture within the school system. In the end, the communities remain committed to ensuring that these schools survive for future generations.

Between the late twentieth century and the present, scholars have written numerous works on American Indian education, but almost all of these studies have focused on the federal Indian boarding school experience. The classic study of nineteenth century Indian education is *American Indian Children at School, 1850–1930* (1993) by Michael C. Coleman. Utilizing Indian autobiographies, Coleman assesses students' responses to white education and elevates Indians from victims to agents influencing their own Indian schooling experience. David Wallace Adams's renowned work, *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875–1928* (1997), describes Hampton Institute, Carlisle Indian Industrial School, and other contemporary institutions. Adams recounts the demanding day-to-day experiences of the students and their responses to federal Indian education. *White Man's Club: Schools, Race, and the Struggle of Indian Acculturation* (2007) by historian Jacqueline Fear-Segal also provides a critical overview of American Indian education during the late nineteenth century. Fear-Segal explores white debates and theories regarding the Indian's capacity to be educated, and traces the trajectory of Indian education at the federal boarding schools. The second part of Fear-Segal's work is an in-depth assessment of Hampton Institute and Carlisle Indian Industrial School from 1875 to 1900.

Other scholars have written full-length exposés on specific off-reservation boarding schools. For instance, anthropologist K. Tsianina Lomawaima, author of *They Called It Prairie Light: The Story of Chilocco Indian School* (1994), draws upon interviews with former students, including her own father's story, to depict the complexity of students' experiences at Chilocco Indian School, a federal off-reservation boarding school in Oklahoma. *The Indian School on Magnolia Avenue: Voices and*



*Images from Sherman Institute* (2012), edited by Clifford E. Trafzer, Matthew Sakiestewa Gilbert, and Lorene Sisquoc, offers a compilation of articles that originated from materials archived in the Sherman Indian Museum vault.<sup>4</sup> These works illustrate the range of writing on federal Indian education. Scholars have explored the boarding school era; they have also evaluated individual federal boarding schools, either from an administrative point of view, the students' perspective, or a combination of viewpoints. Their works are important because they shed light on a form of schooling that affected thousands of Native Americans. Yet, these accounts fail to convey the entire story of Indian education introduced by outsiders.

Historians should also direct their attention to Indian youth enrolled in reservation day schools, public schools, charter schools, and mission schools. Works that have addressed the Indian mission schools generally reflect a limited focus. Typically, these studies recount the early formation and history of mission schools before the impact of Indian self-determination legislation and the revolution that led to Indian-run schools. Irene Mahoney's *Lady Blackrobes: Missionaries in the Heart of Indian Country* (2006) and Anne M. Butler's *Across God's Frontiers: Catholic Sisters in the American West, 1850–1920* (2012) describe the monumental courage and accomplishments of the religious women who opened mission schools. Salish Kootenai College Press published two books containing primary documents on St. Ignatius Mission. These volumes

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<sup>4</sup> For works on federal boarding schools, see Michael C. Coleman, *American Indian Children at School, 1850–1930* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1993); David Wallace Adams, *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875–1928* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995); Jacqueline Fear-Segal, *White Man's Club: Schools, Race, and the Struggle of Indian Acculturation*, Indigenous Education series (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007); K. Tsianina Lomawaima, *They Called It Prairie Light: The Story of Chilocco Indian School* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994); and Clifford E. Trafzer, Matthew Sakiestewa Gilbert, and Lorene Sisquoc, eds., *The Indian School on Magnolia Avenue: Voices and Images from Sherman Institute*, First Peoples: New Directions in Indigenous Studies (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2012).

chronicle the time periods, 1880–1889 and 1890–1894. In *Seeds of Faith: Catholic Indian Boarding Schools* (2000), historian James T. Carroll sets out to prove that Catholic boarding schools in the era between 1874 to 1926 were more conciliatory toward their students than the federal government and their Protestant counterparts. Carroll focuses on four boarding schools, Fort Totten, Fort Yates, Saint Francis, and Holy Rosary, all of which were located in Dakota Territory where they provided schooling for Sioux children. Other narratives that address the modern-day mission school are drawn from personal experience, such as journalist Tim Giago’s work *Children Left Behind: The Dark Legacy of Indian Mission Boarding Schools* (2006). Interestingly, Giago, an Oglala Lakota, recounts his heartbreaking experiences at Holy Rosary Mission on the Pine Ridge Reservation, which paints a very different picture from Carroll’s positive *Seeds of Faith*.<sup>5</sup>

Historian Brian Collier’s PhD dissertation, “St. Catherine Indian School, Santa Fe, 1887–2006: Catholic Indian Education in New Mexico,” traces the entire 111-year trajectory of St. Catherine Indian School. My dissertation shares many similarities with Collier’s work. I take into consideration the current dynamics at St. Paul’s, St. Labre, and St. Stephens, especially the revitalization in Indian languages and culture and the increase in Indian teachers, tutors, and administrators within the field of Catholic education. We both note the rise in volunteer corps in the 1970s and their contributions to mission schools. However, the latter portion of my dissertation provides a deeper

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<sup>5</sup> Irene Mahoney, O.S.U., *Lady Blackrobes: Missionaries in the Heart of Indian Country* (Golden, Colo.: Fulcrum Publishing, 2006); Anne M. Butler, *Across God’s Frontiers: Catholic Sisters in the American West, 1850–1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012); James T. Carroll, *Seeds of Faith: Catholic Indian Boarding Schools*, Native Americans: Interdisciplinary Studies (New York: Routledge, 2000); and Tim Giago, *Children Left Behind: The Dark Legacy of Indian Mission Boarding Schools* (Santa Fe, N.Mex.: Clear Light Publishing, 2006).

analysis on the impact of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975 on mission schools and the current problems these institutions face. While St. Catherine closed its doors in 1998, the three schools I focus on continue to operate in the twenty-first century.<sup>6</sup>

Therefore, my dissertation incorporates a modern-day analysis. Scholars have looked at Indian education in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, but their concentration moves well beyond Catholic Indian education. For example, in *Education and the American Indian: The Road to Self-Determination, 1928–1998* (1999), historian Margaret Connell-Szasz describes changes in federal education policies between the Meriam Report (1928) and the rise of Indian-controlled schools in the late twentieth century. In *To Remain an Indian: Lessons in Democracy from a Century of Native American Education* (2006), K. Tsianina Lomawaima and Teresa L. McCarty also trace the developments in federal Indian education policies throughout the twentieth century and emphasize how Indians have begun actively to promote bilingual education, establish Native charter schools, and support other efforts toward indigenous self-education.<sup>7</sup>

Yet, scholars in this field have largely ignored the twenty-first century Catholic missions. The literature in this field has focused primarily on Indian Bureau schools, public schools, and Indian-controlled schools. Further, these authors have not directed

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<sup>6</sup> Brian Collier, “St. Catherine Indian School, Santa Fe, 1887–2006: Catholic Indian Education in New Mexico” (PhD diss., Arizona State University, 2006). Robert W. Galler Jr.’s PhD dissertation, “Environment, Cultures, and Social Change on the Great Plains: A History of Crow Creek Tribal School,” deserves to be mentioned as well. Galler’s work also focuses on a Roman Catholic boarding school (1886–present) in order “to reveal the tribal contributions to school history” (ibid., 5).

<sup>7</sup> Margaret Connell Szasz, *Education and the American Indian: The Road to Self-Determination, 1928–1998*, 3d ed. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1999); and K. Tsianina Lomawaima and Teresa L. McCarty, *To Remain an Indian: Lessons in Democracy from a Century of Native American Education*, Multicultural Education Series (New York: Teachers College Press, 2006). For a study on Indian education in colonial America, see Margaret Connell-Szasz, *Indian Education in the American Colonies, 1607–1783* (1988; repr., Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007).

their attention to the vibrant history of currently operating mission schools. By discussing the changes in mission education after the 1970s, this dissertation will make a valuable contribution to the historical scholarship. In this regard, an important dimension of my dissertation assesses the interplay between Christian religious beliefs and Native spirituality. Syncretism and the concept of identity remains a recurring theme throughout my work as well. To strengthen my analysis, however, I selected mission schools that require interaction between two distinct tribes. Rather than catering to one particular tribe or many tribes coming together at school, this dynamic adds another dimension to my project. While I trace the convergence of Indian traditions and belief systems with mainstream society's curriculum and the Catholic faith, I also seek to ascertain the relationship between the two tribes. Although they work in unison on the reservations and within the schools, the uniqueness of the individual tribes has prevailed.

Many works have acknowledged that the common experiences of diverse Indian people at the off-reservation boarding schools helped to create a pan-Indian worldview. When Indian children lived away from home, tribal differences tended to dissipate at the large federal American Indian boarding schools such as Carlisle and Haskell. Scholars Patricia Dixon and Clifford E. Trafzer's article, "The Place of American Indian Boarding Schools in Contemporary Society" in *Boarding School Blues: Revisiting American Indian Educational Experiences* (2006), acknowledges the emotional ties forged among classmates as they encountered the same hardships and triumphs at school. During the boarding school era (1879–1940), the schools provided the students with the opportunities to learn from one another. By contrast, works such as Teresa L. McCarty's *A Place to Be Navajo: Rough Rock and the Struggle for Self-Determination in Indigenous*

*Schooling* (2002) have highlighted how contemporary reservation schools enforce traditional values of a specific Native culture, since these schools typically serve a single tribe. By looking at identity formation for members of two different tribes whose youth attended the same Catholic mission school, this study will provide a unique window into the tribal dynamics of these schools. This criterion enhances the discussion on how students form their concept of self within the school environment.<sup>8</sup>

Scholars such as Choctaw historian Devon Mihesuah, Dakota scholar and activist Waziyatawin (Angela Wilson), and Māori professor Linda Tuhiwai Smith have brought decolonization and postcolonial methodologies to the forefront of Native American studies. Decolonization theory has become essential to this field. At the same time, my affirmation of the three mission schools, which continue to encourage mainstream culture and Catholicism, should not imply a counter-argument to these theories. In this dissertation, I assess the injustices that characterized the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century. In the *fin de siècle*, when these mission schools disrupted and hurt families, stripped tribal people of their languages, and degraded Indian culture. This legacy remains. I saw it firsthand when I witnessed tribes' efforts to relearn and regain proficiency in their Native language, which had suffered from repressive schools enforcing English-only policies. In this regard, my support of these schools adheres to Smith's "Celebrating Survival" approach, which she defines as "While non-indigenous research has been intent on documenting the demise and cultural assimilation

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<sup>8</sup> Clifford E. Trafzer, Jean A. Keller, Lorene Sisquoc, eds., *Boarding School Blues: Revisiting American Indian Educational Experiences*, Indigenous Education series (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006); and Teresa L. McCarty, *A Place to Be Navajo: Rough Rock and the Struggle for Self-Determination in Indigenous Schooling*, Sociocultural, Political, and Historical Studies in Education (New York: Routledge, 2002).

of indigenous peoples, celebrating survival accentuates not so much our demise but the degree to which indigenous peoples and communities have successfully retained cultural and spiritual values and authenticity.” Ultimately, I believed in those kindergartners whom I taught in Hays and I trust that my optimism has not clouded my assessments. The community support for these schools might also imply that these tribal members are already a colonized people. However, this rationale denigrates the Indians’ ability to retain their own traditions, while they appropriate the mission schools as their own. I include many perspectives—positive and negative—to produce a well-balanced work. Collier asserts, “There is no such thing as a Native viewpoint, but rather a compilation of perspectives.”<sup>9</sup> Drawing upon my own recollections, I also rely on Native students and alumni, religious personnel, white and Native teachers, and community members to introduce a broad perspective that encompasses all viewpoints.

Chapter 1 provides background information and brief introductions for the six tribes represented at the schools. It explores cultures of the Great Plains people, warfare between these tribes, fighting between Indians and whites, and the confinement of Indians to reservations in Montana and Wyoming. The pre-reservation experiences of the tribes and their struggle to acquire reservation lands near their homelands establish the setting for the missions’ stories.

Chapter 2 complements the first chapter by presenting background information and brief introductions on the religious personnel. In this section I trace the founding and

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<sup>9</sup> Devon Mihesuah, *Natives and Academics: Researching and Writing about American Indians* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998); Waziyatawin Angela Wilson and Michael Yellow Bird, *For Indigenous Eyes Only: A Decolonization Handbook* (Santa Fe, N.Mex.: School of American Research Press, 2005); Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, 5th ed. (London: Zed Books, 2002), 145 (quote); and Collier, “St. Catherine Indian School, Santa Fe, 1887–2006,” 10.

growth of the missions through a focus on the experiences of the priests and sisters. While chapter 1 highlights the tensions between the tribes and their precarious relationship with the federal government, chapter 2 demonstrates the friction between religious orders, and the mission schools' interactions with the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions (BCIM) and the federal government. The second chapter balances chapter 1 by introducing the people who served and educated the Indians, but it also looks at their struggles with limited finances, inadequate facilities, remoteness, and culture shock. By introducing the key participants and setting the stage for the history of the selected mission schools, these two chapters serve as book ends.

The next three chapters assess the different components of this schooling—statewide education, Catholic education, Native education—that were embedded within the teaching goals of the missions. Chapter 3 examines the early history from the 1880s to the 1960s of the three schools. It evaluates their teaching objectives, student enrollment, and the day-to-day activities. The boarding schools under study transitioned into day schools, but the curriculum and extracurricular activities reinforced mainstream society's standards. Yet at the same time, the Catholic faith remains the foundation for each school. Chapter 4 discusses Catholic education at the missions under the impact of Second Vatican Council or Vatican II (1962–1965). This event promulgated a greater appreciation for Native cultures and languages. Chapter 5 deals specifically with the changes spurred by the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act passed by Congress in 1975. For example, St. Stephen's Mission became St. Stephens Indian School when the St. Stephens Indian School Education Association, a committee of tribal members, began to oversee the school with support from the Arapaho and Shoshone

Business Council. Complementing the change in leadership, the teachers' objectives and the focus of the curriculum also transformed by incorporating the cultures of the students and the everyday experiences on the reservation. This chapter highlights how the schools changed to meet the unique needs of their students and community, while embracing their rich, vibrant culture.

Chapter 6 discusses the obstacles faced by Indian students and the immense challenges that confronted each school. It also addresses the issue of academic success. The achievement gap between Indians and whites is still pronounced, and this chapter identifies the sources for some of these disparities. Despite the reality of multiple contentious issues, all three schools have celebrated 125 years of operation. The conclusion highlights these milestones.

Just as in 2004, when I embarked on a new journey to volunteer and make a difference, this dissertation will travel through time and make an impact. The stories of St. Paul's Mission Grade School, St. Labre Indian School, and St. Stephens Indian School are significant. Although missionaries initially established schools to force the assimilation and conversion of Indian youth, these institutions now provide quality education that meets state standards, while integrating Catholic and Native teachings. Their legacy can be traced to the assimilation era and the boarding schools that symbolize that era, but their significance lies in their ability to change. They have transformed former boarding schools into day schools; they have developed strong connections with the community; and they continue to draw students, teachers, and administrators through their doors today.



## Chapter 1

### Tribal Rivalries: The Struggles to Persevere on the Great Plains

On 22 January 1907, Agent H. E. Wadsworth of the Shoshone Reservation frantically wrote the commissioner of Indian affairs in Washington to request “the retention of troops at Fort Washakie.” Wadsworth stated that the military presence was “imperative” since “George Terry, the chairman of the Shoshoni tribal council, had been assassinated by parties unknown” on 10 January. Wadsworth oversaw a reservation in the Wind River region of Wyoming, which the U.S. government initially established for the Eastern Shoshones in 1868. Then, in 1878 the government arranged for the Shoshones’ enemies, the Arapahos, to settle on their land. The situation on the Shoshone Reservation was volatile, for Wadsworth noted: “The Arapaho tribe in this reservation has no treaty rights here, being originally placed here temporarily, and allowed to remain by courtesy of the Shoshoni. As the two tribes had for generations been at war with each other careful handling on the part of the Agent in charge of this reservation has been necessary, in order that no serious friction should result.”<sup>10</sup>

Tension between the tribes mounted in the spring of 1904, when Inspector Jason McLaughlin met with the tribes to discuss allotment of land in severalty. Wadsworth believed that “practically all of the Shoshoni and a large majority of the Arapaho” favored allotment, but “disaffected Arapaho” refused to ratify the treaty and continued to speak out against allotment. Then, in the winter of 1907, the reservation erupted in chaos after “those who opposed the treaty” murdered Chairman Terry. Wadsworth wrote: “I

<sup>10</sup> Superintendent H. G. Wadsworth to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 22 January 1907, box 1, Press Copies of the Superintendents’ Letters to Commissioner, 1907–1909, Records of the Wind River Agency of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Record Group 75, National Archives and Records Administration, Rocky Mountain Region Denver, Colorado [hereafter Wind River Agency, RG75, NARA-Denver, CO].

was amazed at the conditions here. Everyone was in a state of panic, both Indians and whites. People had slept little for several nights . . . expecting an attack any moment.” Wadsworth requested that the government send two secret service men to “locate the guilty parties.” He stated: “It will be a long time, however, before these Indians will get over this affair. Believing that the Arapaho were responsible for the death of their head councilman, the Shoshoni were anxious to fight it out at once.”<sup>11</sup> Fighting had been a way of life for the Plains Indians—their warrior traditions were deeply rooted within their culture—and they had bravely battled their enemies, opposing other tribes and whites, until the reservation system altered their lives, but rivalries between tribes persisted and resurfaced as time went on.

### **Native American Cultures**

Prior to the reservations and allotment, and before the Indians roamed the Plains on horseback tracking the buffalo, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the Assiniboines (Nakota), Gros Ventres (Ah-ah-ne-nin/White Clay People), Crows (Apsáalooke), Cheyennes (Tsitsistas and So'taeo'o People), and Arapahos (Inuna-ina) occupied the western Great Lakes region and the Red River Valley located between present-day western Minnesota and eastern North Dakota. At first the Siouan-speaking Assiniboines split off from the Yankton Sioux lived along Lake Superior, but in the 1600s they migrated westward and inhabited the forests surrounding Lake Winnipeg. The Assiniboines hunted game and gathered plants, moving their tipis to locate food and to conduct trade between the Mandan villages and the French and British fur trappers. Their participation in the fur trade amplified their reliance on the buffalo as a source of food and fur, which eventually enticed the Assiniboines to leave the woodlands and move

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

onto the Plains.<sup>12</sup> The Algonquian-speaking Cheyennes lived farther south in present-day Minnesota's Mille Lacs area. They hunted woodland animals, such as deer, elk, and beaver, but their main target was the buffalo. The Cheyennes killed the buffalo in the spring and fall by driving their prey into ambushes. They also lived in wigwam or cabin-like structures, collected wild rice in the summer, made pottery, and practiced basic agriculture along watercourses. Eventually, between 1742 and 1790, the Cheyennes acquired horses and replaced their permanent structures with mobile tipis, which enabled the Cheyennes to hunt the buffalo freely. Around 1832, the Cheyennes divided into two groups—Northern and Southern. The Northern Cheyennes settled along the North Platte River, while the Southern Cheyennes moved to the upper Arkansas River.<sup>13</sup> Likewise, the Siouan-speaking Crows, who split off from the Hidatsa around 1500, and the Algonquian-speaking Gros Ventres and Arapahos living farther west in North Dakota and Montana, inhabited permanent earthen lodges, farmed, and designed pottery, until the horse revolutionized their lifestyle.<sup>14</sup>

Unlike the Plains Indians, the Shoshones inhabited the harsh, arid Great Basin region—surrounded by the Rocky Mountains to the east, the Sierra Nevada to the west, the Columbia Plateau to the north and the Colorado Plateau to the south. They spoke a Uto-Aztecan dialect, did not engage in farming, hunted small game, and foraged for edible wild plants. They lived in conical structures covered with brush or reeds, and

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<sup>12</sup> *Land of Nakoda: The Story of the Assiniboine Indians*, From the tales of the Old Ones told to First Boy (James L. Long), with drawings by Fire Bear (William Standing), Federal Writers' Project (Helena, Mont.: Riverbend Publishing, 2004), 3–4; Carl Waldman, *Encyclopedia of Native American Tribes*, 3d ed. (New York: Facts on File, 2006), 20, 27; and Mary B. Davis, ed., *Native America in the Twentieth Century: An Encyclopedia* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1994), 63.

<sup>13</sup> John H. Moore, *The Cheyenne*, The Peoples of America series (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), 13, 16–21; Davis, *Native America in the Twentieth Century*, 100; and Waldman, *Encyclopedia of Native American Tribes*, 56.

<sup>14</sup> Waldman, *Encyclopedia of Native American Tribes*, 20, 86–87, 98. The Gros Ventres splintered from the Arapahos.

traveled as small extended families since food was scarce. The Eastern Shoshones, who hived off from the Northern Shoshones, inhabited the Grand Teton and Wind River Mountains in present-day Wyoming. After the arrival of the horse, the Eastern Shoshones, like their Plains' neighbors, lived in tipis and hunted buffalo.<sup>15</sup>

### **The Horse and Rifle**

By the early eighteenth century, the horse had changed the lives of many Native peoples, profoundly impacting many Indians from the Great Lakes and Plains. The horse elevated the Plains Indians reliance on the buffalo, which became the economic and cultural foundation of their societies. The buffalo provided food, shelter, clothing, and implements. Because hunters on horseback could kill more buffalo, the size of the bands grew. The horse provided the Indians with the freedom to travel farther, the ability to carry heavy loads, the chance to perfect their hunting and fighting skills, and the opportunity to trade with others at greater distances.

The introduction of the horse also restructured the Plains Indian societies. Their extended mobility created a fluid band structure, whereby Indians lived the majority of the year in small bands and then met their kinsman during larger gatherings. Since they could easily pursue the bison herds, the Plains Indians enjoyed fewer restrictions and more individual freedom. Ceremonial life became more sophisticated since horses provided hunters with the means to secure copious food stores necessary for large camps that would gather for several weeks. Indians consumed more buffalo meat and acquired more trade goods because of the horse, and “the increased volume of food and trade goods enhanced the purchasing power and status of buffalo-hunting groups.” Horses

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 96–97, 265.

created a stratified society by separating the wealthy horse owners from the poor. The horse became a valuable commodity and even a source of food during desperate times.

In buffalo-hunting societies, men's roles solidified around their prowess as warriors and hunters. Horses enabled men to take additional wives. Women, on the other hand, gained additional work, for they had more hides to process. These changes did not relegate women to a subservient position; rather men and women complemented each other. For example, Arapaho women owned the food they collected, plus the food their husbands and sons brought in, as well as the tipi and household goods. A man had to rely on his wife's skills to oversee their production of provisions and accumulate a surplus, which she or her husband could give away to boost their reputation for being generous and increase their political standing. The tribes perceived men and women differently, but they respected each gender equally. According to the Arapaho origin story, Pipe Being (male in essence) and Whirlwind Woman Being (female) worked together to create life. Therefore, women played a crucial role in the buffalo-based economy: "A woman's labor was viewed as equivalent to and in exchange for a man's." A husband was only as successful as his wife and vice versa.<sup>16</sup>

In the mid-1800s, European traders introduced Indians to the breech-loading rifle, which also stimulated their propensity for the hunt and for warfare. As the horse instantly widened the Indians' domain, it also increased their chances to encounter other

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<sup>16</sup> Colin G. Calloway, *First Peoples: A Documentary Survey of American Indian History*, 3d ed. (New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2008), 24–25, 290–93; Christopher L. Miller, *Prophetic Worlds: Indians and Whites on the Columbia Plateau* (1985; repr., Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2003), 27; Colin G. Calloway, ed., *Our Hearts Fell to the Ground: Plains Indian Views of How the West Was Lost*, The Bedford Series in History and Culture (Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press, 1996), 3, 37–40; Loretta Fowler, *The Columbia Guide to American Indians on the Great Plains*, Columbia Guides to American Indian History and Culture series (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 36; and Loretta Fowler, *Wives and Husbands: Gender and Age in Southern Arapaho History*, New Directions in Native American Studies series (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2010), 28–29, 51(quoted), 58–59.

tribes. Raids and counter-raids became common. Now, provided with powerful horses and weapons the Crows, Northern Cheyennes, Gros Ventres, Assiniboines, Northern Arapahos, and Eastern Shoshones could claim and contest each other for the Great Plains.<sup>17</sup>

### **The Great Plains**

The Crow, Northern Cheyenne, Gros Ventre, and Assiniboine tribes all currently claim reservations in Montana, and the Eastern Shoshones and Northern Arapahos share a reservation in Wyoming, yet their societies were radically different before the decimation of the buffalo and the encroachment of whites upon their lands. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, before their removal to reservations the Cheyennes, Crows, Gros Ventres, Assiniboines, Northern Arapahos, and Eastern Shoshones roamed the Northern and Central Plains. During the spring and early summer, as the lush grass sprang up, the Cheyennes mounted their horses and pursued the buffalo. The hunters galloped into the wind to overtake the grazing herds, letting their arrows fly, as the buffalo fell before the agile riders and their horses. As the sun beat down, the women quickly approached the dying animals in order to skin the buffalo, to remove the meat, and then to begin the drying process before the meat could spoil. The Indians also supplemented their diet by hunting other game, gathering wild berries and edible plants, and trading for maize and other food raised by sedentary people such as the Mandan and Hidatsa.<sup>18</sup> In the fall, a smaller hunt for buffalo, “conducted at the band level . . . not on the scale of the huge communal hunts of the spring,” took place before the Cheyenne

<sup>17</sup> Waldman, *Encyclopedia of Native American Tribes*, 226–27; Michael Stephen Kennedy, ed., *The Assiniboine*, from the accounts of the old ones told to First Boy (James Larpenteur Long), *Civilization of the American Indian Series* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1961), xxxiii; and Calloway, *Our Hearts Fell to the Ground*, 37–40.

<sup>18</sup> Moore, *The Cheyenne*, 31–33, 45, 53–59.

settled down for the winter ahead. After the winter, the cycle of life began again, and extended-family groups dismantled their tipis, loaded their possessions on their travois, and travelled to join the rest of their people for the annual ceremonies and traditional buffalo hunt.<sup>19</sup> Like their Cheyenne neighbors, the Crow, Assiniboine, Gros Ventre, Northern Arapaho, and Eastern Shoshone tribes followed a similar trajectory—the buffalo was a central component of their lives.<sup>20</sup>

The governing system within Plains society was informal. The Arapahos, Assiniboines, Cheyennes, and Eastern Shoshones followed a bilateral descent system, whereby “individuals trace their descent equally from their mother’s and father’s lines . . . individuals do not belong to clans.” The Crows have matrilineal clans, while the Gros Ventres have patrilineal clans. Generally bands were autonomous. Each band followed their own leaders or chiefs, who rose to power through courageous and generous deeds, wise council, or other respected achievements. Leaders offered advice instead of dictating orders. Councils of leading tribal members agreed upon decisions that affected the entire tribe. Men and women offered their opinions regarding controversial matters. Women demonstrated political influence by exerting pressure on their spouses. Public shaming or ostracism helped maintain discipline. Both women and men participated in religious ceremonies. They could each maintain independent ceremonial careers and acquire high ritual positions. Some women, for instance, attained esteem as midwives.<sup>21</sup>

The Indians deeply respected the natural world. In 1984, Franciscan sister Carlan Kraman described the Cheyenne religion:

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 45, 59, 69.

<sup>20</sup> Kennedy, *The Assiniboine*, xxxi–xxxiii.

<sup>21</sup> Fowler, *Wives and Husbands*, 58–60, 64, 92, 295.

They have always acknowledged One Supreme Being, Maheo, the All Father. Under Maheo, the Cheyennes revere the Four Sacred Persons who dwell at the cardinal points of the universe. The Earth is revered as Grandmother and is respected as a living Being. So are the Above and Below Persons who are called upon for blessings: the Sun, the Thunder, the Moon, the Stars and the Whirlwind. Lesser sacred persons assume the forms of animals, birds and other natural phenomena when they appear to mortals. According to Cheyenne belief, all creation is alive and is infused with supernatural powers.<sup>22</sup>

According to John Stands in Timber, a well-known Cheyenne born in the late 1800s, the buffalo, along with the other animals, engaged in a race against a young man, the magpie, and the crow. Since the young man won the race with the help of the two birds, humans secured their position “on top now, above every animal and everything in the world.” The old buffalo men said, “All we animals can do is supply the things you will use from us—our meat and skins and bones. And we will teach you how to give a Sun Dance.” Stands in Timber’s story about the origin of the Sun Dance demonstrates the deep connection between humans and the rest of creation and the valuable knowledge that nature shared with the people.<sup>23</sup>

Men and women sought supernatural visions through dreams and personal quests. Many of the Plains Indians also shared similar sacred customs—secret societies, medicine bundles, and important ceremonies, such as the Sun Dance. Men’s secret societies were “built around the act of warfare. The societies had different initiation rites, pre-battle and post-battle ceremonies, songs and dances, and costumes.” The Arapahos and Gros Ventres had age-graded military societies, while the Cheyennes, Crows, Eastern

<sup>22</sup> Sister Carlan Kraman, *A Portrait of Saint Labre Indian Mission through One Hundred Years, 1884–1984*, box 1, folder 24, St. Joseph Labre Mission Records, 1883–2006, The Archives of the Oregon Province of the Society of Jesus, Foley Center Library Special Collections, Gonzaga University, Spokane, WA [hereafter St. Labre Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU].

<sup>23</sup> John Stands in Timber and Margot Liberty, *Cheyenne Memories*, with the assistance of Robert M. Utley (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1967; repr., Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1972), 23.



Shoshones, and Assiniboines had nongraded societies. The Cheyennes have six soldier organizations, plus a seventh society for the chiefs of the tribe. The soldier bands provided counsel for the chiefs, served as a police force, ensured that the camp moved quickly and correctly, performed ceremonies, and hosted social dances.

Individuals, secret societies, medicine men, and entire tribes possessed medicine bundles with sacred objects. The flat pipe is the sacred object for the Arapaho tribe. To ensure future prosperity the Arapahos, Assiniboines, Cheyennes, Gros Ventres, and Shoshones hold a special renewal ceremony, the Sun Dance. The Crows also participate in the Sun Dance, but “the Crows’ Sun Dance was a prayer for vengeance. A man overcome with sorrow at the killing of a kinsman resorted to this as the most effective, if most arduous, means of receiving a vision by which he might revenge himself upon the offending tribe.” Another important ritual for the Crows was the Tobacco ceremony, which promoted the well-being of the tribe and involved planting the sacred tobacco.<sup>24</sup>

An egalitarian gender system existed among the Northern and Central Plains people who followed the buffalo. Men primarily hunted, fished, took care of the horses, educated the young boys to become proficient warriors, and crafted their weapons for hunting and warfare. Women prepared and dried the meat, tanned the hides, completed domestic chores, made clothing, cooked food, and built the tipis. A wealthy Indian family enjoyed “a large tipi, many high quality horses, well-made and beautiful clothes,

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<sup>24</sup> Fowler, *The Columbia Guide to American Indians of the Great Plains*, 146, 154; Alvin M. Josephy Jr., *The Indian Heritage of America* (1968; repr., Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1991), 120–121; Waldman, *Encyclopedia of Native American Tribes*, 20–21, 27, 57, 87; Dale K. McGinnis and Floyd W. Sharrock, *The Crow People* (Phoenix, Ariz.: Indian Tribal Series, 1972), 30–31; Robert H. Lowie, *The Crow Indians*, (1935; repr., Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 297; George Bird Grinnell, *The Cheyenne Indians: Their History and Lifeways*, abridged and adapted by Joseph A. Fitzgerald, American Indian Traditions series (Bloomington, Ind.: World Wisdom, 2008), 48–56; and Virginia Cole Trenholm and Maurine Carley, *The Shoshonis: Sentinels of the Rockies* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1964), 32, 37.

and many relatives.” Wealth was not static; its quantity and quality ebbed and flowed. Families exchanged and distributed their possessions through give-aways at tribal gatherings, between relatives, for solidifying a marriage, after a tribal member’s death, after a successful raid, as protection of children, or for marking a milestone in one’s life. The Indians participated in dances, sports, and games. They valued physical fitness. Boys and girls became adept riders. Girls honed their skills for strength and agility through athletic recreation, such as swimming competitions and ball games. Boys swam, ran, wrestled, raced horses, and competed with the bow and arrow in order to increase their strength and endurance. These activities helped prepare the boys to become warriors.<sup>25</sup>

### **Conflict**

The six tribes inhabited overlapping domains, all living in proximity to the Rocky Mountains, with the Saskatchewan valley to the north, the Missouri River to the east, and the Platte River to the south (see Appendix, figures 1 and 2). For instance, the Assiniboines could be found along the Milk River, while the Crows often stopped to water their horses along the Powder River or hunt buffalo by the Yellowstone River.<sup>26</sup> Although the Crow, Northern Cheyenne, Assiniboine, Gros Ventre, Northern Arapaho, and Eastern Shoshone tribes all practiced a similar way of life, they still possessed unique customs, ceremonies, stories, societies, and traditions. By recognizing and celebrating these differences, the six tribes did not always share an amiable relationship. Their well-

<sup>25</sup> McGinnis and Sharrock, *The Crow People*, 13, 18–19, 20, 32; Lowie, *The Crow Indians*, 72, 74–75, 84; and Fowler, *Wives and Husbands*, 32–33.

<sup>26</sup> John C. Ewers, “Intertribal Warfare as the Precursor of Indian-White Warfare on the Northern Great Plains,” *The Western Historical Quarterly* 6 (October 1975): 397; and Edwin Thompson Denig, *Five Indian Tribes of the Upper Missouri*, ed. John C. Ewers (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1961), 139.

honed warrior traditions brought them into conflict with one another. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—at the height of the Plains horse culture—alliances and rivalries developed on the basis of “the location of each tribe, its population, its productive capabilities, and its access to trade.”<sup>27</sup> Competition for a specific trade route, a buffalo herd, or possession of horses all could spur Indians into a fight. For instance, during the nineteenth century, the Crows amassed a large quantity of horses, which became prime targets for other tribes. In 1852, the trader Edwin Thompson Miller, who married into the Assiniboine tribe, described the rationale behind stealing horses: “Horses are looked upon in a measure as public property; that is, those nations who have few think they have a right to take them from those who have many.”<sup>28</sup>

Besides their motivation of gaining practical acquisitions to enhance the well-being of their people, Indians also fought to achieve recognition by amassing war honors: “The principal ambition of all men was to join war parties.”<sup>29</sup> The Gros Ventres and the Crows developed within their tribes institutionalized competition that emphasized military prowess. For example, the Gros Ventres chose “enemy-friends” from opposing moieties and participated in military competitions against each other. War honors were based on counting coup: “For the Cheyennes the first three touches on an enemy warrior could be counted in the system of war honors,” while the Assiniboines allowed the first four touches to count for coups.<sup>30</sup> According to Thomas LeForge, a white man who married into the Crow tribe, counting coup on a man rated better than doing so on a

<sup>27</sup> Moore, *The Cheyenne*, 70.

<sup>28</sup> Denig, *Five Indian Tribes*, 144–45; and Edwin Thompson Denig, *The Assiniboine*, ed. J. N. B. Hewitt, *Forty-sixth Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, 1928–1929* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2000), 470.

<sup>29</sup> *Land of Nakoda*, 55.

<sup>30</sup> Moore, *The Cheyenne*, 124; Grinnell, *The Cheyenne Indians*, 31–32; Fowler, *The Columbia Guide to American Indians of the Great Plains*, 71–72; and *Land of Nakoda*, 59.

woman: “At the end of the battle of Pryor Creek, when we were chasing the Sioux over the hills, I counted coup upon one of their women. She was on a horse, but I outrode [sic] her and caught up with her. I lashed her once with my pony-whip and turned aside to go on. Just as I passed her she jerked up a pistol and shot at me. Although a coup counted upon a woman was not ranked highly, it seemed this one came near being very expensive for me.” Among the Shoshones, a warrior called the “Foolish One” boldly rode up to an enemy and struck him with “a quirt and a buffalo scrotum rattle.” The Foolish One also performed clownish antics, while demonstrating his bravery. If a Foolish One survived, the tribe made him a war chief.<sup>31</sup> Honors were also bestowed on those who took possession of an enemy’s weapon in hand-to-hand combat, stole a tethered horse, or planned a raid. An Indian’s bravery and his accomplishments during a battle promoted his social standing and made him a contestant for a chieftainship. More significantly, warfare coexisted within the religious system. Anthropologist Robert H. Lowie writes, “Every single military undertaking was theoretically inspired by a revelation in dream or vision; and since success in life was so largely a matter of martial glory, war exploits became the chief content of prayer.”<sup>32</sup>

The initial impetus for warfare—horses, hunting grounds, trade routes, status—led to conflicts that resulted in casualties, which then sparked retaliation and revenge between tribes. A war party attempting to steal horses was usually limited to a small number of perhaps ten to thirty men, but a war party intent on seeking revenge might involve hundreds of warriors. Raids for horses were common, but a large battle entailed planning and preparation. When summer arrived, the Assiniboine warriors met to discuss

<sup>31</sup> Alden Big Man Jr., “Crow History 1700–1950: A Political and Social Battle to Retain Their Culture” (PhD diss., University of New Mexico, 2011), 83; and Trenholm and Carley, *The Shoshonis*, 30.

<sup>32</sup> Lowie, *The Crow Indians*, 215–16.

an upcoming battle, but a dominant chief did not emerge to take charge. The chiefs of each band, the warriors of esteem, and all of those participating voiced their opinion on the ensuing campaign. Then, the men proceeded by sending scouts forward to locate the opposing camp. Once their nemesis was located, the men rushed upon the lodges, enticing the enemy from his camp. During warfare, the Indians performed as individuals, asserting their own prowess, instead of acting as a military unit in the Euroamerican tradition.<sup>33</sup>

The fur trapper and cowhand Frank Bird Linderman recorded his conversations with his friend Plenty-Coups, the last recognized chief of the Crow nation. Linderman asked: “Which of all the tribesmen your people have met in war are the bravest?” . . . He did not hesitate an instant. ‘The Striped-feathered-arrows [Cheyennes],’ he said.”<sup>34</sup>

Typically, after checking their war ponies, securing their medicine bundle, and preparing their weapons, the Northern Cheyenne Indians rode out to find their nemesis, such as the Crows. Next the scouts made a careful reconnaissance of the area. The Cheyenne called a spy a wolf because he howled to indicate the enemy was nearby. Then the warriors smoked a pipe and the scouts reported their findings. Next, the gathered warriors dressed and applied their paint. The Northern Cheyenne immediately attacked if they surprised the enemy, but the Cheyenne lined up against their foe if their adversary was prepared to meet them in battle. Yelling taunts, the Cheyenne galloped forward as bullets and arrows whizzed by them.

The attack occurred in stages. Anthropologist John H. Moore explains, “There were the suicide boys, galloping across the battlefield and leaping on them [the enemy]

<sup>33</sup> Denig, *The Assiniboine*, 470, 544–51.

<sup>34</sup> Frank B. Linderman, *Plenty-coups: Chief of the Crows*, (1930; repr., Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), 27.

with tooth and claw, desperately trying to kill them with their bare hands.” The suicide boys were followed by the dog rope men. Moore describes, “Disdaining the mobility afforded by their horses, they not only fought on foot but confined themselves to the radius of their dog rope. . . . Next came the attack of the main force of the Cheyennes, who did not maneuver around the flanks seeking tactical advantages and did not try to steal horses, but charged headlong into the thickest part of the fighting.” The Cheyenne pursued their foe, unlike other tribes, with the objective “to destroy the enemy, sometimes to the point of genocide.” After the Cheyenne won, they sang their victory songs to celebrate their strong medicine and courage.<sup>35</sup>

John Stands in Timber spent time listening to the stories of his elders. He gathered tales of the battles fought between his tribe and the Crows during 1820–1870. One of the earliest fights occurred on Prairie Dog Creek, when a Cheyenne war party went after the Crows. The Crows incidentally were also on the warpath and had set up an ambush. The Crows outnumbered and killed the Cheyenne war party. In 1820, an incident took place on Pryor Creek. The Cheyennes set out to attack the Crows at their village, “but no one came out to fight. They found there were just old people and women and children there. The Crow warriors had gone out looking for them and left their own camp unprotected.” The Cheyennes captured children and horses before returning home. The Cheyennes captured another Crow village on the Powder River around 1850. The Crow warriors were away fighting the Sioux when the Cheyennes attacked their village. In 1855 or 1860, the Crows tried to capture six Cheyenne children, but the Cheyennes pursued the Crows and rescued the children. Around 1886, the Crows attempted to steal Cheyenne horses, but they took their time crossing Little Hog Creek, a tributary of the

<sup>35</sup> Moore, *The Cheyenne*, 104–108, 112–13; Grinnell, *The Cheyenne Indians*, 17, 18.

Tongue River. The Cheyennes caught up to the Crows, killed a few and stole their guns and clothes. The surviving Crows straggled into camp without their clothes and weapons. In 1870, some Cheyennes trapped four Crows in a hole, blocked the entrance with dry wood and sagebrush, and then set it on fire. The Cheyennes shot two of the Crow men when they came out of the burning pit, but two escaped to tell the tale.<sup>36</sup> The Cheyennes, as well as the Crows, passed down these tales of near-death experiences, victorious raids, and dismal defeats to future generations.

In 1935, Lowie interviewed a number of Crow elders. They recalled the story of Chief Sore-belly (also called Rotten Belly), who, after seeking a vision, decided to avenge the deaths of his compatriots. He notified Good-herald to rally the military clubs and then Sore-belly explained his plan to trap the Cheyennes in an ambush. By hiding men spaced ten or twenty paces apart along two riverbeds, the Crows surprised the Cheyennes and succeeded in killing the Cheyenne chief Striped-elk, as well as over a hundred Cheyenne warriors. None of the Crows died that day, although a few men were wounded.<sup>37</sup>

Fur trader Edwin Thompson Denig also reported on this event, which he surmises occurred in 1833. He states, “The whole number of warriors [Crows] thus assembled was about 600, or about one-fourth of the whole nation able to bear arms. They were also picked men, not young beginners but persons who had struck enemies.” According to Denig, while the main party of Crows was hidden from view, seven Crow warriors enticed the main body of Cheyennes, approximately sixty to seventy warriors, into the trap. As the Crows encircled and killed these men, more Cheyenne came forth from their

<sup>36</sup> John Stands in Timber and Margot Liberty, *Cheyenne Memories*, 2d ed., The Lamar Series in Western History (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1998), 127–38.

<sup>37</sup> Lowie, *The Crow Indians*, 230–36.

camp, which the Crows continued to decimate. Denig wrote: “Upward of 200 enemies were killed, 270 women and children were taken prisoner. More than 1,000 horses, besides all the camp baggage, merchandise, ornaments, were divided among the Crows. Their loss on this occasion was but 5 killed and some 10 or 15 wounded.” Obviously, this battle was a great victory for the Crows and their leader Sore-belly.<sup>38</sup>

In 1860 or 1861, the Sioux Nation, along with the Cheyennes and Arapahos, set out to obliterate the Crow people and acquire their territory. The Sioux warriors and their allies outnumbered the Crows ten to one. They found the Crows camped along Pryor Creek and began to make war preparations. Meanwhile, Hits Himself Over the Head, a Crow man, spotted the large gathering of warriors and notified the Crow camp. The Crows sent ten warriors forward to confront the enemy, in order to provide more time for the women and children to move to safety and the warriors to plan for battle. The Sioux and their allies charged after the ten warriors and met the Crows’ first line of defense. The Crows sent a volley of arrows into their opponents. The Sioux and their allies attempted numerous charges, but the Crows worked together as a unit to hold their ground. Once the Sioux and their allies suffered heavy casualties, the Crows took the offensive and defeated their enemies.<sup>39</sup>

Plenty-coups recalled, “The Cheyenne, and the Sioux . . . have always been our enemies.” And despite their bitter history, Plenty-coups acknowledged: “I have fought hard against them in war, with the white man more than once, and often with my own tribe before the white man came. But when I fought with the white man against them it was not because I loved him or because I hated the Sioux and Cheyenne, but because I

<sup>38</sup> Denig, *Five Indian Tribes*, 166, 168.

<sup>39</sup> Joseph Medicine Crow, *From the Heart of the Crow Country: The Crow Indians’ Own Stories* (New York: Orion Books, 1992), 14, 64–78.



saw that this was the only way we could keep our lands.”<sup>40</sup> Warfare was an indelible part of life on the Northern Great Plains.

The Assiniboines and Gros Ventres who came from different language groups—Assiniboine were Siouan speakers; Gros Ventre were Algonquian speakers—also share a history of conflict. For instance, the Assiniboine chief Foolish Bear earned the name Crazy Bear as he held off the attacking Gros Ventres in 1844. The chief and a few warriors fought fearlessly in order to protect their woman and children who fled into the woods. Another Assiniboine who distinguished himself in battle against the Gros Ventres was He Who Had the Fast Running Horse. Once, when the Assiniboines were overpowered by the Gros Ventres’ superior numbers, an elderly warrior astride an unruly horse dashed into the heart of the enemy and was able to kill and wound thirteen Gros Ventres with his lance. Returning unscathed to the Assiniboine side, he acquired the new name—He Who Had the Fast Running Horse. The Gros Ventres were also the victims of Assiniboine attacks, such as the battle of Sweetgrass Hills, where four hundred Gros Ventres died in 1835. Then, in 1850, the Gros Ventres decimated an entire Assiniboine war party. Following the slaughter and the first Treaty of Fort Laramie (1851), the Assiniboines and Gros Ventres entered into an agreement to keep the peace between themselves. But individual members of the two tribes disregarded the truce and continued to raid for horses. Another large-scale battle did not occur between the Gros Ventres and Assiniboines, but a solid, peaceful relationship did not exist either.<sup>41</sup>

As whites surged westward toward Oregon Country and mining bonanzas, the competition for land increased the rivalries among tribes. The depletion of game and the

<sup>40</sup> Linderman, *Plenty-coups*, 43.

<sup>41</sup> Denig, *Five Indian Tribes*, 89–93; and Loretta Fowler, *Shared Symbols, Contested Meanings: Gros Ventre Culture and History, 1778–1984* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press 1987), 48.

presence of miners and emigrants drove the Lakotas, Cheyennes, and Arapahos from the North Platte–Powder River lands to the eastern plains of Wyoming, particularly the Wind River valley. In the Wind River Basin, the Eastern Shoshones confronted these three tribes during the mid-1860s.<sup>42</sup>

Relations between whites and Indians continued to deteriorate. After Col. John Chivington and the Third Colorado Volunteer Regiment slaughtered a peaceful Cheyenne and Arapaho village along Sand Creek in 1864, the entire Northern Great Plains seemed to erupt into warfare. The Sioux, Cheyennes, and Arapahos raided and killed white emigrants and settlers. Meanwhile, traveling along the Bozeman Trail, miners streamed into the Yellowstone country and ranchers encroached on the hunting grounds of the Indians. Anxious to protect their lands, the Northern Plains Indians signed the Treaty of Fort Laramie of 1868, whereby the U.S. government agreed to abandon the Bozeman Trail and set aside the Great Sioux Reservation, which included the sacred Black Hills, as perpetual homeland for the Sioux and Cheyenne.<sup>43</sup> On 3 July 1868, the U.S. government set aside a reservation in the Wind River Valley for the Eastern Shoshones and Bannocks. The established boundaries of the reservation did not protect the Shoshones or their neighbors—white settlers and miners—from attacks by Red Cloud’s Oglala warriors. The U.S. government had hoped the Eastern Shoshones would serve as a barrier between the Lakota and the whites, but Sioux warriors were undeterred. In June 1869, the U.S. government constructed Camp Auger, the Wind River Reservation army post, and moved

<sup>42</sup> Henry Edwin Stamm, *People of the Wind River: The Eastern Shoshones, 1825–1900* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999), 47–49.

<sup>43</sup> Robert V. Hine and John Mack Faragher, *The American West: A New Interpretive History* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2000), 229–32, 251–56; and Calloway, *Our Hearts Fell to the Ground*, 9–10.

more infantry to Fort Bridger on Blacks Fork of the Green River. The Sioux, along with the Cheyennes and Arapahos, continued to attack the Eastern Shoshones.

The Sioux railed against the Shoshone presence in the Wind River, while “the Northern Arapahos perhaps were unfortunate or unwilling participants in these struggles.” In 1869, the Arapahos, led by Friday Sorrell Horse and Medicine Man, attempted to form a new alliance with the Shoshones in order to live on the Wind River Reservation. Washakie responded to the news: “I do not understand why the Arapahoes, who have for many years allied themselves with my enemies, the Cheyennes and Sioux, and battled against me, should so suddenly wish to join me. Because Friday Sorrel Horse was a friend of my youth I am willing to have council, for when I see their faces I can understand their intentions.” Then, in February 1870, the two rival tribes met and the Arapahos received temporary permission to live in the Wind River Valley. Washakie refused to allow the Arapahos to possess a permanent part of his reservation, since they had pleaded guilty to murders in the Wind River Valley the previous summer. But, by 31 March 1870, the peace between the two peoples had already disintegrated after the government accused the Arapahos, Sioux, and Cheyennes of stealing stock and killing seven miners. In retribution, 250 whites and Eastern Shoshones attacked the Northern Arapahos in April 1870, killing approximately a dozen Arapahos, including Chief Black Bear. The Arapahos abandoned the area, and the U.S. Army opened an additional fort in the Wind River community.

On 4 July 1874, the two tribes encountered each other again. During the conflict known as Bates’ Battle, the U.S. Army and Eastern Shoshones defeated the Arapahos camped along No Water Creek. The Shoshones also destroyed the Northern Arapahos

who had sought refuge at Red Cloud Agency in 1874–1875. Arapaho leaders, especially Black Coal, sought a peaceful resolution to these issues through negotiations with the U.S. government. In 1876, Northern Arapaho bands relinquished their rights to the Black Hills and agreed to move onto reservations.<sup>44</sup>

Meanwhile, other Sioux, Cheyennes, and Arapahos refused to abandon the Black Hills. And, despite the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868, the United States failed to confront the miners who streamed into the region when gold turned up in the Black Hills.

Understanding that negotiation with Plains Indians to sell the Black Hills was a futile endeavor, the U.S. government prepared for total war. In the summer of 1876, the Sioux, Cheyennes, and Arapahos valiantly fought against U.S. troops under Gen. George Crook at the Battle of the Rosebud, and although the battle could not be credited as a triumph, the Indians did put General Crook's troops out of commission for the next month. Then, on 25 June 1876, Gen. George Armstrong Custer and his Seventh Cavalry met their demise at the Battle of Little Bighorn. Although the Indians achieved a great victory at the Greasy Grass, they did not win the overall war. By the winter, the Indians were constantly on the move to avoid the soldiers, and as starvation and the frigid weather took their toll, the tribes gradually began to surrender.<sup>45</sup>

Following Custer's defeat in 1876, and the conclusion of the Plains Indian Wars, the Cheyennes, under the supervision of their armed escort, slowly began their march south to Indian Territory to live with the Southern Cheyenne. Some bands found the

<sup>44</sup> Grace Raymond Hebard, *Washakie: Chief of the Shoshones*, introduction by Richard O. Clemmer (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 135, 148; Stamm, *People of the Wind River*, 50, 55–57, 110, 126–27; and Virginia Cole Trenholm, *The Arapahoes, Our People*, Civilization of the American Indian Series (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1970), 231–32. Tensions also arose between the Bannocks and the Shoshones. By 1872, the Bannacks had left for Fort Hall, while Washakie's Shoshones remained on the Wind River Reservation (ibid., 85).

<sup>45</sup> Hine and Faragher, *The American West*, 251–56; and Calloway, *Our Hearts Fell to the Ground*, 9–13.

opportunity to seek refuge with the Lakotas and Arapahos, but the majority of the Northern Cheyenne left their homelands and their freedom behind. By 1877, the Northern Cheyennes, along with the Southern Cheyennes, were subsisting at Darlington Agency in Indian Territory. Every day was a struggle to adjust to the unbearable temperatures in the southern plains, to combat disease, and to find a meager morsel of food. In September 1878, around three hundred Northern Cheyennes decided to flee the intolerable conditions and, in a desperate attempt, return to their fertile homelands. During their flight north, after two months of trying to evade government troops, the escapees divided into two groups—Little Wolf led one faction and Dull Knife commanded the other.

Little Wolf's band accomplished their feat; they reached southeastern Montana in 1879. Once they had arrived in their homeland, the band surrendered to the U.S. Army under Lieutenant W. P. Clark and agreed to move to Fort Keogh along the Tongue and Yellowstone rivers, near Miles City, Montana. Meanwhile, by the end of October, the U.S. Army had captured the group led by Dull Knife and taken them to Fort Robinson in northwestern Nebraska. Despite their imprisonment in barracks at Fort Robinson, Dull Knife's band maintained the will to fight. Adamantly refusing to return to Indian Territory by January 1879, the Northern Cheyenne had been denied all rights to food, water, and firewood. After enduring these restrictions for three days, 149 Northern Cheyennes rebelled, fighting against soldiers stationed at Fort Robinson through the frigid night. Sixty-one Cheyennes lost their lives in the struggle, but a few managed to escape, including Dull Knife who sought refuge with Chief Red Cloud on the Sioux reservation; the remaining Cheyenne returned to the fort as prisoners. Embittered, Dull

Knife died four years later. Finally, the U.S. government belatedly acknowledged that sending the Northern Cheyennes to Indian Territory had been a futile mission.<sup>46</sup>

From 1880 to 1884, four hundred Northern Cheyennes lived at Fort Keogh, working as army scouts, tending cattle, farming, and settling down in the Tongue River country. During this time, the military men at the fort, especially Private George Yoakam, sought to establish a permanent reservation for the Cheyennes. But white settlers and cattlemen from Miles City opposed these plans. Little Wolf, anxious to acquire a permanent home, surveyed the land south of Fort Keogh along Lame Deer Creek, a watercourse connected with Rosebud Creek. Content with the area, the Northern Cheyennes began to acquire land along Rosebud Creek and the Tongue River through the Indian Homestead Act of 1875, which granted Indians access to 160 acres of land and the rights to the property if they could pay the filing fee, build a home upon the land, and successfully farm the area. Unfortunately, “Indian and white land claims overlapped.”<sup>47</sup> Joined by a few Northern Cheyennese from the Oglalas’ Pine Ridge Reservation, government officials recognized the importance of legitimating the Cheyenne presence in southeastern Montana. On 26 November 1884, an executive order signed by President Chester A. Arthur sanctioned the Northern Cheyennes’ settlements along Rosebud Creek and the Tongue River.<sup>48</sup>

## Reservations

<sup>46</sup> Orlan J. Svingen, *The Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation, 1877–1900* (Niwot: University of Colorado Press, 1993), 1; John H. Monnett, *Tell Them We Are Going Home: The Odyssey of the Northern Cheyennes* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001), 3–159; Moore, *The Cheyenne*, 268–69; and “The Unhappy History of the Northern Cheyenne Tribe” box 1, St. Labre Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU.

<sup>47</sup> Svingen, *The Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation, 1877–1900*, 29–31.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 33, 44.

The Tongue River Reservation established in 1884 failed to address important issues regarding the Northern Cheyenne. First, a number of Cheyenne settlements existed beyond the boundary markers. Further, the federal government had not surveyed the area, which meant the boundary lines were vague. Also, the Indians awaited a U.S. government representative: “The Northern Cheyennes had to wait until 1886 before they received a commissioned, resident [Indian] Agent.”<sup>49</sup> Meanwhile, white residents of southeastern Montana remained opposed to the Indian presence and sought revocation of the 1884 Executive Order. In order to find a suitable arrangement, Commissioner of Indian Affairs John DeWitt Clinton Atkins considered acquiring land from the Crow Reservation. Agent Robert L. Upshaw, who arrived in southeastern Montana in January 1886, cautioned against removing the Northern Cheyennes to the northeastern corner of the Crow Reservation. Instead, Agent Upshaw and Secretary of the Interior Lucius Quintus Cincinnatus Lamar recommended that land should be withdrawn from white settlers.<sup>50</sup>

As government officials worked to secure land for the Northern Cheyennes, Pine Ridge Cheyennes began to trickle into the Tongue River country. In the summer of 1890, the Indian Appropriations Act of 1890 that Congress had passed, “included provisions for a Northern Cheyenne Commission to negotiate unification of the Pine Ridge Cheyennes with their counterparts in Montana,” but the bill did not outline a specific locale for the consolidated tribe. Rather “its members would consider several possibilities, such as the Pine Ridge Reservation, the Crow Reservation, or any of the existing reservations,

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 49–50.

<sup>50</sup> Svingen, *The Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation, 1877–1900*, 50, 57, 60.

including the Tongue River Reservation.”<sup>51</sup> The Northern Cheyenne Commission included Maj. Gen. Nelson A. Miles, Bradley B. Smalley, and John Zerfass Jr. They reported a conundrum: the Cheyennes living on the Pine Ridge Reservation wanted to join their kin in Montana; the Cheyennes in Montana adamantly refused to leave the Tongue River country and wanted the Pine Ridge Cheyennes to come to Montana; and the Crows rejected any offer to open their reservation to the Cheyennes. Reluctant to lose land, the Crows employed the idea that the two tribes still harbored animosity toward each other. They voiced their concern “that the Cheyennes were ‘bad and crazy people’ who, if placed on the Crow reservation, would ‘do something to get the Crows in trouble.’” The commissioners stated, “no consideration, [and] no price . . . would induce them to consent to the Cheyennes living on any part of their reservation.”<sup>52</sup> On 14 September 1891, President Benjamin Harrison, after reviewing the field reports, ordered the Pine Ridge Cheyennes to join their kin on the Tongue River Reservation.

The next obstacle for the U.S. government was to find a way to enlarge the Tongue River Reservation, answer the demands of white settlers and ranchers, and improve conditions on the Cheyenne reservation. Under the Indian Appropriation Act of 1898, Indian agent James McLaughlin was sent to conduct an investigation into the circumstances at the Tongue River Reservation, as well as seek alternative arrangements for the Northern Cheyennes. He ceased pursuing any plans regarding the Crow Reservation because the Crows “regarded the Cheyennes as troublemakers who created problems wherever they went, and the Cheyennes shunned the Crows as contemptible and ‘inferior’ people. Moreover, the only area that the Crows might have been persuaded

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 69, 75.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 87, 88; and Frank Rzeckowski, *Uniting the Tribes: The Rise and Fall of Pan-Indian Community on the Crow Reservation* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2012).



to relinquish lacked adequate timber and water.” Therefore, McLaughlin officially designated the boundaries of the Tongue River Reservation, which meant Indians living east of the Tongue River itself needed to relocate, but he also managed to arrange land sale agreements with the whites living within the reservation boundaries. By 1900, the Cheyennes finally possessed approximately 460,000 acres; they understood the parameters of the reservation boundary; and they did not have to contend with white settlers within their domain.<sup>53</sup>

Unlike the Northern Cheyenne, “the Crows’ passage into the reservation era was not marked by a bloody confrontation or a dramatic, battlefield defeat,” nor did they encounter the same contestation over their rights to the land.<sup>54</sup> In 1825, the Crows signed a Treaty of Friendship with the U.S. government and during ensuing decades they helped the U.S. Army defeat other Plains tribes. In return for their service to the army, the Crows received a substantial area of land—38,531,174 acres—when they signed the first Treaty of Fort Laramie in 1851. Yet, the discovery of gold in southwestern Montana and the demands from the Sioux nation meant a reduction in the size of the Crows’ territory. After signing the Treaty of Fort Laramie of 1868, the Crows received 9,000,000 acres and Fort Parker became their agency headquarters (see Appendix, figure 3). In 1884, under the direction of Capt. Henry Armstrong, the federal government relocated the Crow Reservation permanently to “the banks of the Little Big Horn River in southeastern Montana.”<sup>55</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Svingen, *The Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation, 1877–1900*, 95, 99, 132–33, 135–37.

<sup>54</sup> Frederick E. Hoxie, *Parading through History: The Making of the Crow Nation in America, 1805–1935*, Cambridge Studies in North American Indian History (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 9.

<sup>55</sup> McGinnis and Sharrock, *The Crow People*, 34, 38, 40–43; and Hoxie, *Parading through History*, 15.

In 1884, the Crows were hesitant to move out of their mountain retreat and onto the lowlands with specific farming plots, but, as stated previously, they were adamant about not sharing their reservation with the Northern Cheyenne. Iron Bull and Medicine Crow assertively rejected the proposal: “The Great Father thinks he knows these people but he don’t, we know them” and “We want to be friendly with the whites . . . we don’t want the Cheyenne with us.”<sup>56</sup> Instead, the Cheyennes would be settled on public lands neighboring the Crow Reservation.

The Crow Reservation, nestled between the cities of Billings, Montana, and Sheridan, Wyoming, contains six towns—Lodge Grass, Crows Agency, Fort Smith, Pryor, St. Xavier, and Wyola—and encompasses approximately two and a half million acres.<sup>57</sup> The Northern Cheyenne Reservation is situated east of the Crow Reservation, and its largest town is Lame Deer. In 2008, the Northern Cheyenne tribe consisted of 9,194 enrolled members with 4,135 living on the reservation. Crow tribal membership had reached 11,357 and 8,143 of the enrolled members reside on the reservation.<sup>58</sup>

Stands in Timber recalls that the Cheyennes and Crows began to visit one another during the late nineteenth century. He remembers the Crow giveaways and how generous they were to the Cheyennes. Also, the Cheyennes and Crows enjoyed exchanging war stories. They would laugh with one another, point out the men they had fought in battle, and reminisce about the past. Usually the mood was joyous, but Stands in Timber recalls one meeting that became confrontational. The Cheyennes and Crows met to play a hand

<sup>56</sup> Hoxie, *Parading through History*, 21–25, 122.

<sup>57</sup> Lowie, *The Crow Indians*, 3; and McGinnis and Sharrock, *The Crow People*, 1.

<sup>58</sup> James J. Lopach, Margery Hunter Brown, and Richmond L. Clow, *Tribal Government Today: Politics on Montana Indian Reservations* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1990), 84; Northern Cheyenne Tribe: Official Site of the Tsitsistas and So’taeo’o People, <http://www.cheyennation.com>; and <http://www.Crowtribe.com/pop.htm>.

game. Man Bear began to brag about his exploits as a Cheyenne warrior. Man Bear recounted that a Cheyenne war party found a horse herd belonging to the Crows. The Cheyennes intercepted a Crow warrior who set out to check on the horse herd. Man Bear began to scalp the Crow, “but this Crow was just knocked out, after all. He came to, and walked back to the village holding his forehead up so he could see. . . . when he got home they tied it up until it healed, and he was still living after peacetime.” After telling about his feats of scalping the Crow, a man stood up in the crowd and began “making signs and shaking his fist.” He called the Cheyennes names and eventually stormed out. Then, “Plenty Coups turned to the Cheyennes. ‘There is the man you scalped.’”<sup>59</sup>

Although the hostilities have subsided and the Northern Cheyennes and Crows remain neighbors, they still maintain distinct boundaries and run their reservations differently. For instance, the Crows welcome white land ownership and investment, while the Northern Cheyennes prefer seclusion and maintaining their own affairs. The Crow Reservation is inclusive: “The Crows tribe itself owns 18 percent of the reservation acreage, while members of the tribe hold 50 percent of acreage through individual allotments. Non-Indians own 32 percent of the land within the reservation boundaries. . . . Approximately three-fourths of the land owned by individual tribal members is leased to non-Indian agricultural operators, primarily ranchers.” On the other hand, “Only 2 percent of the acreage within the [Northern Cheyenne] reservation boundaries is non-Indian owned. Leasing by white ranchers also is insignificant, as only three or four white cattlemen lease grazing acreage from tribal members.”<sup>60</sup> Therefore, the Northern

<sup>59</sup> Stands in Timber and Liberty, *Cheyenne Memories*, 281–85.

<sup>60</sup> Lopach, Brown, and Clow, *Tribal Government Today*, 57, 86.

Cheyennes maintain their reservation solely for their Native American population, while the Crows have incorporated non-Native Americans within their boundaries.

The Crows and Northern Cheyennes may live in the same proximity, but they retain distinctly separate reservations. The Gros Ventres and Assiniboines, on the other hand, live on a single reservation, the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation, which consists of 675,147 acres (see Appendix, figure 4). The reservation, which lies along the Little Rocky Mountains, contains three towns—Hays, Lodge Pole, and Fort Belknap Agency. The adjacent towns outside the reservation are Harlem, Chinook, Landusky, and Zortman. But, the “big” town is Havre with a population of 9,310 people, approximately forty-seven miles from the Canadian border and an hour-and-a-half drive from Hays or forty-five minutes from the Agency. Besides their access to Havre, residents of Hays can travel three hours directly south to Billings or head west to Great Falls. In 2008, Fort Belknap included 5,426 enrolled members and 4,921 of the Gros Ventres and Assiniboines live on or near the reservation.<sup>61</sup>

The U.S. government established the boundaries of Fort Belknap Indian Reservation on 1 May 1888. The government originally designated the reservation for the Gros Ventre Indians, but the Gros Ventre agreement with the government stipulated, “This reservation to be set apart for the Gros Ventre tribe . . . and such other Indians as the President might, from time to time, see fit to locate thereon.” Therefore, in 1888, the U.S. government dictated that the Gros Ventres’ enemies, the Assiniboine Indians, settle on the Fort Belknap Reservation.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 117; and <http://www.ftbelknap-nsn.gov>.

<sup>62</sup> Barry M. Pritzker, *A Native American Encyclopedia: History, Culture, and Peoples* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 319; and Davis, *Native America in the Twentieth Century*, 63, 226.

Initially, the Gros Ventres welcomed the Assiniboines because an alliance between the two tribes meant greater clout for the Indians in their relations with the U.S. government: “By claiming to be ‘one people’ with the Assiniboine, they [the Gros Ventre] increased their numbers and made it more difficult for the government to move them [or dismiss their claim to the land]. But when they [the Gros Ventre] began to view the Assiniboines as a threat to their political position, as well as to their ability to subsist at Fort Belknap, their strategy was to try to outdo the Assiniboines in exhibiting civilized behavior.”<sup>63</sup> In the beginning the Gros Ventres controlled the relationship with government officials because of their superior numbers, for “in 1888 there were 964 Gros Ventres receiving rations at Fort Belknap and . . . 830 Assiniboines enrolled at the Fort Belknap Agency.” By 1890, however, the Assiniboines possessed greater strength in numbers. Also, the Assiniboines strategically accepted assimilation; they established family farms and enrolled their children in Catholic school before the Gros Ventres did. But the Gros Ventres, not to be outdone, sent more children to school than the Assiniboine in 1889 and garnered higher praises from the Indian agent than their neighbors. The competition between the two tribes continued within the confines of the reservation.<sup>64</sup>

In order to convince the whites of their superiority and progressive nature, the Gros Ventres strongly supported the Dawes Act of 1887 and, in 1911, they sought approval for allotment of their lands. Generally, supporters for allotment came from the younger generations, while opposition fermented among the elders. But on the Fort

<sup>63</sup> Fowler, *Shared Symbols, Contested Meanings*, 70.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 70–71; and Booklet, “Brief History of the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation Montana,” by Ralph M. Shane, 1974, box 6, folder 20, p. 1, St. Paul’s Mission Collection Records, 1862–2006, The Archives of the Oregon Province of the Society of Jesus, Foley Center Library Special Collections, Gonzaga University, Spokane, WA [hereafter St. Paul’s Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU].

Belknap Reservation tribal affiliation not age was the determining factor; rather the Assiniboines rejected allotment, while the Gros Ventres sent delegates to Washington, D.C., in order to pursue the allotment issue. The Gros Ventres were victorious and federal allotment of tribal lands began on the reservation.<sup>65</sup>

Besides their ongoing rivalry for dominance over the reservation, the Gros Ventres and Assiniboines were unique in other ways. Both tribes had long participated in different ceremonies. For instance, the Assiniboines celebrated the Sun Dance, while the Gros Ventres joined in the Grass Dance, although currently both tribes participate in these two events. The Gros Ventres also possess two sacred bundles—the Flat Pipe and the Feathered Pipe. The medicine bundles link the Gros Ventres with the Great Mystery Above and, further, with their creation myth. The Gros Ventres' prosperity and well-being were a direct result of the rituals associated with the pipe bundles. But, by 1924, the last of the bundle owners had died; more importantly, he did not formally pass the bundles to another keeper. Controversy over the pipes continues into the present. Anthropologist Loretta Fowler writes, “Attempts to revive the Flat Pipe ceremony are in some respects part of the Gros Ventre’s quest for primacy. Their sacred responsibility for the pipes, in the Gros Ventre’s view, makes them unique among peoples.” The Gros Ventres take pride in their pipes, especially since the Assiniboines do not possess equivalent sacred objects.<sup>66</sup>

Tribal pride is partly derived from one’s interpretation of history. Gros Ventres and Assiniboines tell different versions of the story describing who rightfully claims the Upper Milk valley region. According to a Gros Ventre elder, “The way my grandfather

<sup>65</sup> Fowler, *Shared Symbols, Contested Meanings*, 90–93.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 27, 75–76, 122–23.

told me, he said the Assiniboine tribe they were poor, had a small tribe. They must have got the heck knocked out of them someplace. It made them small, you know. The Gros Ventre tribe was big and they [Assiniboines] used to ask permission to camp close for protection, you know.” Each story is unique, depending on the storyteller, but similar themes emerge from these stories. The Gros Ventres inhabited the area, while the Assiniboines came into the region. The Gros Ventres were prosperous and the Assiniboines were poor. And the Gros Ventres demonstrated their generosity by inviting the impoverished Assiniboines into their homeland. The Gros Ventres are the champions in these stories.<sup>67</sup>

On the other hand, the Assiniboine version completely reverses the Gros Ventre story. The Assiniboines obviously stress their primacy upon the land, their success in the region, the poverty of the Gros Ventres, and the Assiniboines’ willingness to share with these outsiders. For instance, an elder recalls: “They [the Gros Ventres] came from Canada. . . . They say they sure must have been bad or crazy bunch because they’d do something and they’d get runned off. . . . And that’s how come they got clear over here.” The Assiniboines portray themselves as the morally upright residents to the Upper Milk River valley who kindly allowed the Gros Ventres to stay in the region.<sup>68</sup>

The former director of the Montana Historical Society, Michael Stephen Kennedy, wrote, “The Assiniboines at Fort Belknap, almost since the agency’s establishment in 1885, have shared their reservation with the Gros Ventres (or Atsinas), their bitter enemies of an earlier century. . . . Even today the centuries-old enmities are

<sup>67</sup> Fowler, *Shared Symbols, Contested Meanings*, 197, 201–5.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 212–13.

likely to burst into flame.”<sup>69</sup> The distinct identities and cultural traditions of the Gros Ventres and Assiniboines continue to ignite controversies and conflicts on the reservation. The tribes compete for prominence in politics, in education, and in everyday life. They also assert their superiority through their rituals and stories. In the end, tribal conflicts continue to linger.

Like the Assiniboines and Gros Ventres, the Eastern Shoshones and Northern Arapahos live on a single reservation. Approximately 4,000 Eastern Shoshones and more than 7,000 Northern Arapahos share the Wind River Reservation, which consists of 2,268,008 acres. Despite jointly owning 1.75 million acres, they tend to live apart from one another. The majority of Shoshones reside in the western and northwestern half of the reservation, around Fort Washakie, while the Arapahos are located in the eastern and southeastern half of the reservation.<sup>70</sup>

The U.S. government established the Wind River Reservation for the Eastern Shoshones in 1868. By signing the Fort Bridger Treaty that year, the Eastern Shoshones received exclusive rights to the reservation. Meanwhile, “many Arapahoe warriors enlisted as scouts for General Crook’s campaigns” because “the ‘scout chiefs’ hoped to secure influence with the army officers.” By demonstrating their loyalty to the U.S. Army, the Northern Arapahos anticipated that they would be rewarded with a reservation in Wyoming. After negotiating the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868, the United States government planned to settle the Arapahos on the Pine Ridge Reservation. Then, in 1876 after the Battle of Little Bighorn, the federal government altered its decision and ordered the Northern Arapahos to move to Indian Territory with the Southern Arapahos. In

<sup>69</sup> Kennedy, *The Assiniboine*, xxi.

<sup>70</sup> Davis, *Native America in the Twentieth Century*, 48, 589; and Northern Arapaho Tribe, <http://www.northernarapaho.com/>.



September 1877, Black Coal presented his people's case for a Wyoming reserve before President Rutherford B. Hayes and Secretary of the Interior Carl Schurz in Washington. Relenting, the U.S. government authorized the Northern Arapahos' relocation to the Wind River.<sup>71</sup>

In 1877, the United States government arbitrarily settled a band of Northern Arapahos on Shoshone land. The government sent the Shoshones' former agent James Irwin to seek approval from the Shoshones. By October 1877, the Shoshones agreed to coexist peacefully with the Arapahos. On 13 March 1878, the first band of Arapahos arrived on the Wind River Reservation. Arapaho leaders and warriors began to legitimate their presence on the reservation by joining the police force at Wind River, enlisting as scouts for the U.S. Army, and cooperating with the Indian agent. The lengthy presence of the Arapahos on the Wind River Reservation deeply upset the Shoshones. They felt betrayed by the government since they had never agreed to share their land permanently. Even Agent Irwin detested the government's decision, writing to the current Wind River agent James Patten, "The Arapahoes should have a reservation but the government has no right to filch it off the Shoshones." In the end, the U.S. government deceived the Eastern Shoshones because instead of relocating the Arapahos, the government divided the reservation between the two tribes.<sup>72</sup>

By 1879, Eastern Shoshones, Arapahos, and whites inhabited the Wind River valley. The Shoshones insisted on their traditional ways and tried to reject the pressures

<sup>71</sup> Waldman, *Encyclopedia of Native American Tribes*, 20, 21; Stamm, *People of the Wind River*, 128–29, 130, 132–34; Loretta Fowler, "Wind River Reservation Political Process: An Analysis of the Symbols of Consensus," *American Ethnologist* 5 (November 1978): 752; Fowler, *The Arapaho*, 56–57; and Waldman, *Encyclopedia of Native American Tribes*, 265–267.

<sup>72</sup> Waldman, *Encyclopedia of Native American Tribes*, 20, 21; Stamm, *People of the Wind River*, 128–29, 130, 132–34; Fowler, "Wind River Reservation Political Process," 752; Hebard, *Washakie*, 208–14; and Waldman, *Encyclopedia of Native American Tribes*, 265–267.

to “civilize,” while the Arapahos adapted their traditional views so that they could work in tandem with the whites in order to assert their presence on the reservation and gain a separate agency from the Shoshones. Both tribes dealt with issues of starvation and disease, but they were trying to adjust and reluctantly live together. The Shoshones “spitefully called [the Arapahos] Beggars and Dog Eaters” when they came to the Shoshone Agency at Fort Washakie to draw rations. The government established a subagency at Artapaho because “feelings between the two tribes were so bitter.”<sup>73</sup> Then, in February 1887, the U.S. Congress passed the General Allotment Act, better known as the Dawes Act. The Shoshones absolutely abhorred the plan, which would allow Arapahos to own Wind River lands directly and white settlers to claim the “surplus” Shoshone lands. The Shoshones never received compensation from the U.S. government for the lands claimed by the Arapahos. Instead, during the land-cession negotiations of 1891, 1893, and 1896, the U.S. government acknowledged that both tribes possessed equal rights to the reservation and could negotiate with the government over the sale of reservation lands.<sup>74</sup> On 25 August 1899, U.S. Indian Agent H. G. Nickerson wrote to Commissioner William A. Jones: “This fall the Shoshones will receive the last installment of their treaty supplies and will be without further support, while the Arapahoes, presumably, will still be supplied under the provisions of the Black Hill’s agreement [Treaty of Fort Laramie (1868)]. This discrimination will create dissatisfaction, and arouse the jealousy of the Shoshones who have never been very friendly with the Arapahoes whose joint occupancy of this reservation they regard as an

<sup>73</sup> Sue Goff and Tom DeVito, “A Background and History of St. Michael’s Mission with the Arapaho People, 1979” roll 1, series 8, microfilm, General Publications, St. Stephen’s Mission Records, Dept. of Special Collections and University Archives, Raynor Memorial Libraries, Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin [hereafter SSMR, RML, MU].

<sup>74</sup> Stamm, *People of the Wind River*, 226, 231, 241–43.

intrusion.”<sup>75</sup> Finally, in 1937, the Shoshones won their legal claim, whereby the U.S. government admitted that the Shoshones were the sole owners of the reservation, that the government illicitly ignored Shoshone rights, and that they had to compensate the tribe for the lost land. After winning the case, the federal government worked to reach a settlement with the Shoshones. The Shoshones agreed to a settlement in 1939, and the Arapahos finally received joint rights to the reservation.

The Eastern Shoshones’ victory in court could not negate the past. As Agent Wadsworth well understood, the arrangement between the two tribes on the Wind River Reservation was precarious. Although he did not witness further bloodshed after the murder of Councilman Terry on 10 January 1907, Wadsworth acknowledged that animosity between the Eastern Shoshones and Northern Arapahos persisted. He wrote: “From my knowledge of the case I am not of the opinion that the murder was committed by Arapaho at all, in the first place; if it were, however, only a very few individuals were implicated, and without the knowledge of the rest of that tribe. The more reasonable theory, to me, is that some personal enemies of Terry’s did the deed.”<sup>76</sup> Yet, the two tribes tended to blame the opposing faction, rather than carefully examining the evidence. The reaction following Terry’s death illustrates how one incident could ignite age-old grudges, and wars of the past could become a reality in the future. The pressure to conform to white standards on the reservations only elevated the tensions between the

<sup>75</sup> U.S. Indian Agent H. G. Nickerson to Commissioner Wm. A. Jones, 25 August 1899, box 4, Annual Reports of the Agent or Superintendent to the Commissioner, 1890–1906, Wind River Agency, RG75, NARA-Denver, CO.

<sup>76</sup> Superintendent H. G. Wadsworth to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 22 January 1907, box 1, Press Copies of the Superintendent’s Letters to Commissioner, 1907–1909, Wind River Agency, RG75, NARA-Denver, CO.

Eastern Shoshones and Northern Arapahos, Assiniboines and Gros Ventres, and Crows and Northern Cheyennes.

The Northern Plains Indians have a strong, rich culture. Prior to their confinement on reservations and federal restrictions, the Indians hunted buffalo and upheld ceremonial practices. They engaged in warfare to maintain their homeland and ensure the continuance of their way of life. They fought against white encroachment and violence, but also against other tribes. Eventually, the reservations made adversarial tribes neighbors. As they adjusted to life on the reservations, the Indians encountered another new neighbor as well, religious missionaries.

## Chapter 2

### **Roman Catholic Missionaries at St. Labre Indian School, St. Paul’s Mission, and St. Stephens Indian School**

Just as the rapport between the Indians—Gros Ventres and Assiniboines, Crows and Northern Cheyennes, and Northern Arapahos and Eastern Shoshones—was complicated, the relationship between the religious orders, as well as the federal government, was also complex. These religious men and women all reported to a variety of authorities—their superiors, U.S. Indian agents, the BCIM, and the Office of Indian Affairs (OIA). The chain of command was not a vertical hierarchy, but a tree with many branches struggling to achieve a prominent position in the sunlight. Despite the dissonance, before the dawn of the twentieth century, the Catholic missionaries established St. Labre Indian Mission, St. Paul’s Mission, and St. Stephen’s Mission. In order to understand the history of the schools, background information on the founders and subsequent successors is essential.

Father Pierre-Jean de Smet wrote to the superior general in Rome, “It is necessary that the missionaries who are sent [to Indian reservations] that they are equipped with the courage of a hero and the patience of an angel.”<sup>77</sup> Missionaries answered the call to carry out their religious zeal, seek the thrill of the West, satisfy their curiosity to work with Native Americans, or comply with the wishes of their superior. Although united by the Roman Catholic Church, tension over which religious order wielded authority festered and friction within individual orders arose. Sometimes the

<sup>77</sup> Fr. Van der Velden recorded Fr. Pierre-Jean de Smet’s quote in the notes he left during his time at St. Labre from 1885–1987. Recollections of Fr. Van der Velden, S.J., excerpted and edited by Sr. Maria Eustella, O.S.F., folder 13, box 1, Unpublished Histories, St. Labre Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU.

multiple levels of authority proved cumbersome, and at other times, the religious men and women worked in unison to accomplish their overarching goal to convert and educate the Indians. This can clearly be seen in an in-depth description of St. Labre as different men and women vied for power at the mission.

A more concise analysis of St. Paul's Mission and St. Stephen's Mission illustrates the additional challenges encountered by these schools. The section on St. Paul's Mission provides a lens to look at the strife caused by inadequate funding. The final portion of the chapter deals with St. Stephen's Mission and the struggles between Catholic missionaries and Protestant reformers. Just as Indians fought each other for supremacy on the land, whites battled one another in the courts and legislature to determine Indian policy. As the founding and history of the three schools unfolds, each school acts as a conduit for this project to address a specific issue faced by the missionaries—the power struggle for authority over the mission, their roles as cultural brokers and financiers, and their resistance to federal policies initiated by Protestant reformers. Although I explore each topic at a specific school, these issues affected all three schools to varying degrees. The religious men and women from America and Europe faced numerous challenges—limited finances, inadequate facilities, remote locations, culture shock, and unstable relationships—at St. Labre, St. Paul's, and St. Stephen's; however, they felt summoned to bring Christianity to the Indians and had the tenacity to see their plans to fruition.

### **Power Struggle for Authority at St. Labre**

Priests, nuns, religious brothers, and lay personnel all played a part in operating a mission school.<sup>78</sup> A priest typically assumed the role of superintendent of the school. Historian Gerald McKevitt, S.J., writes, “The number of priests engaged in classroom work at a given mission was never large. Although they taught some academic subjects, most priests devoted the bulk of their time to sacramental ministry—which often necessitated frequent absences from the school in order to visit distant parts of the reservation—and to administration.” The priests managed the affairs of the school, which included overseeing its staff, finances, and building improvements. The lay brothers in the religious orders were present in the classroom with the male students, “These men, many of whom labored as artisans, farmers, and tradesmen before entering religious life, were well suited to the needs of the industrial schools.” Women were in charge of “the orphanages, kindergartens, and girls’ schools at the various missions.” They wielded power because their services were essential to the livelihood of the missions. McKevitt explains, “The free service provided by them gave Catholic Indian schools an advantage over understaffed Protestant institutions.”<sup>79</sup> Both men and women were instrumental in the day-to-day operations of the school and both found opportunities to exert their influence within the community and among themselves. An analysis of the local story of St. Labre’s beginning and subsequent history reveals the power dynamics among the religious personnel.

<sup>78</sup> A priest can administer the sacraments and preach. *The New Catholic Dictionary*, s.v. “Priest.” Brothers take religious vows, but they are not ordained. *Collins English Dictionary*, s.v. “Lay Brother.” Sisters are “members of a community of religious women, devoted to spiritual and charitable work . . . and bound by vows.” *The New Catholic Dictionary*, s.v. “Sister, Sisterhoods, Sisters.”

<sup>79</sup> Gerald McKevitt, S.J., “‘Habits of Industry’: Jesuits and Nineteenth-Century Native American Education,” in *Spirit, Style, Story: Essays Honoring John Padberg, S. J.*, ed. Thomas M. Lucas (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2002), 381–82; and Gerald McKevitt, S.J., *Brokers of Culture: Italian Jesuits in the American West, 1848–1919* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2007), 161.

In 1883, Bishop John Baptist Brondel, the first appointed Catholic bishop of Montana Territory, wrote to Bishop Richard Gilmour in Cleveland, Ohio, requesting priests and sisters to come to Montana and work with the Cheyennes. The Northern Pacific Railroad, which had reached Billings in 1882, boosted settlement, led the way for major developments, and set a path for progress in the state. Education was a cornerstone to progress, and missionaries were seen as one of its facilitators. On 15 January 1884, six Ursuline nuns left their convent in Toledo, Ohio, and set out to establish a mission school for the Northern Cheyenne children. Mother Amadeus Dunne led the party of Ursulines into the West. Fr. Joseph Eyler, a diocesan priest from Cleveland, traveled west with the nuns and after three days of travel by train, they arrived in Miles City, Montana, on 18 January. The Ursulines spent the first night in a filthy, cold room devoid of privacy, with straw and feathers coving the floor and hay ticks in the bed. The next day they set out to find proper lodging to rent. In just over two weeks, the sisters had reached their first goal, establishing a convent and school in Miles City. On 2 February, the Sacred Heart School opened its doors to white children residing in town.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Mahoney, *Lady Blackrobes*, ix, 2–18; and Carlan Kraman, O. S. F., *A Portrait of St. Labre Indian Mission through One Hundred Years*, pp. 2–3, folder 24, box 1, Published Histories, St. Labre Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU. The Bishop oversees a diocese and its priests. *The New Catholic Dictionary*, s.v. “Bishop.” In 1535, (St.) Angela Merici organized a religious society of women in Brescia, Italy. She hoped to curtail the rampant heresies and immorality spreading throughout Europe by providing proper education for girls. In 1566, (St.) Charles Borromeo, archbishop of Milan, noticed that the Companions of St. Ursula were living in their own homes and requested that the women live in community. The society quickly spread throughout Italy and France. Then, in 1612, the Companions of St. Ursula became a sanctified religious order. The Ursulines were expected to lead contemplative lives in order to better love and know God. The sisters became cloistered, but continued to teach school. In 1639, a group of Ursulines from France arrived in Canada. Then, in 1727, another group settled in New Orleans. In 1850, Ursulines from Boulogne-sur-Mer in northern France came to Cleveland, Ohio. In 1853, authorities in Rome granted the Ursulines permission to teach in the parochial schools, although they “still lived under a monastic rule and were cloistered.” An Ursuline who taught was referred to as “Mother,” while an Ursuline who did not teach was identified as “Sister.” The Cleveland Ursulines opened a house in Toledo, Ohio, in 1854. Carlan Kraman, O. S. F., *A Portrait of St. Labre Indian Mission through One Hundred Years*, p. 38, folder 24, box 1, Published Histories, St. Labre Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU.



Unlike the Jesuit missionaries, who were united through a worldwide order, the Montana Ursulines formed an independent congregation in 1884: “According to Ursuline monastic tradition, each foundation was autonomous.” Once the sisters in Miles City had established their own convent, they were no longer beholden to the motherhouse in Toledo; instead they looked to their superior, Mother Amadeus, for guidance. Historian Anne M. Butler states, “Mother Amadeus arrived in Montana wearing a somewhat complicated mantle of authority, one woven by the weft of independence and the warp of attachment, which invariably rubbed against one another.” Mother Amadeus needed to recruit more Ursulines to work at the Indian missions, which meant she had to direct her requests to the superior in Toledo, Mother Stanislaus. Mother Stanislaus refused to send more nuns, so Mother Amadeus appealed to the bishop in Toledo for help. Butler explains, “She knew, of course, that her letter bypassed Mother Stanislaus, risking the irritation of the Toledo superior. . . . To minimize the affront, Amadeus placed the onus on Bishop Brondel and described herself as merely acquiescing to his instruction that she write to his Toledo counterpart.” Mother Amadeus was a skilled tactician, determined to see the Montana missions succeed.<sup>81</sup>

On 29 March, Mother Amadeus, Sister Angela Abair, Sister Ignatius McFarland, and Sister Sacred Heart Meilink, accompanied by a small band of soldiers from Fort Keogh, where Little Wolf’s Cheyenne band had found refuge on the western edge of Miles City, began their eighty-mile, four-day trip to the soon-to-be Saint Labre Indian Mission. These women may have been unusually well educated, but they were clearly

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<sup>81</sup> St. Ignatius Loyola founded the Society of Jesus in Montmartre, Paris, in 1534. The Society of Jesus was the first order dedicated to education. *The New Catholic Dictionary*, s.v. “Society of Jesus.” For a description of the Ursuline administration, see Mahoney, *Lady Blackrobes*, 184. For the quoted material on Sister Amadeus’s request to Bishop Gilmour for additional sisters, see Butler, *Across God’s Frontier*, 163–64.

unaccustomed to the West, unacquainted with Cheyenne culture, and unaware of the maze of federal Indian policies. When they headed west, they were “certain that souls could be saved only through the sacrament of baptism administered according to the Roman Catholic ritual. In this light, they could imagine no more imperative duty than to lead a godless people along the path of salvation and save them from the fire of hell. Along the way, they would teach the elements of literacy, enabling a primitive people to be assimilated into a white civilization.” The women felt called to this great endeavor; their optimism, faith, and determination to help those in need had brought them into the West. Though some were immigrants and others, native-born, all of these nuns were young; they had a “zeal for education and academic achievement”; they also shared the European and Christian worldview of white superiority and brought their notions of class and gender to Montana Territory. “Frequently members of immigrant communities, they plowed their way through dislocation, homesickness, poverty, and the barriers of language” as they worked with the Indian community. The work load for sisters at the missions often “stepped around gender barriers of the era.”<sup>82</sup> The sisters supervising the mission for the Northern Cheyennes would find themselves tested time and time again.

The wagons carrying trunks, furniture, and other supplies from Miles City to the reservation forded the Tongue River nine times throughout the journey, but, by 1 April, everyone had made their way safely to the three-room cabin, which served as the school, the priest’s lodging, and the convent (see Appendix, figure 5). Father Eyler said Mass on 2 April. Fourteen Cheyenne boys and girls arrived for school and then Mother Amadeus began her trip back to Miles City.

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<sup>82</sup> Mahoney, *Lady Blackrobes*, 19; Butler, *Across God’s Frontiers*, chapt 1, 41, 85.

The mission was underway. Sr. Angela wrote about their first year with the pupils: “We studied their language part of the time and taught them ours. We taught them sewing and games also. After an early supper they were dismissed. Two meals a day were given; our limited means would allow no more until our house was built.” The three nuns set out to improve the schoolroom, which measured twelve feet square, with a dirt floor and no fireplace. They also planted a vegetable garden. Due to poor health, Father Eyler left the Mission in June. Throughout the summer, Father Kramer and Father Allaeyes aided the three sisters. Then, in September, Father Peter Barcelo, S.J., arrived at St. Labre.<sup>83</sup>

Since President Chester A. Arthur would not sign the executive order establishing the Tongue River Reservation until 26 November 1884, almost eight months away, tensions mounted as white ranchers eagerly sought to claim the land that the federal government planned to set aside. The animosity extended toward the religious men and women aiding the Cheyennes. In the mission’s first year, violence erupted when four masked cowboys grabbed the school handyman, George Yoakum, tied him to a tree, and beat him mercilessly in the middle of the night. He survived, but the sisters insisted that he find a safer place to live and work. The tasks Yoakum had assumed—cutting firewood, carrying water, making repairs, and supplying food—fell to the sisters and Fr. Barcelo. Unfortunately, Fr. Barcelo became ill and left to receive medical care. Now the three Ursulines were alone, bereft of their one consolation—spiritual support administered by a priest through the sacraments.<sup>84</sup>

<sup>83</sup> Mahoney, *Lady Blackrobes*, 21–31; and Carlan Kraman, O. S. F., *A Portrait of St. Labre Indian Mission through One Hundred Years*, pp. 3, 40, folder 24, box 1, Published Histories, St. Labre Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU.

<sup>84</sup> Mahoney, *Lady Blackrobes*, 28, 46–50.

Yet, they were determined to continue working with the Cheyenne people, enduring below-freezing temperatures in their “log cabin with its mud floor.” While facing these hardships, they recognized the importance of securing financial support. A decade earlier, in 1874, Catholics established a central agency to oversee missionary work, which in 1879 became the BCIM. This organization was established “to coordinate and direct Catholic Indian mission work and through [it] all Catholic missions would deal with the federal government.” Beginning in the 1870s, the federal government negotiated contracts with mission schools, whereby the OIA paid an annual fee for each enrolled student. On 5 February 1885, Charles Rusk, secretary for the BCIM, requested a government contract to sustain the mission. On 24 March, the OIA approved the contract, which allowed for the education of thirty Indian children at St. Labre. By the fall of 1885, Saint Labre had become a boarding school funded by the OIA.<sup>85</sup>

In October of that year, Bishop Brondel arranged for Father Aloysius Van der Velden, S.J., who had recently sailed from Holland to the eastern United States, to work with the Northern Cheyennes. After he arrived at the mission, Father Van der Velden wrote, “There are three sisters: one German, one French, and one American, from Irish descent. Add to this my companion, an Italian, and when Msgr. [Brondel] is here who is a Belgian, then with me a Hollander altogether six nationalities are here united to convert the Indians.” Father Van der Velden was a young, enthusiastic Jesuit priest with rudimentary training in medicine and an aptitude for languages. Father Van der Velden could soon speak the Cheyenne language fluently. He reinvigorated the life of the

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 50–51; and Francis Paul Prucha, *Churches and the Indian Schools, 1888–1912* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979), 2, 3.

mission, which now served forty children. Under the guidance of Sister Ignatius McFarland, St. Labre soon added a convent, classrooms, girls' dormitory, separate kitchen, chapel, and refectory. The new two-story building, which was nicknamed "the White House," stood for over three decades, until it burned down in 1917. The nuns, meanwhile, were engaged in domestic chores for the majority of their days in order to provide for the children. They also had to feed the men working to construct the new building.<sup>86</sup>

Despite the construction, St. Labre struggled with issues of poor attendance, financial burdens, and unsuccessful attempts to raise a crop. In 1887, "the Ghost dance, swept over the Rocky Mountain regions. . . . Bishop Brondel recalled Father Van der Velden and the Sisters from the Mission." School resumed in March 1889: "The oldest record of St. Labre Mission School still extant shows that between March 3 and June 30 of 1889 forty-five Cheyenne children were enrolled in the school. The records continue until September 30, 1891, when the Ghost Dance again disturbed the Mission and Father Van der Velden closed the school for about two years." Despite the hiatus, Father Van der Velden erected a dormitory for the boys in 1891.<sup>87</sup>

In 1893, Mother Amadeus traveled to the Ursuline Monastery at Trois Rivières in Canada, where she recruited forty-nine-year-old Sister St. Scholastique Lajoie to work at St. Labre. French-speaking Sister Scholastique had been a cloistered nun for twenty-nine years and was accustomed to a regimented monastic tradition centered on spiritual

<sup>86</sup> Carlan Kraman, O. S. F., *A Portrait of St. Labre Indian Mission through One Hundred Years*, pp. 3–4, folder 24, box 1, Published Histories, St. Labre Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU; Recollections of Fr. Van Der Velden, S.J., excerpted and edited by Sr. Maria Eustella, O.S.F., folder 13, box 1, Unpublished Histories, St. Labre Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU; and Mahoney, *Lady Blackrobes*, 58–61.

<sup>87</sup> St. Labre Mission High School, *The Chief*, 1953, School Yearbook, folder 5, box 1, Publications, St. Labre Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU; and Mahoney, *Lady Blackrobes*, 97–100, 108.

enlightenment; St. Labre was a culture shock. The work of the mission would now supersede the quality of her religious life. After six weeks of traveling, Sister Scholastique arrived at St. Labre, which Father Van der Velden had reopened in March of that year. Once school resumed, the Cheyennes enrolled their children because they had come to understand the value of education and did not want to see their children sent to the federal Indian boarding school at Fort Shaw, twenty-five miles west of Great Falls, a good distance away. Despite the successful enrollment, the crops failed again and the school lacked winter provisions. Ursuline sister Irene Mahoney states, “The \$8 per month per child allotted by the government hardly covered their needs.” Sister Scholastique accepted her fate and tackled the challenges of mission life with ardor. However, she felt isolated from her companions at St. Labre since they could not converse in French or appreciate French culture. She also felt overworked and at the same time unproductive; she stated “When you try to grasp too much you hold on to nothing.”<sup>88</sup>

Despite feeling overwhelmed, the nuns strove to provide a solid education for the girls under their supervision and also perform the necessary domestic chores, while the Jesuit scholastics taught the boys. Father Van der Velden ardently sought to improve the conditions at St. Labre. He began to build Saint Labre Church in May 1895. Although Father Paul Brounts replaced Father Van der Velden later that year, Father Van der

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<sup>88</sup> Mahoney, *Lady Blackrobes*, 135–155, 168, 169. The superior at Trois Rivières recalled Sister Scholastique by 1897. She returned to her monastery in Canada (*ibid.*, 164). Sister Scholastique quoted in Mahoney, *Lady Blackrobes*, 154.

Velden returned on 30 April 1896 and delivered the first Mass in the new church on the third of May, while Bishop Brondel consecrated the new building on 29 April 1897.<sup>89</sup>

Although the Jesuits worked at St. Labre, it was not a Jesuit mission. Bishop Brondel had established the school with the help of the Ursulines. Bishop Brondel remained the authority at St. Labre. Still, the Jesuits often usurped the bishop's authority and made their own decisions. It came as a surprise, then, that the Jesuit provincial Father Van Gorp decided to withdraw the Jesuits from St. Labre in August 1897, shortly after the consecration of the new church. After serving twelve years at St. Labre, Father Van der Velden was heartbroken to leave the mission. Accompanied by his compatriot, Fr. John Van der Pol, the two Jesuits obeyed their superior and left St. Labre. The enraged bishop could not insist that the two men remain at the mission because the Jesuits were not under his ecclesiastical jurisdiction. In this manner, the nuns were, once again, left alone to continue their work.<sup>90</sup>

Although the Jesuits had left, the Ursulines continued to serve faithfully at the school. St. Labre was their first mission in Montana, and it remained dear to their heart. By 1890, the Ursulines had established a strong presence in Montana with “a motherhouse at St. Peter's,” which also served the Blackfoot Indians; Mother Amadeus as superior; and “a congregation [that] consisted of nine houses [Sacred Heart in Miles City, St. Labre, St. Peter's, St. Paul's, St. Francis Xavier's Mission to the Crow Nation, St. Ignatius's Mission to the Flathead Reservation, Holy Family Mission to the Blackfeet, St. Charles's Mission to the Crow Nation, and St. John Berchmans's Mission to the Flathead

<sup>89</sup> *Historical Sketch St. Labre's Catholic Indian Mission; Northern Cheyenne Indians; Tongue River Agency, Montana, 1927*, compiled by Rev. Emmanuel Roets, O.M.Cap., edited by Rev. Alexis Gore, O.M.Cap. (Detroit, Mich.: O.F.M. Capuchin Fathers, 1927), folder 20, box 1, Published Histories, St. Labre Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU; and Mahoney, *Lady Blackrobes*, 135–155, 168, 169.

<sup>90</sup> Mahoney, *Lady Blackrobes*, 170–172.

Nation] and a noviate.” In January 1899, Mother Amadeus learned of a proposal for a worldwide Ursuline union; the proposal was circulated by Mother St. Julien Aubry. In 1900 the Ursulines approved the union and Mother St. Julien assumed the position of superior general over the entire order. This polity shift led to minor changes for the Montana missionaries. The Ursulines had to meet new clothing requirements and they no longer took the fourth vow—a promise to serve in education. The Ursulines, however, were excited to join a larger support network.<sup>91</sup>

In November 1903, Bishop Brondel, the first bishop of Helena, Montana, passed away. He had been the Ursulines faithful advocate and supported Mother Amadeus.<sup>92</sup> On 27 June 1904, Bishop Mathias Lenihan assumed leadership over the Great Falls diocese. The relationship between Bishop Lenihan and the Ursulines was strained from the beginning. Before Bishop Lenihan even met the Ursulines, he was offended because they did not travel to his inauguration. He looked upon religious sisters with paternal benevolence and expected adoration in return. Following this alleged offense, Bishop Lenihan requested that the Ursulines establish a school in Great Falls, Montana, but Mother Amadeus refused because she lacked sufficient funds and nuns to undertake the project. Also, Mother Amadeus could not comply with the bishop’s request because she no longer had the authority to make these decisions; only her superior in Rome, Mother St. Julien, could decide to build the school.<sup>93</sup>

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 184, 192–93.

<sup>92</sup> Carlan Kraman, O. S. F., *A Portrait of St. Labre Indian Mission through One Hundred Years*, p. 38, folder 24, box 1, Published Histories, St. Labre Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU.

<sup>93</sup> Mahoney, *Lady Blackrobes*, 204, 206–7. In 1904, Montana was separated into two dioceses, “Helena in the west, presided over by John Patrick Carroll, and Great Falls in the east, under the authority of Mathias Lenihan” (ibid., 204).



In the spring of 1905, discord erupted within the Ursuline community in Montana. While Mother Amadeus traveled to all the missions, her assistant, Mother Mary Rose Galvin presided over the motherhouse. Soon Mother Rose Galvin, aligned with Bishop Lenihan and his assistant Father Van den Broeck, began to question Mother Amadeus's leadership. Mother Amadeus wrote to St. Julien in Rome expressing her concern over the mutiny. The charges leveled at Mother Amadeus were not unfounded since she was constantly absent; failed to respond to inquiries, although she insisted "that all permissions come from her"; did not manage the novitiate; and spent money recklessly. Regardless of Mother Amadeus's conduct, St. Julien supported her choice of superior of the Ursulines of Montana and reiterated that authority over the Ursulines resided in Rome, not with the bishop in Montana.<sup>94</sup>

Montana had freed Mother Amadeus from cloistered life and allowed her charismatic and ambitious personality to excel, and she "viewed the bishops as oppressive obstacles" to her grand plan. Despite the ongoing insurrection by Mother Rose Galvin, Mother Amadeus decided to establish missions in Alaska, which further infuriated Bishop Lenihan. He would not allow Mother Amadeus to remove any of the Ursulines from his diocese, so Amadeus selected "three nuns from St. Ignatius—a mission belonging to the diocese of Helena, and thus lying outside Bishop Lenihan's jurisdiction." Lenihan was irate and ordered the Ursulines at St. Peter's to recognize Mother Rose Galvin as their superior. Mother St. Julien called Amadeus and Rose Galvin to Rome. She appointed Amadeus superior of the entire provincialate of the north in the United States, thereby affirming her authority and removing her from the conflict.<sup>95</sup>

<sup>94</sup> Mahoney, *Lady Blackrobes*, 215, 216–217.

<sup>95</sup> Butler, *Across God's Frontiers*, 166; and Mahoney, *Lady Blackrobes*, 218, 222–230.

The Roman Union and Amadeus's new role as superior of the north, however, had a far-reaching impact on the missions in Montana. Before the union, novices had received training at St. Peter's and learned about Native culture before they were sent to serve a particular Indian school. Now the Roman Union established a central novitiate in Middletown, New York, where novice training failed to prepare them for life in Montana and on the reservations.<sup>96</sup> The sisters assigned to St. Labre desperately needed this training, especially given the high turnover rate of priests at the mission.

From 1897 to 1904, Bishop Brondel sent a series of diocesan priests to St. Labre. On 24 December 1897, Fr. Joseph Wermat arrived; the nuns soon discovered his weaknesses: he was inexperienced, aloof toward the sisters, and disengaged from the mission school. On 2 October 1899 Father Aloysius Mueller succeeded Father Wermat. Father Mueller was afraid of the Cheyennes and found solace in alcohol. In 1904, Bishop Lenihan, who had succeeded Bishop Brondel, assessed the situation at St. Labre, removed the inept Father Mueller, and requested additional funds from the BCIM for the mission. In 1905 Father Paul Gallagher, a strong advocate for the Cheyennes, replaced Father Mueller. He wrote to the OIA regarding the reservation boundaries, problems with whites, and access to rations for the school. Although he took an interest in St. Labre, made the necessary repairs on the boys school, and was active in the Cheyenne community, Father Gallagher was also a drunk. Father A. Catania in 1910 and Father B. J. Maguire in 1911 worked at St. Labre. Next, Father Theodore Rocque, a young, enthusiastic Canadian priest, replaced Father Maguire. Father Rocque worked well with the Indians, but not with the nuns. Father Rocque wanted to be in charge of St. Labre,

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<sup>96</sup> Mahoney, *Lady Blackrobes*, 233–234.

while the nuns insisted on maintaining their authority over the school. Unable to find a satisfactory solution, Father Rocque resigned.<sup>97</sup>

The priests' lack of leadership and quick turnovers only exacerbated the financial problems befalling the school. Since 1885, the mission had relied on federal contracts to finance the school, but in 1894, Pres. Grover Cleveland agreed to "decrease the appropriations for the contract schools by at least 20 percent a year, so that in a few years they would cease to be made." Protestant-dominated Indian reform groups had pressured Congress and the president to stop supporting mission schools and end the partnership between the government and the churches. Reflecting anti-Catholic prejudices, these reformers insisted upon the separation of church and state. The Indian Appropriation Act for fiscal year 1896 initiated a plan that would eventually prohibit "the use of government funds for the education of Indian children in sectarian schools." By 1900, contract schools received only 15 percent of the 1895 figure and this marked the final year that the federal government funded mission schools.<sup>98</sup> Father William H. Ketcham, director of the BCIM from 1901 to 1921, worked diligently to collect revenue for the mission schools. The *Indian Sentinel*, an annual magazine introduced in 1902, solicited funds for the BCIM. Mother Katherine Drexel donated large sums of money to the missions. The Marquette League, established in 1904, collected money for the missions as well.<sup>99</sup>

Catholic schools, including St. Labre, had to seek alternative financial means to continue operation. In 1904, the BCIM requested permission to use tribal funds. On 15

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<sup>97</sup> *Historical Sketch St. Labre's Catholic Indian Mission; Northern Cheyenne Indians; Tongue River Agency, Montana, 1927*, compiled by Rev. Emmanuel Roets, O.M.Cap., edited by Rev. Alexis Gore, O.M.Cap. (Detroit, Mich.: O.F.M. Capuchin Fathers, 1927), folder 20, box 1, Published Histories, St. Labre Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU; Mahoney, *Lady Blackrobes*, 175, 213, 257, 258–59, 290; and Carlan Kraman, O. S. F., *A Portrait of St. Labre Indian Mission through One Hundred Years*, p. 4, folder 24, box 1, Published Histories, St. Labre Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU.

<sup>98</sup> Prucha, *Churches and the Indian Schools*, 4, 8, 24, 30, 40; and Mahoney, *Lady Blackrobes*, 165.

<sup>99</sup> Prucha, *Churches and the Indian Schools*, 44, 50, 52.

August 1904, the Tongue River Agency sent a petition to Commissioner of Indian Affairs Jones asking to apply tribal funds toward financing St. Labre School. The OIA approved the Northern Cheyennes' request and issued contracts for the fiscal year of 1905. The BCIM received a \$6,480 contract for the fiscal year 1905 for St. Labre. The Tongue River Agency submitted petitions and received approvals throughout the following years. The Supreme Court case *Quick Bear v. Leupp* provided federal legal approval of this financial arrangement between the tribes and the schools. On 18 May 1908, Chief Justice Melville Weston Fuller concluded that Congress had no right to keep Indians from using their treaty funds to educate their children at a sectarian school, and to do so would have prohibited the Indian's free exercise of religion guaranteed in the First Amendment. Their decision in "*Quick Bear v. Leupp* was a major triumph for the Catholic Indian missions, for it settled favorably the legality (and constitutionality) of the use of the tribal funds, for which the Catholics had been contending for a decade."<sup>100</sup>

In 1914, as World War I erupted, Bishop Lenihan arranged for the Fathers of the Society of Saint Edmund of Swanton, Vermont, to work at St. Labre.<sup>101</sup> Edmundites served for a decade at St. Labre, from 1914 until 1924. During the ten years, the priests included Fr. M. J. Trigory SSE, Fr. William Arendzen SSE, Fr. Charles Renaudin SSE, Father G. Ledoux SSE, Fr. Herbert Leduc SSE, and Fr. Charles Bernier SSE. Father Arendzen was a favorite among the nuns and the Cheyennes.<sup>102</sup> On 12 January 1917, "fire destroyed the convent school. . . . Undaunted as ever, the little band of mission

<sup>100</sup> Prucha, *Churches and the Indian Schools*, 40, 84, 87, 128, 157–60.

<sup>101</sup> In Pontigny, France, Fr. Jean-Baptiste Muard founded the Society of St. Edmund in 1843: "The members devote themselves to parochial and educational work, to the direction of pious associations, and to foreign missions." *The New Catholic Dictionary*, s.v. Congregation of St. Edmund.

<sup>102</sup> Mahoney, *Lady Blackrobes*, 290; and Carlan Kraman, O. S. F., *A Portrait of St. Labre Indian Mission through One Hundred Years*, p. 5, folder 24, box 1, Published Histories, St. Labre Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU.

workers found a way, and in less than two weeks the church was partitioned and room was found to house the Indian girls, so that they might return to school.” With the financial support of the bishop, the BCIM, the Marquette League, and generous donors, “A two-story concrete building, costing \$32,000, was erected as a boarding school for girls.” At this time, the Fathers of the Society of St. Edmund constructed “a new building for the boys at a cost of \$6,000 to replace the ramshackle affair that had served for many years and was much the worse for its struggles with wind and rain.” The fathers were in charge of the boys’ school, while the Ursuline sisters ran the girls’ school.<sup>103</sup> In 1921, Bishop Lenihan transferred the administration of the mission and school over to the Edmundites even though the Ursuline Sisters had founded Saint Labre Mission and had been in charge since its inception. After the Edmundites left in 1924, Fr. Rocque returned.

In 1925, a year before the U.S. Department of the Interior arranged for the Brookings Institute to conduct a survey on Indian affairs under the direction of anthropologist Lewis Meriam, Bishop Lenihan met with the general superior of the Capuchin Order while in Rome, Italy. He requested the Capuchins come to St. Labre Mission, and on 8 April 1926 the Capuchin provincial board voted in favor of sending members of their order to Montana.<sup>104</sup> In late April 1926, Fr. Francis Busalt OFM Cap.

<sup>103</sup> *Historical Sketch St. Labre’s Catholic Indian Mission; Northern Cheyenne Indians; Tongue River Agency, Montana, 1927*, compiled by Rev. Emmanuel Roets, O.M.Cap., edited by Rev. Alexis Gore, O.M.Cap. (Detroit, Mich.: O.F.M. Capuchin Fathers, 1927), folder 20, box 1, Published Histories, St. Labre Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU.

<sup>104</sup> In 1525, Fr. Matteo da Bassi established the Order of Friars Minor Capuchin in order to strictly adhere to the Rules of Saint Francis. He felt that the Order of Friars Minor or Franciscans had grown lax since its founding by St. Francis of Assisi in 1207–1208. Pope Clement VII approved Father Matteo’s request to observe rigorously the vow of poverty, the call to preach the Word of God, and the proper attire—the dark brown Franciscan habit complete with a white cord and sandals. The Capuchins lived in small, secluded communities, and “strove to maintain the simplicity and detachment which characterized them as true sons of St. Francis.” *The New Catholic Dictionary*, s.v. Capuchin Friars Minor.

(born in Germany) took charge of St. Labre. St. Labre grew under the direction of the Capuchins. Father Busalt made a point to visit the Cheyennes in their homes and learn their names and the Cheyennes responded well to his personal interest. Brother Gaul Neumann, who arrived on 14 October 1926, was a skilled repairman and he built the L-shaped building, which housed a shop, a laundry, a bakery, additional storage, and recreation area. He also planned the irrigation system and installed the electric lights in 1927. In 1929, he built an addition onto the convent and girls' school and constructed a dormitory for the boys. In 1927, Father Benno Aichinger "took a significant step. He invited the Indian men who were going to serve as an honor guard in the Corpus Christi procession to wear their native costume. . . . From that time on the Indians were encouraged to wear their native dress and perform their dances on feast days celebrated at the mission."<sup>105</sup>

On the cusp of the Indian New Deal, which began under President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, the Capuchins introduced the first high school to appear "on any American Indian Reservation." The Northern Cheyenne high school opened on 15 October 1932, enrolling four students in the ninth grade. The federal government insisted that white children also be permitted to attend the high school.<sup>106</sup> Then, in 1933, as the New Deal took hold, a major shift rocked the school when six School Sisters of Saint Francis replaced the long serving Ursulines. The six sisters were Sister M. Adelrica, the superior and teacher for the sixth, seventh, and eight grade girls; Sister Anna, a high

<sup>105</sup> Carlan Kraman, O. S. F., *A Portrait of St. Labre Indian Mission through One Hundred Years*, pp. 6–8, 9, folder 24, box 1, Published Histories, St. Labre Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU; "Ashland Indian Mission to Note Jubilee," *The Eastern Montana Catholic Register*, 23 September 1959, folder 27, box 1, Diamond Jubilee Commemoration, St. Labre Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU; Selected issues of the periodical *Sandal Prints*, 1968–1984, published by the Capuchin Fathers, folder 23, box 1, Published Histories, St. Labre Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU; and Mahoney, *Lady Blackrobes*, 293.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

school teacher; Sister Giswalda, the third, fourth, and fifth grade teacher (who later taught at St. Paul's Mission); Sr. Ermentrude, the teacher for the primary grades; Sr. Bavoline, the nurse; and Sr. Frideburga, who was in charge of the bakery and laundry. The new sisters also served as house mothers for the boarders. In 1937, as FDR began his second term, Sr. Argentina arrived and became the mission cook.<sup>107</sup> The first superior was Sister M. Adelrika, O.S.F. Sister Limana served as principal and "two sisters taught four grades each in two classrooms."

In the spring of 1934, less than two years after it opened, the high school received accreditation. But the Great Depression persisted, and in 1938, the four-year high school for Indians and whites closed due to a lack of monetary resources. In 1941, as the federal government began to prepare for war, it ceased any financial aid for the school, and in 1942, after the United States had declared war against the Axis Powers, the boarding school was replaced by a day school. In the early 1930s, W. Carson Ryan, the director of education for the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), had begun pushing for boarding schools to be phased out, and his successor Willard Beatty continued this effort. Although St. Labre was not on the cusp of this movement, it did eventually make the transition to a day school.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> "The School Sisters of Saint Francis were founded in the early 1870's by three women who had been part of a small community of religious women in Germany whose work was teaching and caring for orphans. With the unification of the German states under Bismarck in 1870 there were laws passed to curb the influence of the Church and the clergy. Religious women were forbidden to teach in the schools unless they became laicized and ceased wearing the habit, so Sisters Alexia, Alfons and Clara came to the United States and began a new congregation which eventually settled in Milwaukee." Carlan Kraman, O. S. F., *A Portrait of St. Labre Indian Mission through One Hundred Years*, folder 24, box 1, Published Histories, St. Labre Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU.

<sup>108</sup> Carlan Kraman, O. S. F., *A Portrait of St. Labre Indian Mission through One Hundred Years*, p. 8, folder 24, box 1, Published Histories, St. Labre Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU; and Connell Szasz, *Education and the American Indian*, 30, 62.

During the 1945–1946 school year, only 45 children, both Indians and whites, attended the grade school, but with the return of peace, “in 1947 the purchase of a school bus made possible the opening of the boarding department” and “gradually by 1948, there were 120 pupils, half of whom were boarders.” The faculty expanded to meet the needs of the growing student body: “By 1949 the number of Sister teachers had increased from three to six and besides there were two lay teachers—one for physical education . . . one for music.” The mission purchased an additional school bus in 1950, and the “1956 records showed 246 pupils in school of whom 199 were boarders.” The school buses enabled the students to go home on the weekends, which pleased the parents. By now the staff had grown to

8 Sisters, 3 Priests and 3 lay teachers. We have a volunteer nurse. . . . One Sister and three Indian ladies do all the washing, ironing, cooking and baking. . . . This past year for the first time, three Indian ladies and a white lady were assigned as Matrons in the dormitories. In previous years, the Sisters performed this task. . . . We have two Brothers who labor at the Mission—they take care of the chickens; haul mail; fix plumbing, laundry equipment, boilers or anything in need of repair; plus a number of odd jobs.

The priests taught classes, drove the school buses, coached, did office work, and “they travel[ed] 136,000 miles each year to visit the Indian towns on the reservation to bring the word of God to the Indian people and to give aid to the sick and needy.”<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Carlan Kraman, O. S. F., *A Portrait of St. Labre Indian Mission through One Hundred Years*, p. 8, folder 24, box 1, Published Histories, St. Labre Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU; “Ashland Indian Mission to Note Jubilee,” *The Eastern Montana Catholic Register*, 23 September 1959, folder 27, box 1, Diamond Jubilee Commemoration, St. Labre Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU; “In the Light of the Franciscan Apostolate; St. Labre Indian Mission, 1883–1957,” by Fr. Emmett Hoffmann, O.F.M. Cap. 1957, folder 18, box 1, Unpublished Histories, St. Labre Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU; Questionnaire response anent Mission history, by School Sisters of St. Francis, folder 10, box 1, Notes, St. Labre Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU; and Selected issues of the periodical *Sandal Prints*, 1968–1984, published by the Capuchin Fathers, folder 23, box 1, Published Histories, St. Labre Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU; *St. Labre Indian Mission* (Ashland, Mont.: Mission Press, 1960), folder 6, box 1, Publications, St. Labre Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU.



Capuchins who had worked at St. Labre since 1926 included Fr. Richard Brunner OFM Cap., Fr. Regis Neeser OFM Cap., Fr. Matthew Niedhammer OFM Cap., Fr. Patrick Berther OFM Cap., Fr. Daniel Bormann OFM Cap., Fr. Seraphin Winterroth OFM Cap., Fr. Bernadine Schlimgen OFM Cap., Brother Berthold, and Fr. Marion Roessler OFM Cap. Under Father Marion, St. Labre truly began to flourish. Father Marion, who arrived in 1947, valued the Cheyennes' culture and sought to preserve their language. Father Marion also instilled the appreciation of Cheyenne ways upon his successor, Fr. Emmett Hoffman.<sup>110</sup>

In 1952 Sr. Limana was replaced by Sr. Estella Bush as superior of the Sisters and principal of St. Labre, and "Sr. Estella also taught classes, directed the choir and played the organ. Before coming to Saint Labre she had spent 18 years in China, several of those in a concentration camp." Superintendent Fr. Marion wrote, "With her background of so many years with the Chinese (whose habits and customs, in very many ways, resemble our Indians), we believe that she is well qualified to deal with our Cheyenne Indians." In 1952, Father Marion contacted alumni from his Capuchin college to request donations for St. Labre. Alumni Leo Dohn from New York City helped Father Marion organize a successful fundraising operation for St. Labre.<sup>111</sup>

In 1954, as the federal government sought to expedite the assimilation process by terminating federal services, and Indian leaders, such as those involved in the National Congress of American Indians fought against termination, Father Emmett assumed

<sup>110</sup> Carlan Kraman, O. S. F., *A Portrait of St. Labre Indian Mission through One Hundred Years*, pp. 6–8, 9, folder 24, box 1, Published Histories, St. Labre Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU; "Ashland Indian Mission to Note Jubilee," *The Eastern Montana Catholic Register*, 23 September 1959, folder 27, box 1, Diamond Jubilee Commemoration, St. Labre Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU; Selected issues of the periodical *Sandal Prints*, 1968–1984, published by the Capuchin Fathers, folder 23, box 1, Published Histories, St. Labre Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU; and Mahoney, *Lady Blackrobes*, 293.

<sup>111</sup> Carlan Kraman, O. S. F., *A Portrait of St. Labre Indian Mission through One Hundred Years*, folder 24, box 1, Published Histories, St. Labre Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU.

leadership of the school and parish. Father Emmett, like so many priests and nuns before and after him, found it difficult to adjust to life at the mission. Father Emmett thought his sole responsibilities were confined to teaching Latin and religious classes, but he soon discovered a slew of daily chores—mending fences, cleaning chicken coups, herding cattle, caring for the pigs, and cultivating crops—to complete as well. Besides the additional burden of manual labor, Fr. Emmett encountered spiritual hardships when he found himself “ministering to a people living without the basic necessities of life, without clean water, proper shelter, food and in many ways, people living without hope for the future.” Then, on top of these responsibilities, he shouldered the added stress of managing the finances for the mission. The expenses—building maintenance, heat, food, school supplies, wages for the employees—always exceeded the church’s revenue. In response, volunteers, like the Marquette League for Catholic Indian Missions, came to assist the priest.<sup>112</sup>

Fr. Emmett also encountered difficulties with the nuns. For instance, one of the School Sisters of Saint Francis reprimanded the children for walking on the school lawn. Fr. Emmett interceded and explained that the lawns were for the children to enjoy. When she continued to scold the children, Fr. Emmett made a formal complaint to her superior, whereby she was transferred from St. Labre. Fr. Emmett found it difficult to work with the sisters because they retained their fear of the Indians and believed they might contract diseases from the children. He replaced the nuns ill-suited for life at St. Labre, and in the end, the School Sisters of St. Francis dedicated their time to feeding, clothing, and educating the Cheyennes. As Fr. Emmett adjusted to St. Labre, his charming personality

<sup>112</sup> For information on Father Emmett Hoffman, see Renee Sansom Flood, *Renegade Priest of the Northern Cheyenne: The Life and Work of Father Emmett Hoffman 1926–*. (n.p., Renee Sansom Flood, 2003), 55, 57, 63, 64, 71, 77, 100.

won over the Cheyennes. Journalist Renee S. Flood writes, “Father whipped around the mission, painting, fixing and tearing down with tremendous energy. He taught school, drove the bus, offered Mass, counseled, buried and baptized,” worked in the print shop, hunted game, delivered the mail—the tasks were endless, but no match for Father’s exuberance.<sup>113</sup>

After four years at St. Labre, Fr. Emmett knew his time at the mission was coming to an end. Flood explains, “The Church policy was to reassign priests after a three-year term in one location. Father believed this rule destroyed the relationship between the Church and the Catholic Indian community.” Once the tribe learned that Fr. Emmett faced the prospect of a transfer, the Northern Cheyenne tribal government became involved in the decision by passing Resolution Number 128, which expressed their desire to have Fr. Emmett stay at St. Labre. The tribal resolution persuaded the provincial minister to keep Fr. Emmett at St. Labre.<sup>114</sup>

In 1957, ten sisters resided at St. Labre and seven of them taught in the classrooms, along with four lay teachers. Eight of these teachers had university degrees. Also, in 1957, the school opened a kindergarten program, followed by a head start program in 1966, a direct response to President Lyndon B. Johnson’s War on Poverty. In 1962, “a factory was built on tribal land across the road from the mission where Guild Arts and Crafts from New York set up its Ashland division. This was part of Father Emmett’s attempt to give the Cheyennes regular employment. This mission fund drive became the Guild’s best customer.” St. Labre included the merchandise produced in the factory “with the appeal letters and their costume jewelry was advertised and sold

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

through *The Race of Sorrows*, a newsletter which was sent to donors several times a year beginning in the year 1956.”<sup>115</sup>

As Native activism accelerated during the 1960s, St. Labre continued to expand its missionary influence. In 1965, “Bishop William Condon of Great Falls, asked the Capuchin Fathers at Saint Labre to assume the pastoral care of the Crow Indians on their reservation west of the Northern Cheyenne Reservation.” During the previous eleven years, Father Emmett had diligently focused on aiding the Northern Cheyennes, “a people far poorer than the wealthy Crow.” Now Father Emmett had to find the resources to rebuild the Crow mission churches, while still maintaining St. Labre. Besides the additional financial burden, the Northern Cheyenne still resented the Crow:

For their work as scouts and as staunch government allies, they received a much larger reservation than the Cheyennes, who had taken a leading role in Custer’s demise at the Battle of the Little Bighorn. The Cheyennes didn’t like the fact that the Crow were ‘awarded’ such a large reservation right next to the small Cheyenne Reservation. Whenever they got the chance, school children from both tribes pecked at each other like ducks on a bug. Putting Cheyenne and Crow youngsters in classrooms and dorms was a daunting feat. The Capuchin Fathers and the School Sisters of St. Francis were determined to make it work and they did, but not without many bloody altercations.<sup>116</sup>

Father Emmett helped integrate the school, but while he was trying to create harmony between Cheyenne and Crow within St. Labre, divisive forces were upsetting the balance within the church.

The Second Vatican Council or Vatican II (1962–1965) disrupted the Roman Catholic Church. The modernization of the church led to a schism between the younger,

<sup>115</sup> Carlan Kraman, O. S. F., *A Portrait of St. Labre Indian Mission through One Hundred Years*, folder 24, box 1, Published Histories, St. Labre Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU. In 1977, regulations on operating fund drives meant the Guild Arts and Crafts factory had to close (ibid., 13).

<sup>116</sup> Carlan Kraman, O. S. F., *A Portrait of St. Labre Indian Mission through One Hundred Years*, pp. 11, 12, folder 24, box 1, Published Histories, St. Labre Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU; *St. Labre Indian Mission* (Ashland, Mont.: Mission Press, 1960), folder 6, box 1, Publications, St. Labre Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU; and Flood, *Renegade Priest*, 125, 126.

progressive priests and the pre-Vatican II priests. Fr. Emmett's awareness of this split enabled him to relate to the Northern Cheyenne elders who witnessed the divide between progressive and traditional Indians over allotment, New Deal legislation, and termination. The younger religious personnel at St. Labre, feeling invigorated by Vatican II, became critical of Fr. Emmett's leadership, especially his penny-pinching practices and his drinking habit.<sup>117</sup> Meanwhile, sisters and lay people also became more active in the church.

St. Labre sent the school children home when a flu epidemic broke out in 1967. In the process the administration realized that "several children had no home to go to. Jasper and Alice Tall White Man were happy to take care of them and this was the beginning of the Cheyenne Home. . . . In 1978 the first small group home, Eagle's Nest, was opened to accommodate nine children." The Cheyenne Home program continued to expand and by 1984, "a professional staff which includes a full-time director, a psychologist, counselors, a registered nurse, program supervisors as well as houseparents" took care of the children. Since 1969, "young men and women, members of the Jesuit Volunteer Corps have been serving at Saint Labre . . . primarily with the Cheyenne Home Program."<sup>118</sup>

In 1968, the year the American Indian Movement formed in Minneapolis, Larry Kostecky became the St. Labre superintendent. The Capuchin Friars no longer controlled the school, and heeding the words from President Richard Nixon's "Special Message on Indian Affairs" of July 1970 advocating Indian self-determination, "the Labre School became a Bureau of Indian Affairs school in 1978 with an all-Indian school

<sup>117</sup> Flood, *Renegade Priest*, 133–37.

<sup>118</sup> Carlan Kraman, O. S. F., *A Portrait of St. Labre Indian Mission through One Hundred Years*, folder 24, box 1, Published Histories, St. Labre Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU.

board.” Once St. Labre ceased operating as a Catholic school, the number of Sisters was reduced from ten to three. Still the Capuchins remained at St. Labre, and Fr. Emmett even returned following the 1982–1983 school year in order to restore order at St. Labre: “Unrest and disagreements among staff and administrators had upset the entire school. The end results were student walkouts, fights among the staff and resignations.” Under Indian control, the Capuchins did not have the same administrative powers, but they continued to be a part of the Mission Board of Directors. Lay personal now oversaw “the day-to-day business of the mission.”<sup>119</sup> The executive director served as a liaison with the tribal officials, a manager of finances, and an administrator, but “policy is set by the Mission Board of Directors most of whom are Capuchin Friars.” In 1983, Robert B. Phelan, a veteran businessman, became the executive director, overseeing the business affairs of St. Labre “while keeping it in harmony with the Saint Labre parish, the Labre school and the Cheyenne Home.” As a BIA school, St. Labre’s budget had remained sparse; however, as a private school with a strong fundraising network, St. Labre’s financial strength grew, so in 1985 the Catholic Diocese of Great Falls resumed control over the school and retained an Indian community advisory board.<sup>120</sup>

As a diocesan school again, many of the committed priests and sisters at St. Labre positively impacted the mission. However, Flood notes, “Father [Emmett] had heard that homosexual men were often promiscuous with young boys. St. Labre was a predator’s paradise, a perfect set up for a priest looking to seduce a child. Indian reservations across

<sup>119</sup> Selected issues of the periodical *Sandal Prints*, 1968–1984, published by the Capuchin Fathers, folder 23, box 1, Published Histories, St. Labre Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU; Carlan Kraman, O. S. F., *A Portrait of St. Labre Indian Mission through One Hundred Years*, folder 24, box 1, Published Histories, St. Labre Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU; and Flood, *Renegade Priest*, 178, 179.

<sup>120</sup> Carlan Kraman, O. S. F., *A Portrait of St. Labre Indian Mission through One Hundred Years*, chpt. 10, folder 24, box 1, Published Histories, St. Labre Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU.

the country had suffered in silence for many years with priestly child molesters in their midst. . . . Catholic schools provided a better education for their children, but the question remained—should they trust their youngsters with priests?”<sup>121</sup> Father Emmett kept these thoughts to himself while he worked diligently to secure donations for the Cheyenne and Crow students; he even established a college scholarship fund. He continued to make improvements at St. Labre and labored to develop employment opportunities for the Northern Cheyenne Tribe.

Meanwhile, the younger Capuchins began a campaign to slander Fr. Emmett’s name and undermine his authority. In 1987, Father Emmett “met with tribal leaders to investigate buying and renovating the local sawmill.” Father Emmett then convened the St. Labre Board of Directors to discuss the sawmill, and they voted in favor of the project. The new Provincial Minister, Father Kenneth Reinhart, who was new to the board, objected to Father Emmett’s “purchase of a ‘sling sorter,’ a machine that eliminated the need for a man to lift unbearably heavy timber with his bare hands.”

Father Reinhart inquired:

‘How did you make the decision to buy it without coming to the board for approval?’ Father Emmett was accustomed to earlier Provincials and Bishops who had trusted him to do the best job possible. When the Provincial, who apparently knew little about running a business, questioned his authority, it seemed like a slap in the face. Father Emmett and the donors had built up St. Labre, St. Xavier Mission and St. Charles Mission and there had never been a question of how the money was spent. Father’s fund raising efforts over the years had amounted to millions compared to the sling-sorter in question. The hard feelings that began with the Provincial’s disrespectful approach at the board meeting, would have lasting and tragic effects on St. Labre, Father Emmett’s career and the Northern Cheyenne Tribe.

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<sup>121</sup> Flood, *Renegade Priest*, 180.

When the 1980s came to a close, the bitter feelings and growing number of complaints on all sides had divided the Capuchin Fathers in Montana.<sup>122</sup>

On 14 May 1991, Father Dennis Druggan, who was thirty years younger than Father Emmett and anxious to run St. Labre, fired Father Emmett as co-director of St. Labre over a funding dispute. Following the confrontation, BIA officials, FBI agents, and tribal representatives stormed into St. Labre to investigate a child abuse case. Provincial Reinhart removed Father Druggan from Montana as a result of the child abuse scandal. Father Druggan and Provincial Reinhart blamed Father Emmett for leaking the story. In retaliation, Provincial Reinhart accused Father Emmett of child molestation. Flood states, “Despite Father’s distinguished record of achievement and many awards for outstanding community service and leadership, a cloud of humiliation and grief passed over him. He knew that the allegation the Provincial had made against him was false, but the obvious hatred his superior felt toward him was real and powerful.” After psychological testing in Chicago, the report cleared Fr. Emmett of being a child molester.

While Provincial Reinhart actively pursued his bogus charge against Father Emmett, he ignored serious complaints of sexual abuse by Capuchins in Milwaukee and continued to harass Father Emmett. Next, he charged Fr. Emmett with “financial misconduct.” Father Emmett tried to ignore the accusations as he “continued to make improvements for St. Labre and the surrounding community, dedicating the new recreational facility, the Soaring Eagle Center, in May 1993.” Yet, the slanderous attack within the Capuchin order was too much for Father Emmett and “on 17 November 1994,

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 185, 186, 187, 187–88.



Rather Emmett wrote to his new Provincial, Rev. Anthony Scannell, requesting to leave the Capuchin order. He would finish out his days as a diocesan priest.”<sup>123</sup>

St. Labre mission witnessed many power shifts throughout its history. Bishops, Ursulines, Sisters of Saint Francis, Jesuits, diocesan priests, Edmundites, and Capuchins all made an impact on the history of St. Labre. Usually the religious orders worked together to improve St. Labre, but sometimes, dominant figures like Bishop Lenihan and Mother Amadeus or Father Emmett and Provincial Reinhart saw things differently and engaged in power struggles to maintain personal control of the mission.

### **Cultural Brokers and Financiers at St. Paul’s**

Multiple religious organizations travelled into the West to evangelize, educate, and “civilize” the Indians. Father de Smet, S.J., was the first missionary to visit the Assiniboines and Gros Ventres. During the winter of 1846–1847, Father de Point, S.J., met them in passing. Fr. Giorda baptized 134 Indians, mostly children, “a few weeks before Easter 1862.” The Methodist ministers, however, were assigned to Fort Belknap Indian Reservation during the so-called Peace Policy endorsed by President Ulysses S. Grant. The Jesuits, despite the Methodist presence—or lack thereof—on the reservation, continued to send priests, and “In 1883 Fr. Damiani baptized six infants from the same tribe, and in 1884 Reverend Father Joseph Bandini baptized three. In autumn of 1885, Reverend Father Joseph Cataldo, the Superior General of the Rocky Mountain Missions, sent Father Frederick Eberschweiler to the Gros Ventres and Assiniboines, who wanted a permanent mission to be established in their territory.”<sup>124</sup>

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 190–205, quote 194.

<sup>124</sup> Descriptive accounts of St. Paul’s Mission and surrounding region, by Fr. Eberschweiler, S.J., folder 18, box 2, St. Paul’s Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU; and Historical Review of Jesuit Missionary Work with the Gros Ventres and Assiniboines, by Fr. Eberschweiler, S.J. ca. 1889, *Historia Missionis ad*

In August 1883, when Father Eberschweiler arrived in Helena, “he was attached to St. Peter’s Mission and appointed to be the first resident priest to which belonged a very large district. At one of his visits to the garrison Ft. Assiniboine, Indians told him that they greatly wished that a Mission be founded for them.” Father Eberschweiler composed a letter to President Grover Cleveland requesting permission to build a Roman Catholic mission “on the Reservation belonging to the Ft. Belknap Agency.” On 1 November 1885, Father Eberschweiler received a letter from President Cleveland, which approved his endeavor. Father Eberschweiler gave the letter to the government agent at Fort Belknap Agency, who begrudgingly took the news, “since he was a Methodist.”<sup>125</sup>

Father Eberschweiler established St. Paul’s mission on 8 December 1885 for the Assiniboine and Gros Ventre Indians.<sup>126</sup> With the help of the local Indian trader, Thomas O’Hanlon, Father Eberschweiler constructed a rude hut and log chapel. Then, he built a rough school, and requested the aid of the Ursuline nuns under Mother Amadeus. Father Eberschweiler was a Jesuit priest exiled from Germany by the May laws, “the anti-Catholic policies of the Kulturkampf.” An energetic and creative forty-six year old, he was captivated by the task ahead of him—establishing a permanent mission for the Assiniboines and Gros Ventres in the Little Rockies. He eagerly began negotiations with

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S(anc)tum Paulum, English translation by Fr. Silvano Votto, S.J., 26 June 2003, folder 19, box 2, Reports, St. Paul’s Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU. President Ulysses S. Grant established a Peace Policy intended to create “an element of humanitarianism to Indian affairs.” As part of the policy, Christian missionaries replaced corrupt Indian agents and Christian organizations established churches and schools to facilitate civilization. Calloway, *First Peoples*, 372.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Father Eberschweiler describes himself: “Frederick Hugo Eberschweiler S.J. was a native of Prussia, Germany, born at Waxweiler, in the beautiful Rhine province on the 19<sup>th</sup> of June 1839. He made his studies in the college at Treves, entered the Society of Jesus on the 30<sup>th</sup> of September 1858. He was ordained priest on the 15<sup>th</sup> of June 1870, when the war between Germany and France broke out in which he was a hospital chaplain. He went to America in August 1872, worked in Cleveland O., Toledo O., Burlington, Ia. And finally in Montana and now lives in Havre Mont.” Descriptive accounts of St. Paul’s Mission and surrounding region, by Fr. Eberschweiler, S.J., folder 18, box 2, Reports, St. Paul’s Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU.

Washington for land to build upon in a location removed from Fort Belknap Agency and the corrupt influence of the whites. On 15 September 1886, a gold miner by the name of Mr. Unstet, along with his companions, laid the cornerstone for the Mission. The men constructed three log buildings—the church and priest’s residence, a convent, and a school. By September 1887, Father Eberschweiler was ready to welcome the two Ursulines, Martha Gahan and Francis Siebert, to St. Paul’s Mission, which consisted of a main building with a dormitory, two additional buildings, and a log church.

The mission at Little People’s Creek, nestled by the beautiful Little Rockies, was picturesque, but also extremely isolated. After an exhausting four-day stagecoach trip from Miles City, Sisters Francis and Martha arrived at Fort Belknap. The next day, 13 September, twenty children, the two nuns, and Father Eberschweiler traveled some sixty-five miles by wagon to their new home. The trip took sixteen hours and the travelers arrived after midnight to total blackness. By 15 September, school was in session. The school thrived, and by the summer of 1889, the year Montana acquired statehood, the three Ursulines (sisters Francis, Martha, and Santa Clara Henry) were teaching the 102 children in attendance at the mission.<sup>127</sup>

In 1891, “with his Bishop’s approval, the Jesuit superior assigned Father Balthaaser Feusi to St. Paul’s, which covered one district, and Father Eberschweiler to

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<sup>127</sup> Mahoney, *Lady Blackrobes*, 79–87; St. Paul’s Mission, Hays, Montana, folder 9, box 6, School Events and Fundraising Materials, 1900–1972, St. Paul’s Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU; and Descriptive accounts of St. Paul’s Mission and surrounding region, by Fr. Eberschweiler, S.J., folder 18, box 2, Reports, St. Paul’s Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU. Father Eberschweiler states, “From Jan. 18–Jan. 23, 1887 Indian Commissioners from Washington made a treaty with the Indians by which the lines of the present Reservation were defined and their petition regarding the Little Rockies agreed to and the selected place for the future Mission given to the Jesuit-Fathers.” Descriptive accounts of St. Paul’s Mission and surrounding region, by Fr. Eberschweiler, S.J., folder 18, box 2, Reports, St. Paul’s Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU. See also Fred Ojers, “St. Paul’s Mission Proves Keystone Development of Northern Montana: Jesuit Priests Start School with Indian Children Giving Up Prairie Freedom to Study,” *Great Falls Tribune*, 1926, folder 22, box 6, General Clippings, St. Paul’s Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU.

the Milk River area, which extended all the way to the Dakotas.” Father Feusi was at St. Paul’s from 1891 to 1894.<sup>128</sup> Father Feusi welcomed two Ursulines from Québec City to St. Paul’s. These women were recruited by Mother Amadeus during her tour through Canada in 1893. Like Sister Scholastique at St. Labre, Sister Félix Talbot and Sister Elisabeth Sirois had a difficult time adjusting to mission life. Once they arrived, the two sisters found the house in poor condition, while the mission lacked the necessary funds to repair it. Sister Elisabeth found the work daunting. Even simple tasks like making bread seemed overwhelming; everyday she had to knead enough dough to feed 150 children. She expressed her unhappiness in a letter to Bishop Brondel and the bishop of Québec, asking to return to Canada. While awaiting a reply, Father Charles Mackin arrived at St. Paul’s in 1894. Unlike his predecessor Father Feusi, Father Mackin was a capable and shrewd businessman. His confidence in the missionary endeavor at St. Paul’s inspired the French nuns to continue to serve at the mission. Reinvigorated, Sister Félix taught the children, while Sister Elisabeth, who never learned English, carried out the tasks necessary to maintain a boarding school. Their superior in Québec City eventually recalled the sisters to Canada in 1896.<sup>129</sup>

Throughout the history of St. Paul’s, a cornucopia of nationalities have taught and provided spiritual guidance at the mission. Gabriel M. Menager, S.J. wrote, “After Father Mackin, Father [Ignatius A.] Vesta took charge. He had come from Italy. Father [Joseph M.] Piet followed him [five years later]; he was from France; Father Le Vasseur

<sup>128</sup> St. Paul’s Mission, Hays, Montana, folder 9, box 6, School Events and Fundraising Materials, 1900–1972, St. Paul’s Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU. Father Feusi was born in Switzerland in 1854. He came to America in 1885 as a Jesuit scholastic. In 1886, he was the first priest ordained in Spokane, Washington. See Edgar Dowd, S.J., “Swiss,” *Jesuit Missions*, 8 (March 1934), folder 18, box 6, Published Histories, St. Paul’s Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU.

<sup>129</sup> Mahoney, *Lady Blackrobes*, 135–146, 155–157, 163.

from Canada succeeded him; Father Boll from Germany followed. At present [in 1937] we still have some three nationalities represented among the Mission personnel.”<sup>130</sup> The Jesuits, according to historian Gerald McKevitt, were cultural relativists. The Jesuits undertook four vows: poverty, chastity, obedience, and a special vow to obey the pope. This fourth vow committed the Jesuits to go where ever His Holiness believed they were needed, so they had to think and act globally. They “functioned, therefore, neither exclusively as Americanizers nor as Europeanizers, but as brokers of multiple cultures.” Besides their appreciation for Native cultures, their foreign backgrounds helped convert the Indians to the Roman Catholic faith. McKevitt states, “European Jesuits enjoyed an advantage that escaped Protestant missionaries. Since Native Americans did not view them as Americans, they were not held accountable for repressive United States policy.”<sup>131</sup> Overall, these men and women had the daunting task of adjusting to their new environments, while maintaining a mission; this was not an easy undertaking, especially without adequate funding.

When the federal government withdrew the school subsidies from St. Paul’s in 1900, the mission, like St. Labre to the south, was forced to rely on assistance from friends and the BCIM. Donors had already been augmenting the money from the federal government. For instance, Father Mackin’s friend “a Mr. Wilson of Portland, Oregon” generously donated money to build “a new stone church and a convent. The church,

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<sup>130</sup> Gabriel M. Menager, S.J., “In the Little Rockies,” *Jesuit Missions*, vol. 11, no. 7 (1937), folder 18, box 6, Published Histories, St. Paul’s Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU. A large percentage of the Jesuits in the American West emigrated from Italy. Italy’s unification and the wave of anticlericalism that swept through the country pushed the Jesuits from their homeland. Jesuits also left France, Belgium, and Holland due to political pressures. These well-educated men established churches, schools, and Indian missions in the American West. The teachings of St. Ignatius guided them and gave them strength to endure the primitive conditions, but many struggled to learn the Native languages, as well as master English. Mahoney, *Lady Blackrobes*, 38–39.

<sup>131</sup> McKevitt, *Brokers of Culture*, 5, 11, 121.

which was completed in 1898 and later embellished with the frescoes of Brother Carignano, was the gem and pride of the whole region.”<sup>132</sup> The Jesuits also crafted fundraising pamphlets requesting monetary donations. For example, Father Levasseur put together a brochure, “Will you help St. Paul’s Mission,” to be distributed to members of the Marquette League at Christmas time in 1925. He wrote:

The early frost and severe storms of September destroyed our wheat and vegetables. The very old buildings are badly in need of repair. Thanks to the generosity of the Marquette League, the roofs no longer leak, but windows and doors are in sorry condition. The plumbing is unsanitary. Antiquated wood stoves do not keep out the bitter cold and penetrating dampness. Oil lamps are a menace. . . . At St. Paul Mission 105 children await the coming of the Christ Child this year.<sup>133</sup>

In order to supplement St. Paul’s income, the Jesuits established a successful ranch at the school.<sup>134</sup> The Jesuits managed beehives and introduced fish into the pond. Unfortunately, the poverty of the mission inhibited structural improvements, such as installing bathtubs and toilets in the girls’ school and convent. On 19 January 1928, Father Wm. G. LeVasseur, S.J., wrote to Rev. Eduardus Goulet, S.J. in Rome, Italy, about the conditions at St. Paul’s. According to LeVasseur:

All the Missions that I know are very short of men and money. As a result the Missions are very much neglected. . . . After 41 years at St. Paul, the Father in charge is Farmer, Stockman, Machinist, and lastly Missionary. . . . We have to hire all our farm hands, Indians for the most part, poor help. The Province has not helped this Mission in any way for the last four years, but to add to our difficulties has raised the taxes. The Father \$240.00 and the Brothers \$120.00 per year. The Bishop has asked me to pay the Sisters \$20.00 a month. I am getting \$7000.00 a year from the Indian Bureau and I have an average of 125 children to maintain at the school. You can see that we are asked the impossible. For 41 years the

<sup>132</sup> St. Paul’s Mission, Hays, Montana, folder 9, box 6, School Events and Fundraising Materials, 1900–1972, St. Paul’s Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU.

<sup>133</sup> School Events and Fundraising Material, folder 9, box 6 Printed Materials, St. Paul’s Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU.

<sup>134</sup> “St. Paul’s Mission Observes Jubilee,” *The Harlem News*, 28 December 1962, folder 22, box 6, General Clippings, St. Paul’s Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU.

Mission has been using oil lamps and wood stoves. It is only by constant begging that I am able this year to put in an electric light plant.<sup>135</sup>

Father LeVasseur continued to feel the strain of financial poverty. He wrote to the Jesuit Provincial seeking help: “I have just returned from a trip to Great Falls, The Bishop . . . urged me to put in a heating plant in the sisters building. In fact he said that if it was not done he would call the sisters home.” The Mission needed a new heating plant and a septic tank. The sisters were still using wood stoves to heat their building and the sewer was a health concern. The Bishop urged LeVasseur to appeal to Cardinal George Mundelein in Chicago to fund these two improvement projects. LeVasseur continued his pleas for financial help. The farm crops had failed due to a lack of rain, the students needed clothes and shoes, the Mission needed fuel, and the children were even fed horse meat instead of beef.<sup>136</sup> The Marquette League provided donations to St. Paul’s during the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>137</sup>

On 16 November 1931, a faulty flue ignited a fire that destroyed the stone church, convent, girls’ boarding school, and granary. While the mission was recovering, natural disasters devastated the area: “Subsequent years of drought wrought havoc to farms and cattle ranches and reduced both the Mission and its people to utter destitution. People’s Creek which had watered the valley became for the most part an arid bed of stones. The

<sup>135</sup> Fr. Wm. Levasseur, S. J., Mission Superior, with Provincial Jos. Piet, S. J., folder 11, box 1, Correspondence, St. Paul’s Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU.

<sup>136</sup> Fr. Levasseur, S.J., with Jesuit Provincials, Cardinal Mundelein, fellow Jesuits and non Jesuits, folder 14, box 1, Correspondence, St. Paul’s Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU.

<sup>137</sup> Correspondence from Marquette League, folder 15, box 1, Correspondence, St. Paul’s Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU.

final touch came in 1936, when a raging fire devoured the stately pines and left the Little Rockies barren and black.”<sup>138</sup>

The house diary in 1936 written at the height of the Great Depression contains entries describing the need for funds, food, and clothing; costly repairs; problems with the weather; difficulties procuring drinking water; and the challenges of maintaining the property. For instance, the heading for February 1936 reads, “Feb = No water. No light. Dirt + Darkness. On 28 February 1936, Fr. L. O’Brien records, “Zero degrees again last night. Sheep piled up, & some hundred died.” On 29 February 1936, the weather outside was negative forty-two degrees and windy, and Father O’Brien wrote, “Fr. Bolfe & men working on H<sub>2</sub>O Intake. Fr. O’Brien Blesses Pipe with image of Little Flower. If snow is water. Then, ‘water, water everywhere, but not a drop to drink.’ Pipe must be frozen under 6 ft of sand + 6 ft of Ice. Bro. says we may have water in July, if we get hot rain.” In March, the priests were still praying for water, “Children need baths but no water since the first week in Feb.” On 21 March, the well diggers struck water. On 27 March, the entry states, “Snowed all night—snowing heavily this a.m. A new radiator must be bought for our light plant. Girls throw stones in our fod[d]er mixer, to break it. Exhatitude! Indians will steal anything & break everything.” Then, on 28 March 1936: “Snowed all yesterday and last night—looks like a ft. deep. Sun shining this a.m. Bad for sheep & cattle. Cattle very thin. We are down to the last bit of fodder. To fix our light plant will cost between 50 & 60 dollars.” The entry for 1 May 1936 states, “Water-None=Still

<sup>138</sup> Correspondence from the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, folder 1, box 2, Correspondence, St. Paul’s Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU; and Condensed Story of St. Paul’s Mission, folder 15, box 6, General Historical Sketches, n.d., St. Paul’s Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU.



digging for leaks in the pipe-some expense!”<sup>139</sup> After reading through the Jesuit house journal, the entries demonstrate that these were trying times for the Jesuits. It was their responsibility to provide adequate facilities, especially the basic necessities, to the mission, but Mother Nature and limited finances thwarted their objectives.

During this bleak time for the school and for the United States, the Ursulines were recalled from St. Paul’s and the mission found it could no longer afford to operate the boarding school. Fr. Balfe decided to look into opening a day school instead.

Transitioning to a day school also conformed to major policy changes within the Education Division of the BIA. The successive directors of education Ryan and Beatty now emphasized opening community day schools, rather than promoting boarding schools. In order to staff the day school, Bishop Edwin V. O’Hara traveled to Milwaukee to request that the School Sisters of St. Francis come to assist the mission. On 27 May 1936, director J. B. Fennelly of the BCIM wrote to Father Balfe, “The change from a boarding school to a day school will not make any difference in the allowance from the Indian Mission Fund.” He continued, “Bishop O’Hara informed me recently that the Franciscan Sisters will replace the Ursulines at St. Paul’s. Next school year will probably be the best time to reorganize the school and make the transition to a day school.” On 1 September 1936 “a new era” began “when four Sisters Arrived to take up where the Ursuline Sisters left off. The former boarding school became a thing of the past and the new day school opened with a fine representation of Gros Ventre.”<sup>140</sup>

<sup>139</sup> “Historia Domus (House Diary), June 1, 1935–January 1, 1938, also includes entries for 1939–1948,” folder 5, box 3, Journals, St. Paul’s Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU.

<sup>140</sup> Correspondence from the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, folder 1, box 2, Correspondence, St. Paul’s Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU; Condensed Story of St. Paul’s Mission, folder 15, box 6, General Historical Sketches, n.d., St. Paul’s Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU; Mahoney, *Lady Blackrobes*, 294–96; and Connell Szasz, *Education and the American Indian*, 60–61.

Fr. Balfe welcomed Sister Giswalda, accompanied by Sister Simeona Mock, Sister Carissima Geis, and Sister Limana Kachelmeier, at the Harlem train station on 5 September. On the way to the mission, Fr. Balfe commented, “‘I suppose you heard that the boarding school has been discontinued.’ The words struck the Sisters like a flash of lightning from out of the blue. Afterwards, Sister Giswalda said, ‘I was so relieved, I could have jumped out of the car.’” While the Sisters were enthusiastic about teaching, Fr. Balfe continued to be overwhelmed by financial troubles. To compound matters, the school’s entire flock of sheep followed “the lead sheep over a cliff.” “Father nearly lost his mind” because the sheep were an integral source of income for the mission. Financial problems continued to plague the mission.<sup>141</sup>

The new nuns began teaching earnestly, but their job extended well beyond the classroom. They were part of the maintenance crew as well: “As soon as school closed for the day, the Sisters took a bite to eat, said their prayers in common, pinned up their habit skirts, put on their overalls, and went right to work alongside Mr. Reger. Often they worked late into the night,” repairing, painting, and cleaning the classrooms. The Sisters also did all the cooking and laundry for the priests. Eventually, Sister Bavoline Stroeder arrived to relieve the other sisters of their domestic duties.<sup>142</sup>

Due to the geographical isolation of St. Paul’s, the mission could recruit an abundant number of students. The parents supported the efforts of the missionaries, which helped the school thrive: “In the Spring of 1937 the Mission celebrated its Golden Jubilee. . . . Bishop O’Hara presented the first eight graduates with their diplomas during

<sup>141</sup> Sister M. Giswalda Kramer, *That’s My Baby* (Chinook, Mont.: Chinook Opinion, 1981), folder 21, box 6, Publications, St. Paul’s Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.; and Sister M. Clare Hartmann, O. S. F., *As It Was: History of Mission High School*, 2 vols. (Chinook, Mont.: Chinook Opinion, 1984), 1:24.

the Jubilee Celebration. They returned the following September as ninth graders and the nucleus of a high school was born.”<sup>143</sup> By 1938, the financial plight of the mission seemed to be lifting as New Deal recovery programs went into effect:

The Federal AAA pays the mission for not planting various crops; for cleaning, opening & piping water of spring etc. Through Fr. Superior’s efforts hundreds of dollars come in from benefactors. The River Ranch & Sheep Ranch . . . leased & a substantial income is derived there from for the mission. The mission farm has been placed upon a paying basis by entering into partnership with Fred Morin on a 50-50 basis. We do not have to pay working men’s salaries & besides receive 50% of all increase of cattle & ½ of crops raised.<sup>144</sup>

From the late 1930s to the early 1970s, Mission High School had been very successful, but on 5 December 1973, it burned down (see Appendix, figure 6). The 1973–1974 school year resumed inside the cramped quarters of the temporary trailers, but the students persevered, along with the last group of teachers who taught high school at Hays, Montana. On 20 May 1974, the final graduating class received their diplomas from Mission High. After the fire destroyed the high school, the Mission continued to operate, although it limited its coverage to grades first through eighth.<sup>145</sup>

In 1979, Father Bernard F. McMeel wrote to Bishop Thomas J. Murphy about the “viability of the school operation.” He listed:

1. School. The present enrollment of the school is only 55 students. . . .
2. Two of the Sisters I would judge to be in their 60’s, one in her 70’s (dear Sister Benno). Sister Giswalda owns that they have no replacements among their Order. . . .
3. Resources. . . . Joe [Retzel] operates pretty much on a fixed income, but inflation is eating him up. Dear Joe is a very prayful and holy priest, but not the best administrator. When bills pile up, Joe prays.<sup>146</sup>

<sup>143</sup> St. Paul’s Mission Centennial Committee, St. Paul’s Mission History, 1887–1987, folder 8, box 6, Printed Material, St. Paul’s Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU.

<sup>144</sup>“Historia Domus (House Diary), June 1, 1935–January 1, 1938, also includes entries for 1939–1948,” folder 5, box 3, Journals, St. Paul’s Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU.

<sup>145</sup> Hartmann, *As It Was*, 2:582–99.

<sup>146</sup> Of Fr. Joseph Retzel, S.J., 1975, folder 14, box 2, Correspondence, St. Paul’s Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU.

In 1980, three Dominican sisters, including Sr. Helen Durso, arrived at St. Paul's Mission to relieve the aging Sisters of Saint Francis.<sup>147</sup> During the 1980s, enrollment decreased for the seventh and eighth grade classrooms as more students left to attend the public school, which supported a better sports program. In response, Mission Grade School decided to focus on strengthening the educational system from the bottom up. In 1985, the Dominican sisters added a kindergarten class and eliminated the seventh and eighth grades.<sup>148</sup> Sister Helen became the principal of the grade school in 1989. Today, the school still struggles to stay afloat financially, but its attendance remains steady with close to one hundred students and the teachers continue to be dedicated, hardworking men and women.

### **Resistance to the Roman Catholics at St. Stephen's**

In 1884, the diocesan priest in Lander, Father D. W. Moriarity contacted Bishop James O'Connor of Omaha to inquire about opening a mission on the Wind River Reservation. Wyoming Territory fell under Bishop O'Connor's jurisdiction. Bishop O'Connor responded favorably. He secured the necessary funds and then set out to find a director for the proposed mission. He appealed initially to the Jesuit Order in Missouri, but they informed him they could not spare any Jesuits. The bishop then turned to the German Jesuits in Buffalo, New York, who agreed to send Father John Jutz. Father Jutz was accompanied by Brother Ursus Nunlitz. After his arrival in Wyoming, Father Jutz spoke with the Arapaho chief Black Coal, and he made plans to establish the Catholic mission. The mission is located on the eastern lands of the Wind River Reservation in

<sup>147</sup> These dedicated sisters would eventually replace the Franciscan nuns in Hays, Montana.

<sup>148</sup> Mission Grade School Papers, Personal Collection.

the section occupied by the Arapaho. The Shoshone live in the western part of the reservation, which is approximately “one hundred miles southeast of Yellowstone National Park.” In the following year, however, the German Jesuits reassigned Father Jutz to work among the Sioux in South Dakota, which meant Bishop O’Connor was left to find a replacement. In response to his second request, the Missouri Jesuits agreed to supervise St. Stephen’s Mission. On 30 June 1886, Father P. Ponsiglione, along with Brother Kiloullen, reopened St. Stephen’s Mission located “about three or four miles outside the [present-day] town of Riverton . . . . In the distance, some seventy miles away, loom the Teton Mountains.” Father Ponsiglione was born in Italy. He traveled to the United States after “the Jesuits were expelled from their houses in Italy as a result of the revolution of 1848. The provincial chose him because of his long experience with the Osage Indians.”<sup>149</sup>

In 1887, Katherine Drexel set aside funds to build a school for the Arapahos at St. Stephen’s Mission. In September 1888, as the building neared completion, Rev. F. X. Kuppens, S.J., who was in charge of the mission, asked Bishop Burke in Cheyenne, Wyoming, to travel east to find sisters willing to work at the new school. The Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth agreed to send six of their members to work with the Arapahos. Sister Joanna, a three-hundred pound, sixty-eight-year-old volunteer led the group, which included Sister Ann Davis, Sister Clara Kammer, Sister Mary Jerome Martin, Sister Jovita Jennings, and Sister Mary Claudia Finnigan. Approximately ninety students

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<sup>149</sup> Barbara L. Flasch, “‘For God and Country’: The Changing Role of St. Stephen’s Mission” (master’s thesis, University of Wyoming, 1973); Joseph Henry, “Catholic Missionaries on the Wind River: The Saint Stephen’s Mission to the Arapahoes, 1884–1911” (master’s thesis, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 1984), 24; General Correspondence, 1865, 1886-, roll 2, series 1-1, microfilm, Mission and School Correspondence, SSMR, RML, MU; and Unknown author, 1939, and author unknown, 1884, roll 2, series 2, microfilm, Mission and School Reports, SSMR, RML, MU.

arrived in January 1888 to attend the grade school. Sister Joanna realized that an additional building was needed to house the boys. She refused to open school the next year until the addition was built, and the school had received cattle, stables, outhouses, and other improvements. The sisters found it frustrating to work for the stubborn, opinionated superintendent Father Kuppens, but he would soon abandon them in 1889, leaving St. Stephen's in debt. Before his departure, BCIM secretary George Willard wrote, "I can see no reason why the school is not in operation but the obstinacy of Father Kuppens. He is a terrible man." By July 1890, the school ceased to function, and the sisters were recalled to Leavenworth.<sup>150</sup>

Later that year, Father J. Panken arrived as successor to Father Kuppens, but during Panken's tenure as superintendent, "the Indian children were mistreated, poorly clothed and sparsely fed." During these early years, staff turnover at St. Stephen's was rampant: Pankin (1890–1891), Reverend A. M. Folchi (1891–1892), Reverend Philip Turnell (1892–1894). The Sisters of Charity were replaced by five Sisters of St. Joseph, but these five women were also recalled in June 1892. In 1892, the Franciscan Sisters of Pendleton, Oregon, arrived, and finally, in 1894, Father Feusi, a diplomatic and driven superintendent, established order at St. Stephen's. Fr. Feusi, who served as superior from 1894 to 1901, developed a good relationship with the Indian agent and formed a plan to ensure St. Stephen's future, despite the federal government's decision to phase out funding for the contract school system. He initiated an ambitious project to dig an irrigation ditch to the Little Wind River in order to grow crops and he also acquired more

<sup>150</sup> Katherine Burton, *The Golden Door: The Life of Katherine Drexel* (New York: P. J. Kenedy & Sons, 1957), 137, 139, 142; Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth (Kans.), *History of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth, Kansas* (Kansas City, Mo.: Hudson Kimberly Publishing Company, 1898), chapt. 34; Reverend Lowrie J. Daly, S.J. "For God and Country—The Story of St. Stephen's Mission," *Jesuit Bulletin* 39, no. 6 (1960): 3–6, 18; and Henry, "Catholic Missionaries on the Wind River," 26.

farmland. Still, problems persisted. The winters were long and money was scarce. Fr. Feusi wrote, “We stand greatly in need of help with very little prospect of relief, and a hard winter already ushering on us. . . . We are now very short of fuel, beef, and of boys; clothing, and shoes, and hats, and shawls for the girls. And no money to get these things with, and a debt of \$2000 pressing on us.” Tensions arose between the sisters and Fr. Feusi. The agent H. G. Nickerson and Fr. Feusi were also at odds over who had authority to manage student attendance at St. Stephen’s.<sup>151</sup>

The debate over student attendance also arose at the national level. As BCIM director, Rev. William H. Ketcham sought “abrogation of the ‘Browning Ruling.’” In 1896, Commissioner of Indian Affairs Daniel M. Browning wrote, “Indian parents have no right to designate which school their children shall attend.” The federal government treated the Indians as wards of the state who were incapable of making the right decision regarding their children’s education. Fortunately, the Catholic missionaries successfully agitated for the overturn of the Browning Ruling.<sup>152</sup>

More detrimental for St. Stephen’s Mission, however, was Agent Nickerson’s refusal to give rations to the mission. Even though the OIA no longer appropriated funds for the Indian mission schools, the missions still received rations from the federal government in accordance with treaty obligations or contracts. In 1901, Commissioner of Indian Affairs Jones stated, “Schools on the various reservations which are conducted by religious, philanthropic, or other societies, will, in the future, receive no supplies

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<sup>151</sup> Father Jean Paul Médaille, S. J., along with Rt. Rev. Henri de Maupas, founded the Sisters of St. Joseph in Le Puy, France, in 1650. They established the Sisters of St. Joseph to promote “Christian education of children” and “the constitutions, drawn up by Bp. De Maupas, are based on the Rules of St. Ignatius.” *The New Catholic Dictionary*, s.v. “Sister, Sisterhoods, Sisters.” Henry, “Catholic Missionaries on the Wind River,” 22–38. In 1896 the first public school on the Wind River Reservation was established. See Henry, “Catholic Missionaries on the Wind River,” 76. Fr. Feusi quote in “The Beginnings,” roll 1, series 2, microfilm, Mission and School Reports, SSMR, RML, MU.

<sup>152</sup> Prucha, *Churches and the Indian Schools*, 46, 57–58.

whatever from the Government for the Indian children therein whether the children would be entitled to such supplies or not if living as reservation Indians with their parents. Neither will the rations etc. be issued to the parents of such children as attend these schools or any other schools.” BCIM director Father Ketcham wrote to President Theodore Roosevelt arguing for the restoration of the rations. The Catholics felt the rations rightfully belonged to the Indians for ceding their land to the government. Roosevelt arranged for a hearing before the U.S. attorney general to consider the matter. In 1904, Congress passed the legislation to restore the rations entitled to the Indian children and Roosevelt signed the bill into law. Although St. Stephen’s won the battle for rations, they lost students in the process.<sup>153</sup>

The contract school period from 1884 to 1900 was deemed satisfactory because the school attracted an average of seventy students each year, but the school was not yet a great success. Fr. Feusi managed to provide stability for the school, but he never transformed it into a flourishing institution.<sup>154</sup> St. Stephen’s received funds from appeals in the *Indian Sentinel*, a BCIM publication; the Marquette League; and Mother Kathryn Drexel. As superintendent, Fr. Feusi had authority only over the mission. He focused on maintaining St. Stephen’s survival, which remained a challenging task especially since the Indian agents worked against the mission. By 1900, however, a harmonious relationship developed between St. Stephen’s and Agent W. Waddsworth, which was

<sup>153</sup> Henry, “Catholic Missionaries on the Wind River,” 22–38; and Prucha, *Churches and the Indian Schools*, 65–66, 68–70, 79–80. Despite the Catholic victory, by 1909, only one school was entitled to receive rations. Prucha, *Churches and the Indian Schools*, 80.

<sup>154</sup> Henry, “Catholic Missionaries on the Wind River,” 22–38.



beneficial for the mission, since “the agent was the highest authority on the reservation.”<sup>155</sup>

An unreliable staff also stymied the initial growth of St. Stephen’s. The quick turn over “stemmed, in part, from the reluctance by the various Jesuit Missionary Provinces to assume permanent responsibility for Saint Stephen’s.” First, the Buffalo Province sent Father Jutz in 1884. Then the Missouri Province took over. Five superintendents later, the “Rocky Mountain Mission took over [in 1892] and operated the mission until 1912 with six different superintendents.”<sup>156</sup>

The Sisters of Saint Francis, however, remained at St. Stephen’s after their initial arrival in 1892. Sister M. Clementina Mullaney, for example, arrived in April 1909 and taught the children at the mission for fifty-two years. She was also superior of the Franciscan Community at the Mission for twenty-four years. Sister M. Firmina, born in Ireland, went to St. Stephen’s in 1924 to work as a nurse. Arriving in 1911, Sister M. Expedita, a native of Portugal, spent forty-one years in “the classroom, the mission bakery, sewing room, and laundry.”<sup>157</sup> These women who devoted so many years to St. Stephen’s felt reassured by their purpose. On 9 February 1909, Sister M. Blanche, O.S.F., wrote to her superior: “It is true were our children placed in the Government Schools, they would be provided for in every way, except the spiritual way. We know only too well the fruit of a Godless education. We have a large school and in our poverty try to provide for one hundred and ten children; we receive a very small sum for the

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<sup>155</sup> Ibid., 71–72, 73.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid., 62.

<sup>157</sup> Henry, “Catholic Missionaries on the Wind River,” 64. When the Sisters of St. Francis took over, they began a lengthy period of administration (1892–1981). St. Stephen’s Mission Records, Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Special Collections, Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Flasch, “‘For God and Country’”; and 108 Years as Indian Missionaries, 1939, and “Small Miracles,” 1983, roll 1, series 2, microfilm, Mission and School Reports, SSMR, RML, MU.

support of thirty children; the remainder are left to our charity to keep or send to the Government school, which means for us to thrust their souls into a pool of vice and sin. Can we as Religious conscientiously commit such a crime?" These women saw Catholic education as vital, and they were willing to commit their lives to its cause.<sup>158</sup>

The Sisters of Saint Francis also worked with Fr. John B. Sifton, S.J., superior from 1905 to 1912. Fr. Sifton surpassed Fr. Feusi as a leader at the school. He learned the Arapaho language, visited with the people, and took an interest in their culture. Unlike his predecessors, he did not discredit the Arapaho culture; further, he was willing to work with their traditions.<sup>159</sup> Despite his efforts, Fr. Sifton still endured criticism. On 4 March 1910, Isaac Goes-in-lodge filed a complaint with BCIM director Ketcham in Washington, D.C., regarding Father Sifton's management of St. Stephen's. Goes-in-lodge protested that Fr. Sifton did not pay one of his Indian employees, that the students are under nourished, and that Indians joining the church are neglected. Father Ketcham replied, "I am sure people who do not like the Arapahoes and who do not like Father Sifton would be glad to have him go far away so he could not do good for the Arapahoes,—especially for their souls. How do you want Father Sifton who talks your language to go away . . . ? Be careful what you say. I hope your heart is good." Father Ketcham also corresponded with Wadsworth and they concluded that "the letter of Goes-in-lodge was written by Mr. Charles Kealear." Ketcham noted, "The Kealears—husband

<sup>158</sup> General Correspondence, 1865, 1884, 1886–1890, 1900, 1904–1909, roll 1, series 1-1, microfilm, Mission and School Correspondence, SSMR, RML, MU.

<sup>159</sup> Henry, "Catholic Missionaries on the Wind River," 63, 70.

and wife—are notorious and should have been dismissed from the Government service long ago.” In April 1910, the OIA transferred the Kealears.<sup>160</sup>

Despite the allegations, Wadsworth and Ketcham fully supported Fr. Sifton. Wadsworth wrote in a letter to Ketcham, “I have just been visiting your people at St. Stephens Mission, and was much pleased at the many signs of improvement about the plant. They have a new bakery and laundry that will be a great help to them in their work and a credit to the school. I believe you have a very good executive officer in the person of Father Sifton, your superintendent. He seems to be wide awake and energetic, and always doing something. We get along together the best of any superintendent you have ever had there, with the possible exception of Father Feusi.”<sup>161</sup> With the affirmation of Wadsworth and Ketcham, Sifton forged ahead to improve St. Stephen’s. He had already acquired additional land for St. Stephen’s in 1909, which “brought the total acreage to 311,” and in 1911, Father Sifton acquired enough Arapaho signatures to use tribal funds for the mission.<sup>162</sup>

Ketcham had sought “permission to use the Indians’ own money (that is, Indian trust and treaty funds) for education of their children in schools of their choice.”<sup>163</sup> President Roosevelt was interested in his proposal and approved of the contracts as long as the Indians themselves agreed to use their tribal funds for their children’s education. President Roosevelt believed that the Indians “were entitled as a matter of moral right to have the moneys coming to them used for the education of their children at the schools of

<sup>160</sup> General Correspondence, 1910–1912, 1918, 1927–1928, roll 1, series 1-1, microfilm, Mission and School Correspondence, SSMR, RML, MU.

<sup>161</sup> General Correspondence, 1910–1912, 1918, 1927–1928, roll 1, series 1-1, microfilm, Mission and School Correspondence, SSMR, RML, MU.

<sup>162</sup> Henry, “Catholic Missionaries on the Wind River,” 63, 70.

<sup>163</sup> Prucha, *The Churches and the Indian Schools*, 46.

their choice.” He did insist that the agents guarantee the authenticity of the petitions and that “the money appropriated for any given school represents only the pro rata proportion to which the Indians making the petition are entitled.”<sup>164</sup>

Father Sifton no longer had to rely solely on the generosity of Sr. Drexel, the Marquette League, and other donors. On 1 July 1911, “the first contract was drawn up” for the eighty-three Arapaho students at St. Stephen’s. Each year after that, “the Arapahoes financed the education of 80–100 children at Saint Stephen’s” providing “a per capita payment of \$108 yearly (later raised to \$125) from the U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs.” The BCIM no longer needed to provide financial support for the mission; instead Arapaho tribal funds would cover the costs. Despite his success in securing financial stability for St. Stephen’s, Father Sifton was removed from his position. In June 1912, the Missouri Province acquired St. Stephen’s Mission and Father Sifton, a California Province Jesuit, was sent to Alaska.<sup>165</sup>

Although the Arapaho leaders had agreed to finance the school, some of the tribal members resented the Catholic presence in their community: “By the 1890’s, the Arapahoes of Wyoming were perceived as being under Catholic influence and, therefore, a distinctly undesirable group.” The Arapahos were already discriminated against for being Indian, but they also felt the stigma of being Catholic in a predominantly Protestant area. On the Wind River Reservation, the Shoshonis’ religious affiliation benefitted them, while the Arapahos “were the worst off of the two tribes. The surrounding population, mostly Protestant, tended to hire the Shoshoni who were also Protestant,

<sup>164</sup> Prucha, *The Churches and the Indian Schools*, 84–87, 98, 108, 157, 159–60.

<sup>165</sup> Henry, “Catholic Missionaries on the Wind River,” 63, 70; Daly, “For God and Country—The Story of St. Stephen’s Mission,” 6; and Flasch, “For God and Country’.”

while the small Catholic population at Lander was unable to do the same for the Arapahoes.”<sup>166</sup>

On 13 January 1912, Lone Bear, chief of the Arapahos, wrote to Rev. Ketchum: “We think this teacher whips the children most too much and that he carries a gun on his person, which is a crime in itself. We have reported the matter to Rev. J. B. Sifton, but he has not taken any action in the matter. We ask for the removal of this teacher, for sooner or later he may cause some serious trouble.” On 23 April, director Ketchum responded, “I must tell you that I have no authority over the priest at St. Stephen’s Mission as I am not his superior.”<sup>167</sup>

Still, life at the mission moved forward. The sisters instructed the boys and younger girls, while a male prefect taught the older boys. The prefect was typically a Jesuit scholastic, although non-religious personnel were also employed as prefects.<sup>168</sup> In 1914, Fr. Aloysius J. Keel, a native of Switzerland, became the mission superior. During Father Keel’s tenure of nineteen years, St. Stephen’s acquired a play-hall for the boys, a barn, poultry house, and a herd of cows. A fire struck in 1928, destroying the boys’ classrooms, living area, and sleeping quarters; the chapel; and a brick building.<sup>169</sup> After the fire, Fr. Keel contacted Cardinal Dennis Dougherty, the chairman of the Board of Directors of the BCIM, to inform him of the damage and to remind him “that St. Stephens Mission is controlled by the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, and that the Bureau holds title to all the Mission property.” Fr. Keel continued, “We therefore look to

<sup>166</sup>Henry, “Catholic Missionaries on the Wind River.”

<sup>167</sup>General Correspondence, 1910–1912, 1918, 1927–1928, roll 1, series 1-1, microfilm, Mission and School Correspondence, SSMR, RML, MU.

<sup>168</sup>Flasch, “‘For God and Country’.”

<sup>169</sup>Daly, “For God and Country—The Story of St. Stephen’s Mission,” 3–6, 18; Henry, “Catholic Missionaries on the Wind River,” 38–; and Author unknown, 1984, roll 2, series 2, microfilm, Mission and School Reports, SSMR, RML, MU.

the Bureau for help. And quite naturally, for it is the owner of this property.” The fire insurance covered the cost and Fr. Keel had acquired a concrete church, boys’ building, and gym built within the year (see Appendix, figure 7).<sup>170</sup> In 1932, Father A. C. Zuercher became the first American-born superior of the mission. In 1934, St. Stephen’s celebrated its fiftieth anniversary by recognizing its “modern grade school, a boarding school for some one hundred and sixty children,” and championing the mission’s victory “in converting the entire tribe of northern Arapahoes to Catholicism.”<sup>171</sup>

For almost five decades (1892–1939), St. Stephen’s School functioned as a boarding school designed for first through eighth graders. The curriculum included academic subjects and industrial arts, as well as a strong emphasis on Catholic devotion. In 1939, the school shifted from its boarding school status to that of a day school. The shift adhered to former Commissioner of Indian Affairs Francis Ellington Leupp’s vision for Indian policy. He was Jones’s successor in 1905 and believed that Indian assimilation should be a gradual process and that the boarding school was not the best solution for Indian education. On this issue the staff at St. Stephen’s agreed with the policymakers.<sup>172</sup>

In a letter to Father Provincial Peter A. Brooks, S.J., Father A. C. Zuercher wrote, “Well, we began the day school Sept. 5<sup>th</sup> [1939] and had 93 the first day. Before the end of the week, after the Indians returned from the Labor Day celebration and rodeos in the neighboring towns, we had 130.” He also mentioned, “We are taking care of three orphans at the Mission. Besides these three girls, we have five other boarders [Shoshones] who are paying \$15.00 a month for their board. The parents get them every

<sup>170</sup> General Correspondence, 1910–1912, 1918, 1927–1928, roll 1, series 1-1, microfilm, Mission and School Correspondence, SSMR, RML, MU.

<sup>171</sup> Daly, “For God and Country—The Story of St. Stephen’s Mission,” 6.

<sup>172</sup> Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 307–8. Francis Ellington Leupp was commissioner of Indian Affairs from 1905 to 1909.

Friday evenings and return them Sunday evenings. . . . It may be the beginning of doing something for the Shoshones.”<sup>173</sup> In the house diary, Father Zuecher wrote about the shift from boarding to day school: “It was felt that the children could exert some good influence by returning to their home each day and also help to cultivate greater responsibility on the part of the parents. The merits of the two systems is still debatable.”<sup>174</sup> Father Zuecher continued:

During boarding school days the mission had a contract with the Government for \$125.00 per child for 125 children. For any above that number nothing was received, and the enrollment has averaged a little more than 200 each year during the past decade. When the day school was begun and busses had to be purchased to transport the children to and from school each day, the per capita payment was dropped to \$50.00, but the number was increased to 175 children. In 1946 the payment was the same but the number was cut to 150. In 1949 the number was still further cut to 125 but the payment per child was raised to \$90.00. It was only after several years of efforts that Rev. J. D. Tennyly, Director of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Washington, D.C. was able to secure this raise in the per capita payment. (It is Father Tennyly who negotiates the contracts between the Government and the Mission).<sup>175</sup>

Even as a day school, St. Stephen’s financial concerns proliferated.

On 23 January 1941, Fr. George P. Prendergast remarked, “There is an excellent spirit in the school and new pupils are coming in all the time. We have 212 on the rolls now. We are sending the children home after school now with a cup of cocoa and a bun or sandwich. They really need it, we can do it, and it endears the Mission that much

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<sup>173</sup> General Correspondence, 1930–1931, 1934–1939, roll 1, series 1-1, microfilm, Mission and School Correspondence, SSMR, RML, MU; and House History/Historia Domus, Mission and School Reports, 1908–1981, 1983, n.d., roll 1, series 2, microfilm, Mission and School Reports, SSMR, RML, MU. “Father A. C. Zuercher, S. J., Superior of St. Stephens Mission since 1932, was succeeded on January 1, 1940 by Rev. George P. Prendergast, S. J., who remained Superior until September 8, 1946, when Father Zuercher was again appointed Superior which position he now holds.” House History/Historia Domus, Mission and School Reports, 1908–1981, 1983, n.d., roll 1, series 2, microfilm, Mission and School Reports, SSMR, RML, MU.

<sup>174</sup> House History/Historia Domus, Mission and School Reports, 1908–1981, 1983, n.d., roll 1, series 2, microfilm, Mission and School Reports, SSMR, RML, MU.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

more to both children and parents.”<sup>176</sup> Father Prendergast regularly corresponded with the Jesuit Provincial regarding the placement, conduct, and health of the priests at St. Stephen’s. They also exchanged letters on the school’s finances, such as St. Stephen’s cattle business, discussed annual retreats, and wrote about the spirituality of the Indians.<sup>177</sup> Interestingly, on 11 August 1954, Fr. E. J. Kurth (who had become superior on 15 August 1953) wrote to the Jesuit Provincial, Daniel H. Conway: “We could easily handle about 25 white children in the first six grades. . . . Whether or not we will ever admit them in High School will depend upon whether or not we can be State Accredited as I would not want to have white Catholics graduate from St. Stephen’s and then have them ‘unacceptable’ in college.” Father Conway responded, “The experiment of taking in the white children will be very interesting, and I hope that it will succeed.” In December 1954, Fr. Kurth reported, “We have had no difficulty with the white children at school.” He also expressed his concern “that the Indian Bureau will no longer support Mission schools,” admitting that he “had no official word about the situation except the notice of 50% reduction in reimbursement of services offered” for 1954.<sup>178</sup> Meanwhile, the Arapahos raised money for a modern gymnasium that was dedicated in 1955. That year, 216 children attended St. Stephen’s and 30 of them were white. Fr. Kurth acknowledged, “Accreditation was thought a necessary move if we intend to carry the white Catholic children . . . on through the High School.” Once the high school achieved

<sup>176</sup> General Correspondence, 1940–1942, roll 1, series 1-1, microfilm, Mission and School Correspondence, SSMR, RML, MU.

<sup>177</sup> General Correspondence, 1943–1950, roll 1, series 1-1, microfilm, Mission and School Correspondence, SSMR, RML, MU.

<sup>178</sup> General Correspondence, 1951–1955, roll 1, series 1-1, microfilm, Mission and School Correspondence, SSMR, RML, MU.



accreditation in 1957, the Fathers had to teach more classes since only one sister had the proper credits to offer high school courses.<sup>179</sup>

Staffing the school remained problematic. Jesuit scholastics were teaching the high school girls due to the lack of qualified sisters.<sup>180</sup> Father Knuth pleaded for additional help, writing to the Jesuit Provincial on 18 September 1958:

Important work is being neglected because of the demands of the school and the lack of manpower. It is impossible for us to operate without me spending time in the school which could best be spent on other duties. I am teaching Religion in the High School and must take one other class. . . . Our enrollment increased from 290 to 350. We have about 270 in the grades and about 80 in the High School. Fr. Dillon has taken over the responsibilities of the Principal of the High School and is doing a fine job. He is also teaching most of the periods as do Fr. Zummach, Mr. O'Neil and Mr. Higgins.<sup>181</sup>

By 1960, six buses transported a total of four hundred children from Lander, Riverton, Ft. Washakie, Ethlete, and Arapahoe to the grade school and high school.

In 1963, 254 students were enrolled in the grade school, which was “bursting at the seams.” In 1963, Father Linus J. Thro wrote, “Changes are in the offing. Government is soon to build a central vocational school for the Indians, especially at the high school level. This means automatically the loss of thirty to sixty percent of our Indians in the High School—or perhaps more—unless we provide a competing vocational school.” Realizing that the Father General was removing the scholastics from St. Stephen’s and unable to collect sufficient tuition to meet the financial costs, Father Thro acknowledged: “If the Bishop is willing to take responsibility for the High School, it can go on as a Diocesan school with as much support as he can muster. But the

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<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

<sup>180</sup> General Correspondence, 1956–1960, roll 1, series 1-1, microfilm, Mission and School Correspondence, SSMR, RML, MU.

<sup>181</sup> General Correspondence, 1956–1960, roll 1, series 1-1, microfilm, Mission and School Correspondence, SSMR, RML, MU.

Missouri Province cannot take responsibility for continuing it without a great deal more support than it presently has.” Peter Arrupe, S . J., the general of the Society of Jesus, wrote, “Since St. Stephen’s High School is a Mission school it is a parish high school and, therefore, although the Society can decide to withdraw Jesuits from the faculty, only the Bishop has the right and the authority to close the high school. If the Bishop wishes to continue the high school with lay volunteers, Sisters and whatever Jesuits remain at the Mission such an action would be within his jurisdiction.” After learning that the Father General chose to remove the religious personnel since they “could be used more effectively elsewhere,” Bishop Newell was left with no choice but to close the high school. On 12 March 1966, Father Linus J. Thro posted:

Although with mixed feelings and inevitable regret, I wish to communicate with you hereby the decision that after the current school year our scholastics will be no longer assigned to Saint Stephen’s Mission high school. As a result the high school will not be able to resume operations in the following school year. . . . With a considerable number of white students registered from Lander and Riverton, the Indian boys and girls have been exposed to a certain measure of integrated school life and have shown benefits from this. Meanwhile, the decreasing Indian registration . . . the exception allowed at Saint Stephen’s to standard Jesuit policy regarding coeducational high schools was re-examined. . . . Since His Excellency, Bishop Newell, would not assume responsibility . . . ‘the second-largest Catholic high school in Wyoming’ will go out of existence.

Without the necessary funds and well-qualified teachers, the Jesuits and Sisters of St. Joseph terminated secondary-level education in 1966. At this time, approximately one-third of the high school population (30 of 95 students) was white and 73 out of 262 students attending the junior high and grade school were white.<sup>182</sup>

<sup>182</sup> General Correspondence, 1956, 1959, 1961, roll 1, series 1-1, microfilm, Mission and School Correspondence, SSMR, RML, MU; Flasch, “‘For God and Country’”; General Correspondence, 1862–1865 and 1966–1971, roll 2, series 1-1, microfilm, Mission and School Correspondence, SSMR, RML, MU; and Daly, “For God and Country—The Story of St. Stephen’s Mission,” 6, 18. In 1965, “The High School was flourishing and graduated 33 students. The faculty consisted of 8 lay teachers, 8 Franciscan

## Conclusion

The demeanors of the religious personnel, the faculty turnover at the missions as new orders replaced those recalled by their superiors, the battle to secure funding, the physical demands and daily burdens of starting and running a mission, all took a toll. Despite this turmoil, St. Labre, St. Paul's, and St. Stephen's all came into being, expanded, and diversified. The litany of missionaries who worked at St. Labre Indian School sheds light on the capricious relationships between the religious personnel and the power struggles that ensued. The events at St. Paul's Mission shows the diversity of the staff and the schools' financial hurdles. Founding missions and sustaining them were daunting tasks, especially without a solid stream of revenue. St. Stephen's Mission highlights the battles that raged between Roman Catholic missionaries and the federal government to secure students, rations, and funding. Despite the uncertainties and multiple obstacles, the priests and nuns intended to "civilize" and educate their students, and in the end they accomplished their objective.

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Sisters, 5 Jesuit Fathers, 3 Scholastics, and 3 Brothers. This was the Faculty for the combined Grade School and High School. From the far flung area of the Wind River Reservation and a little beyond in Lander and Riverton, half-a-dozen buses picked up and returned the students to and from their homes. Our cattle ranch operated on 685 acres of Mission land and on 1475 acres of land leased from the Indians." House History/Historia Domus, Mission and School Reports, 1908–1981, 1983, n.d., roll 1, series 2, microfilm, Mission and School Reports, SSMR, RML, MU.

### Chapter 3

#### **Becoming American: Molding the Minds, Spirits, and Bodies at St. Labre Indian School, St. Paul's Mission, and St. Stephens Indian School**

St. Labre Indian School, St. Paul's Mission, and St. Stephen's Catholic Mission operated through an ethnocentric lens providing intellectual stimulation, as well as industrial training, to prepare the students to become productive individuals in American society. The schools also offered extracurricular activities and sports as another avenue to assimilation. Before the advent of boarding schools, Indian children received a holistic education that gave them the skills necessary to contribute to the well-being of the tribe. With the advent of the boarding schools, these missions adhered to a disciplined routine, which seemed foreign to the Indian students. Some Native students battled a range of emotions from apprehension to outright resistance, while others were eager to learn. This chapter looks at the teaching objectives of the mission schools, the student enrollment, the transition to day schools, the evolution in the curriculum, and the day-to-day activities. From the boarding school era to the postwar years, the Indian mission schools' primary objective was to encourage assimilation.

#### **Native Education**

Pre-Columbian Indian education always involved the entire community. Before children could be recognized as mature tribal members, they mastered survival skills, such as hunting, fishing, curing meat, tanning leather, and making clothing. They also cultivated an appreciation of their cultural heritage and acquired spiritual awareness. Directed practice through imitation helped hone a child's talents. For example, Crow

boys received toy bows and arrows, and Cheyenne girls received rag dolls. Fur trader Denig wrote, “As soon as a[n Assiniboine] child [is] able to talk the father makes toy scraping tools for a girl, which mother teaches her to use, and a toy bow and arrows for a boy. As boy grows, father increases size of weapons, and also brings in unfledged birds for him to shoot at under coaching.” Storytelling was an integral means of educating youth. The legends taught respect for the earth, animate, and inanimate objects; proper etiquette; loyalty to their people; and reverence toward their Elders. Spiritual awareness pervaded lessons on daily life. Ceremonies reinforced educational tenants. To enforce discipline, parents avoided corporal punishment; instead they chose a person outside the family circle to administer discipline, and used ridicule, praise, and supernatural threats to enforce proper conduct.<sup>183</sup>

Thus, “they were not without education, but it was an education holistic and appropriate to their way of life. White man’s learning (reading, writing, arithmetic) might be an acceptable addition to their Indian education, but it could never replace it. In the Indian view, children taken off to white men’s schools would be at a disadvantage for the rest of their lives.”<sup>184</sup> Children sent to boarding schools and missions learned practical skills according to American society’s standards, but they lost a crucial connection with their language, their culture, and their people. The mission schools destroyed the foundation upon which a person builds his or her identity and introduced a new way of thinking and being.

<sup>183</sup> Connell-Szasz, *Indian Education in the American Colonies, 1607–1783*, 9–24; George A. Pettitt, *Primitive Education in North America* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1946), 15–16, 40–47; Fear-Segal, *White Man’s Club*, 51, 52; and Mahoney, *Lady Blackrobes*, 115–17. For Edwin Thompson Denig’s quote, see Pettitt, *Primitive Education*, 43. For additional clarification on discipline, Pettitt notes, “It seems obvious that the chief inhibition to corporal punishment as a disciplinary measure derives from the fact that pain per se cannot be used as a fear producing, coercive force in a social milieu which places a premium upon ability to stand pain and suffering without flinching” (ibid., 8).

<sup>184</sup> Mahoney, *Lady Blackrobes*, 115–17.

## The Boarding School Experience

For white Americans, Native education appeared ineffective. In order to adapt to European American civilization, whites believed Indians must understand, “the value of individualism, industry, and private property; accept Christian doctrine and morality, including the ‘Christian ideal of the family’”; replace their loyalty to their people with a commitment to the country as a loyal citizen; produce and purchase material goods; and acknowledge “the idea that man’s conquest of nature constituted one of his noblest accomplishments.” During the late nineteenth century, reformers designed policies intended to assimilate the Indian peoples. Encouraged by these reformers, in 1887, Congress passed the General Allotment Act, which destroyed two-thirds of the Indians’ land base and forced Indians to farm the remaining land; in 1883, Congress approved the new Court of Indian Offenses to try cases involving “minor crimes”; and in 1878, Congress introduced an Indian police force to extend Euroamerican principles of law and justice over the reservations. The foremost undertaking was schooling. Since reformers ignored the Indians’ constitutional rights as sovereign nations and viewed them as wards of the federal government, they justified the opening of federal Indian boarding schools. Reformers saw these institutions as an assimilationist tool that would separate the children from their families and immerse them in an institutional environment geared toward “obliterating tribal cultures and acculturating a whole race.” The boarding schools isolated students from their homes and their people and, from the reformers’ perspective, “any contamination from Indian life.”<sup>185</sup>

<sup>185</sup> Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 7, 14–15, 16–18, 35; Cathleen D. Cahill, *Federal Fathers and Mothers: A Social History of the United States Indian Service, 1869-1933* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 32; and Fear-Segal, *White Man’s Club*, 26.

Missionaries accepted the call to bring Euroamerican civilization to the Indians; however, during the first few years at the new mission schools, the pupils and the staff encountered numerous obstacles. Communication was problematic, attendance was tenuous, and a structured curriculum was nonexistent. At St. Stephen's from 1888 to 1890, "everything was haphazard, with little direction; there was no pattern to the education of the Indian. The naked objective was to make them Christians and teach them English." Eventually the nuns established a "strenuous" routine "with the day divided between prayer, exercise, eating, classroom and farmwork." The children boarded at the mission, and by 1900 the students were adhering to a formal curriculum.<sup>186</sup>

The example of St. Stephen's rocky beginnings, which later laid a foundation for a stable education system, corresponds with the national trends in Indian education. Although the earliest federal Indian boarding schools opened in 1879, "a true 'system' of education" under the OIA did not emerge until the mid-1890s. From 1889 to 1893, Commissioner of Indian Affairs Thomas J. Morgan standardized the Indian curriculum and pushed for compulsory school attendance.<sup>187</sup> With standards in place, Indian children throughout the country who enrolled in school endured a similar demeaning process of transformation upon entering the school grounds. The first assault upon an incoming first-year student's identity occurred when the missionaries cut the boys' long hair, which they justified as a means to promote cleanliness and remake the boys into gentlemen. Students received new attire, typically some remnants of tattered and worn clothing, a pair of boots, and a hat. Finally, the missionaries assigned the boys and girls Euroamerican names. Commissioner Morgan supported the renaming process because

<sup>186</sup> Henry, "Catholic Missionaries on the Wind River," 45, 47, 48–49.

<sup>187</sup> Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 61–66, 70.

the Indian students' new surnames created family lines to trace property inheritance and promote "possessive individualism."

Compounding the initial orientation, students at Indian schools faced further disconcerting adjustments—new surroundings; a foreign diet and attire; a strict schedule split between work and study; extended time spent indoors, and the likelihood of harsh disciplinary action. The earliest classroom lessons demanded the learning of English, and missionaries punished Indian children for speaking their Native languages. School officials believed that the students would attain proficiency in English if this were their only form of communication. On occasion, staff—both Catholic and Protestant—delivered a mixed message on the "English only" policy. Fr. Scollen and Fr. Sifton (1905–1912), appreciated the richness of the Arapaho language, which led their effort to create Arapaho dictionaries at St. Stephen's Mission. Fr. Sifton even tried to say his homilies in Arapaho and "actively encouraged the singing of Catholic hymns in Arapaho in the Mission Church." Simultaneously, the Mission school chastised the students for speaking Arapaho, "perhaps under government pressure," to ensure the children were taught English. Even though the priests tried to integrate the Arapaho language into the Mass, the language policy of the classroom left a bitter memory for the students. Once the students had grasped rudimentary English, the teachers moved on to introduce arithmetic, geography, science, and U.S. history.<sup>188</sup>

### **The Split Curriculum**

As off-reservation boarding schools multiplied during the turn of the twentieth century, educational experts began to question the Indians' aptitude for learning. The

<sup>188</sup> "The Beginnings," roll 1, series 2, microfilm, Mission and School Reports, SSMR, RML, MU; Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 100–108, 112–21, 142–47, 149, 154.



general public believed that Indians suffered from a racial handicap that precluded them from professional life. Estelle Reel, who in 1898 became superintendent of Indian education, was convinced that Indian children were incapable of achieving academic success due to racial inferiority. This stance led her to direct Indian education toward manual training. In 1901, Reel introduced a new course of study that focused on practical lessons. The adoption of a rudimentary curriculum for Indian children spread throughout Indian country and, by 1908, educators had designated vocational training as the primary concentration of the Indian school curriculum at both on and off reservation schools.<sup>189</sup>

At St. Labre, St. Paul's, and St. Stephen's the students learned to read, write, and speak English, while they also received industrial training. For boys, staff taught farming and manual training, while girls learned Euroamerican standards of housekeeping. Educators intended to provide students with the skills necessary to achieve economic stability, which meant that students performed manual labor during part of each day. The school maintained these goals: providing a strong Catholic upbringing, instilling the drive to succeed as hardworking individuals, and shaping men and women ready to assimilate into mainstream society.<sup>190</sup>

At St. Paul's Mission, boys and girls lived in separate quarters. By the turn of the twentieth century, children at St. Paul's attended classes in the morning, where the sisters taught catechism, writing, reading, and mathematics. The students also enjoyed music lessons. In the afternoon, the students worked on mastering practical skills: "the girls did mending and fancy work while the boys hauled wood from the mountains, or hauled

<sup>189</sup> Frederick E. Hoxie, *A Final Promise: The Campaign to Assimilate the Indians, 1880-1920* (1984; repr., Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 191-200.

<sup>190</sup> Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 112-21, 149, 154.

barrels of water from the canyon.” The mission also operated a farm and ranch, which was supervised by Dave Hawley, Sr.: “he raised cattle, sheep, pigs, turkeys, geese, and chickens which were used for the children’s meals. The children cultivated their own vegetable garden which was all a part of their training.” During Fr. Feusi’s tenure (1891–1894), the mission bought a yoke of oxen, and the draft animals alleviated some of the strain from the boys’ chores. The school cook supervised the baking and “washing was done on a regular schedule.” The Jesuits and sisters insisted that the children speak only English, but the close proximity of the mission to the reservation helped preserve the Native culture. At St. Paul’s, parents could visit on Sundays and holidays, plus the students enjoyed a two-month vacation. The school went up to the fifth grade.<sup>191</sup>

Likewise, at St. Stephen’s, the children received academic instruction up to the eighth grade, as well as an industrial education. The girls learned to cook, bake, sew, perform household chores, and wash the laundry. The boys farmed, tended the dairy cows and the sheep, and practiced carpentry, masonry, and shoemaking. The Franciscan sisters noticed that the girls were “very apt at fancy work and turn[ed] out some fine pieces. They are extremely fond of Bible History and delight in listening to stories and the large girls as well as the small ones take great pleasure in playing with dolls.”

Religious education emerged as a key component of the school curriculum at all three missions. First Communion and Confirmation marked such important milestones for

<sup>191</sup> Hartmann, *As It Was*, 1:11–12; Mahoney, *Lady Blackrobes*, 56, 60–61, 85, 195–96; and “St. Paul’s Mission Observes Jubilee,” *The Harlem News*, 28 December 1962, folder 22, box 6, General Clippings, St. Paul’s Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU.

students that families often came to the missions to celebrate the occasions with their children.<sup>192</sup>

During the early twentieth century, the schools continued to follow a split curriculum that was divided between classroom work and manual labor. Catholic doctrine proliferated throughout the classrooms as well. On 8 April 1929, Father LeVasseur at St. Paul's Mission reported to the Department of the Interior: "At the present the children are taught the prescribed course of the grade schools. The large boys are given practical experience in farming, stock raising and dairy work. The large girls are given lessons in domestic science, baking, washing, sewing and general house work. To the above are added 4 periods a week of Christian ethics grounded upon the ten commands of God." At the time of the report, 128 students attended St. Paul's, which maintained six grades, four teachers, a domestic science teacher, three matrons, and two directors.<sup>193</sup>

Due to the complementary emphasis on manual training and the need to supply the missions, the boarding schools maintained farms and ranches. They remained operational into the post-World War II era. During the 1930s, for example, the Saint Labre farm raised chickens and turkeys and managed the dairy and beef herds. The student farmers harvested crops of hay, oats, and wheat, and raised many vegetables, such as cucumbers, pumpkins, squash, cabbage, celery, cauliflower, beets, peppers, tomatoes, onions, corn, melons, rutabaga, and beans. Brother Gaul recalled, "The gardens, farms and herds of Saint Labre were so diversified and productive that during

<sup>192</sup> Henry, "Catholic Missionaries on the Wind River," 66; Franciscan House History, Book 1, roll 1, series 2, microfilm, Mission and School Reports, SSMR, RML, MU; and "Saint Stephens Indian School," Bob Spoonhunter, roll 1, series 5, microfilm, Mission and School Publications, SSMR, RML, MU.

<sup>193</sup> Fr. Levasseur, S.J., with Jesuit Provincials, Cardinal Mundelein, fellow Jesuits and non Jesuits, folder 14, box 1, Correspondence, St. Paul's Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU.

the 30's and 40's the only necessities not produced at the mission were soap and salt.”

St. Labre sold the herds in 1955 because the government milk program made it cheaper to purchase milk than to raise the cows.<sup>194</sup>

At St. Stephen's, the Mission Farm was critical to the school's survival, especially as government assistance waned and the Great Depression took its toll. Unfortunately, the farm sometimes thwarted the students' lessons “as often the students would be out in the fields in the afternoons, laboring on the farm instead of on the books. One Mission diary account records young Gregory Blackburn (later a respected elder of the Tribe) as running away in \_\_\_\_\_ because of ‘too much work and not enough study.’ But few could complain about the bountiful feasts the Farm provided. The diary entry for 25 December 1912, for example, describes “300 lbs. of beef, 150 loaves of bread, 300 lbs. of potatoes” at the mission feast thanks to the productive farm. The students even won blue-ribbon prizes for their crops “in the first quarter of the century at the nearby Lander Fair.” By 1964, however, the cattle ranch had become a financial drain on the school and the priests sold the ranch in 1967.<sup>195</sup>

### **Resistance and Retention during the Boarding School Era**

Following the model established by Richard Henry Pratt, the renowned yet controversial superintendent of Carlisle Indian School, the mission schools operated according to a military regime. Discipline and structure remained essential components in the boarding schools. In 1928, for example, Maurice Finn, a teacher and prefect of the

<sup>194</sup> Carlan Kraman, O. S. F., *A Portrait of St. Labre Indian Mission through One Hundred Years*, chpt. 8, folder 24, box 1, Published Histories, St. Labre Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU.

<sup>195</sup> “The Beginnings,” roll 1, series 2, microfilm, Mission and School Reports, SSMR, RML, MU. By 1964, however, the cattle ranch was “not making much money. The ranch had become a financial drain and only lasted this long because of Br. Keeven who “likes being a rancher.” The ranch sold in 1967. General Correspondence, 182–1865, roll 2, series 1-1, microfilm, Mission and School Correspondence, SSMR, RML, MU.

St. Labre boys, created a Catholic Boys' Brigade. The boys wore out-dated army uniforms, began each morning with a bugle reveille and flag raising ceremony, and ended each day with bugle taps and the lowering of the flag. The military atmosphere pervading the mission schools was a direct response to "policymakers' perceptions of the 'wildness' of Indian children."<sup>196</sup>

The strict military atmosphere proved stifling for some children. Inadequate building conditions, sanitation, and food; corporal punishment, overwork, and abuse; unqualified teachers; and deadly diseases prompted protests from parents and resistance from students. Separating children from their parents, stripping them of their identity, forcing them to live in an alien environment, and exposing them to an institutional regime was traumatic and violent. Some children committed suicide or ran away; others turned to arson or theft, mischievously played pranks, obstinately refused to participate or feigned illnesses; others were indolent and even nonresponsive. Besides passive resistance to the school system, children secretly attempted to maintain their culture. Transferring to other schools and protesting school procedures also served as a means of resistance.<sup>197</sup> Other students cooperated because they enjoyed school and liked their teachers, recognized the importance of education, or perceived school as a better option for their future.<sup>198</sup>

Before the dawn of the twentieth century, St. Stephen's Mission and St. Labre Indian School had a difficult time maintaining enrollment; they were plagued by

<sup>196</sup> Carlan Kraman, O. S. F., *A Portrait of St. Labre Indian Mission through One Hundred Years*, chpt. 9, folder 24, box 1, Published Histories, St. Labre Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU; and Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 118–21.

<sup>197</sup> Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 223–24, 229, 231, 233, 243–35, 236; and Coleman, *American Indian Children at School, 1850–1930*, 146–59.

<sup>198</sup> Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 257, 260–61.

numerous behavioral problems and rampant runaways. U.S. Indian Agent John Fosher reported to OIA Commissioner Morgan that St. Stephen's had only 30 pupils for a period of "one month or more during the year" of 1890, although the school could "properly and healthfully accommodate" 125 students. In the annual report for 1891, Fosher wrote, "They could keep no Employees any length of time, the Pupils took advantage of the situation and the Parents became dissatisfied and the School was closed about May 15<sup>th</sup>/91."<sup>199</sup>

St. Stephen's "continued for years [after 1908] to be plagued by the problem of runaways. Truancy was not the sole cause for absenteeism." Local fairs during the fall kept students from school, "thereby delaying the opening of the school year." Parents also chose to keep their children home because they needed help around the house or disagreed with "the manual labor required of students at the mission."<sup>200</sup>

St. Labre contended with similar problems. The school's existence remained uncertain because the religious sisters could not retain their students. On 1 July 1892, St. Labre was vacated again:

[It was] abandoned for the second time, as the Indians practically did not show any good disposition, not only in not giving their children to be taught at school, but especially in not coming to prayers. . . . The Commissioner of Indian Affairs at that time . . . instructed the Agent, that he would send some one [*sic*] to take the Cheyenne children to the newly erected boarding school at Fort Shaw. . . . As soon as the Cheyenne heard about it, there was quite a stir in the different camps. They did not want to have their children taken far away, they wanted the priests and sisters back. . . . They showed a much better spirit. Nightly prayers were frequented and they seemed to be very willing to give all the children we could accommodate.<sup>201</sup>

<sup>199</sup> Annual Reports of the Agent or Superintendent to the Commissioner, 1890–1906, box 4, Wind River Agency, RG 75, NARA-Denver, CO.

<sup>200</sup> Flasch, "For God and Country'."

<sup>201</sup> *Litterae Annuae* report, folder 3, box 1, Reports, St. Labre Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU.

St. Labre struggled to maintain its enrollment during the early twentieth century. On 13 November 1915, the superintendent for the Tongue River Agency wrote to the commissioner of Indian affairs:

I have the honor to report to you that there is considerable difficulty in getting pupils into the St. Labre's Catholic Mission School and in keeping them there. The Indians complain against the management of the school. I recently visited the school and am satisfied that the persons in charge of the School are excellent people and have outlined a plan of conducting the school which would be best for the Indian pupils, but these Indians strongly object to their children being punished even though they are guilty of misconduct. . . . I respectfully request discretionary authority to cut off rations and with-hold payments to the parents who refuse to put their children in.<sup>202</sup>

Without the parents support, St. Labre struggled to remain open.

The students at St. Labre, St. Stephen's, and St. Paul's had little contact with their families while the schools operated as boarding facilities. Exceptions did occur, such as on 22 August 1915, Mother St. Thomas composed a letter to Major J. S. Buntin, describing four Indian cabins on St. Labre's school grounds. Different families occupied the cabins and proved to be a distraction for the school. Mother St. Thomas complained that the families continued "hanging around the school fence, giving news of the different camps to the children, making them dissatisfied or telling them to run away as there is to be a dance or smoke party somewhere."<sup>203</sup> Generally, the schools isolated students from their families and homesickness was a constant problem. While St. Labre was a boarding

<sup>202</sup> Superintendent to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Tongue River Agency, Lame Deer, Montana, 13 November 1915, box 12, General Subject Files, General Correspondence files, 1900–25, Northern Cheyenne Agency, Lame Deer, Montana, Record Group 75, National Archives and Records Administration, Rocky Mountain Region Denver, Colorado [hereafter Northern Cheyenne Agency, RG75, NARA-Denver, CO].

<sup>203</sup> Mother St. Thomas to Major J. S. Buntin, 22 August 1915, box 12, General Subject Files, General Correspondence files, 1900–25, Northern Cheyenne Agency, RG 75, NARA-Denver, CO.

school from 1885 to 1947, the students only “saw their parents on Sunday after Mass and went to their family homes only for the Christmas vacation.”<sup>204</sup>

Kept from their families, forbidden to speak their Native languages, and punished for school infractions, students engaged in passive and blatant acts of resistance. On 16 December 1921, Sister M. Eugenia, superior at St. Labre, shared her concerns with Superintendent O. W. Boggess in Lame Deer Montana: “ We regret to be obliged to inform you of a very serious misbehavior on the part of our large Girls. For some time these Girls have been in constant uprising, refusing to do their work, both class and house work. On Friday Dec. 9<sup>th</sup>, three of them ran away at night, after eight o'clock and went to the dance. We are constantly disturbed by Cheyennes coming to ask for the Girls to go to the dance, and the Girls insist on going in spite of our strong disapproval.”<sup>205</sup> The Northern Cheyennes and Arapahos actively resisted education at the mission schools. “The Arapahoe children, accustomed to large spaces found school life very confining. For the first few years the sisters had ‘Eighty apparently untamable wild bronchos [sic]’ and “Kept a horse and one man all day long to catch the run-away children.”<sup>206</sup>

St. Paul’s, on the other hand, was much more successful with attracting and retaining students. According to the documentary record, St. Paul’s has maintained a strong enrollment since its founding.<sup>207</sup> In 1889, the Jesuit provincial Father Van Gorp, S.J., wrote to the Superior General of the Rocky Mountain Missions Fr. Joseph Cataldo: “I was agreeably surprised to find the school [St. Paul’s] doing so well . . . 102, of whom

<sup>204</sup>Carlan Kraman, O. S. F., *A Portrait of St. Labre Indian Mission through One Hundred Years*, folder 24, box 1, Published Histories, St. Labre Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU.

<sup>205</sup> Sister M. Eugenia (Superior) to Mr. O. W. Boggess, Superintendent Lame Deer Montana, 16 December 1921, Ashland, Montana, box 43, St. Labre’s Mission folder, General Subject Files, General Correspondence files, 1900–25, Northern Cheyenne Agency, RG 75, NARA-Denver, CO.

<sup>206</sup> James Walter Hasse, S.J., “Northern Arapaho Religious Reorganization” (master’s thesis, St. Louis University, 1965), roll 2, series 7, microfilm, Jesuit Papers, SSMR, RML, MU.

<sup>207</sup> Mahoney, *Lady Blackrobes*, 211–12.



there are 62 boys; the balance 40 are girls. . . . The children are very well behaved, docile, and doing very well in their school experiences and also in their manual work. There is less trouble in the management of this school than of any of our schools that I have seen.”<sup>208</sup> In the annual report of 1912, Fr. Placidus F. Sialm wrote, “From 1887 to 1911, the mission has had about 2500 enrollments of Indian children.”<sup>209</sup>

Although attendance remained steady, St. Paul’s Mission still encountered some problems with retaining students. On 8 October 1927, Father Wm. G. LeVasseur, S.J. wrote, “We have a good girl school, but only 35 boys.”<sup>210</sup> On 3 November 1927, Father LeVasseur continued, “As to the smaller amount of boys in school this year, I think that there may be several causes. . . . The great complaint was Brother Fox. . . . You know that the Indian boy is the boss at home. The Government school is giving them much more liberty than we can, dancing etc. which appeals to the larger boys and girls. They can also supply better clothing than we can.”<sup>211</sup> Tension between tribes also accounted for enrollment loss: “Because of conflicts with the Cree, Chippewa and Assiniboine Indians, the Gros Ventres withdrew their children from the mission school and built a public school in nearby Hays [Montana].”<sup>212</sup>

Another factor that impacted enrollment numbers at all three mission schools was disease. Contagious diseases—trachoma, tuberculosis, scrofula, measles, smallpox, and

<sup>208</sup> Fr. Van Gorp, S.J. to Fr. Cataldo, S.J., folder 9, box 1, Correspondence, St. Paul’s Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU.

<sup>209</sup> Annual Report 1912, box 1, School Program Records, 1885–1941, Fort Belknap Agency, Record Group 75, National Archives and Records Administration, Rocky Mountain Region Denver, Colorado [hereafter Fort Belknap Agency, RG75, NARA-Denver].

<sup>210</sup> Fr. Wm. Levasseur, S. J., Mission Superior, with Provincial Jos. Piet, S. J., folder 11, box 1, Correspondence, St. Paul’s Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid.

<sup>212</sup> “St. Paul’s: A Mission and a Milestone,” folder 22, box 6, General Clippings, St. Paul’s Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU.

scarlet fever—spread throughout the missions.<sup>213</sup> Poor facilities, improper sanitation and hygiene, and crowded conditions increased the risks for these diseases. St. Labre faced a scarlet fever epidemic in 1936 and a mumps epidemic in 1937.<sup>214</sup> In November 1961, a hepatitis epidemic forced St. Paul's to close. The school reopened after the Bishop agreed to install indoor bathrooms for the children.<sup>215</sup>

The schools constantly monitored their attendance rates and sought ways to improve the statistics. At Saint Stephen's, for example, the school years throughout the late-nineteenth century were “originally divided into four quarters with the United States Government paying one hundred and eight dollars annually for each student.” Attendance remained unreliable “with most children attending during the first quarter and the fourth quarter. . . . The greatest absence occurred during the third quarter from July 1 to September. Traditionally this was a time for prayer and hunting.” The administration later adjusted the length of the school to three quarters, “but the government's annual stipend stayed the same.”<sup>216</sup>

In 1900, 70 students attended Saint Stephen's. By 1908, the figure had risen to 119. The attendance of boys and girls fluctuated. Attendance rates during the first decade of the twentieth century varied: 1902, 30 boys and 41 girls; 1905, 55 boys and 61 girls; and 1910, 45 boys and 37 girls. Data on St. Stephen's during this time reveal: “a small percentage turnover each year, [and] that every four years there was a 29.8% turnover. However, the withdrawal rate was very low, 1.92 students per year. Between 1901–1914 there were twenty runaways with a return of 17, or 85%. Also, six students

<sup>213</sup> Mahoney, *Lady Blackrobes*, 56, 60–61, 85.

<sup>214</sup> Carlan Kraman, O. S. F., *A Portrait of St. Labre Indian Mission through One Hundred Years*, chpt. 9, folder 24, box 1, Published Histories, St. Labre Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU.

<sup>215</sup> Hartmann, *As It Was*, 2:375–76.

<sup>216</sup> Henry, “Catholic Missionaries on the Wind River,” 45, 47, 48–49.

died during those fifteen years.” The student body was primarily Arapahos. From 1900 to 1905, however, approximately ten Shoshoni students attended the mission. Similar to the statistics for St. Stephen’s, enrollment eventually became steady at St. Labre and St. Paul’s. After these three missions transitioned to day schools, class sizes increased. For instance, by 1965, 472 students attended St. Stephen’s, a substantial increase compared to 1900.<sup>217</sup>

### **Transition to Day Schools**

Following the Progressive Era, all three schools transitioned from boarding schools to day schools, expanded their programs to include high school instruction, and became more diversified in student enrollment and course offerings. In 1901 Commissioner of Indian Affairs Jones admitted that “the nation’s Indian policy was a national failure.” David Wallace Adams writes, “Indeed, Jones’s 1901 report marks the opening phase of a gradual thirty-year retrenchment from the ideal of immediate assimilation to one of gradualism. As part of the retrenchment, policymakers from widely different ideological perspectives would whittle away at the boarding school as a central component of Indian education.”<sup>218</sup> Reformers during the turn of the century began to view Indian education as a slow process. They criticized boarding schools for fostering dependency and being inhumane. Educators supported the idea of exposing students to their traditions in the evenings and weekends. No longer beholden to eradicating Indian ways and cognizant of the importance of familial bonds, reformers

<sup>217</sup> For the statistics for the school records from 1900 to 1920, see *The Contribution of St. Stephens Mission to Arapaho Education, 1884–1914*, roll 1, series 8, microfilm, General Publications, SSMR, RML, MU; and Henry, “Catholic Missionaries on the Wind River,” 64–65. For the information after 1920, see *A History of Catholic Schools in Wyoming*, M.A. thesis, University of Wyoming, 1971, roll 1, series 8, microfilm, General Publications, SSMR, RML, MU.

<sup>218</sup> Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 307, 308.

began to shift their approach away from boarding schools. As a result, attendance in day schools and public schools rose. From 1905 to 1915, the number of federal day schools grew from 139 to 228. In 1926, the Department of the Interior commissioned the Brookings Institute to conduct a survey of Indian affairs. Published two years later, *The Problem of Indian Administration*, by Lewis Meriam and commonly known as the Meriam Report, supported the long-overdue concept of phasing out the Indian boarding schools.<sup>219</sup> Following suit, the three mission boarding schools all transitioned into day schools.

By choosing to operate day schools, rather than boarding schools, the missions became more desirable institutions for both parents and students. The day school continued to meet the educational needs of the students, but now students could spend quality time with their families and community. St. Paul's Mission was the first of the three schools to complete the transition. In 1936, in the midst of the Great Depression, the School Sisters of St. Francis arrived and St. Paul's opened as a day school: "The day school brought the Indians and Mission closer together. Every evening the children would relate the events of the day to their parents."<sup>220</sup> The mission's decision to operate a day school happened to coincide with shifts in Indian education policy at the federal level. Will Carson Ryan and Willard Walcott Beatty, directors of education for the Indian Bureau from 1930 to 1952, and John Collier, commissioner of Indian affairs from 1933 to 1945, advocated for this transition across Indian country. The St. Paul's house diary entry for 18 January 1939 stated: "Parents and children prefer the new system of bringing the children to school in a bus, and returning them to their homes in the

<sup>219</sup> Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 308–19; Calloway, *First Peoples*, 403.

<sup>220</sup> Hartmann, *As It Was*, 1:23.

afternoon. This is quite natural. Children should live at home with their parents. The children enjoy the trip to the mission. They are delighted especially with the noon lunch. Sometimes they have little to eat at home. When this condition exists the noon lunch at the mission is a life-saver.” St. Paul’s, as well as schools across the country, provided sustenance and warmth during the Depression. In order to “escape the grinding poverty of the reservation” parents sent their children to school.<sup>221</sup>

In 1939, St. Stephen’s transitioned into a day school, offering this rationale for the change: “the children could exercise some good influence by being in their homes each day and it would help to cultivate greater responsibility on the part of the parents.”<sup>222</sup> Not until 1942, however, as the United States government focused its resources and manpower overseas after declaring war against the Axis powers, did St. Labre make the switch to a day school. In the postwar years, St. Labre welcomed back boarders, but “since our facilities cannot accommodate all who want to live here, the school maintains a daily bus service to Birney (30 miles distant) and Lame Deer (21 miles distant) for those whom it cannot shelter. The buses are also sent out over the weekends to transport the boarders who live in these two towns and to Busby which is 39 miles away.”<sup>223</sup> By the postwar years, all three missions operated day schools and had also expanded their programs to include high school instruction.

In 1931, as the United States struggled to survive the Great Depression, St. Labre opened a high school. The majority of the high school students were white, since the

<sup>221</sup> “Historia Domus (House Diary), June 1, 1935–January 1, 1938, also includes entries for 1939–1948,” folder 5, box 3, Journals, St. Paul’s Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU; and Calloway, *First Peoples*, 441.

<sup>222</sup> Franciscan House History, 1951–1957, roll 1, series 2, microfilm, Mission and School Reports, SSMR, RML, MU.

<sup>223</sup> *St. Labre Indian Mission* (Ashland, Mont.: Mission Press, 1960), folder 6, box 1, Publications, St. Labre Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU; and St. Labre Mission High School, *The Chief*, 1953, School Yearbook, folder 5, box 1, Publications, St. Labre Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU.

town of Ashland did not have its own public high school. Cheyennes who graduated from eighth grade could enroll in the high school or opt to take “a two-year Commercial course.” In 1934, the Commercial class began publishing the school paper, *The Arrow*.<sup>224</sup> Saint Labre High School earned state accreditation in 1933, which was a significant step. Ryan, director of education for the BIA from 1930 to 1935, encouraged Indian schools to meet state standards and also urged schools to implement vocational education, like the commercial course at St. Labre. The accredited high school, however, proved to be short lived. Following high school graduation in 1937, “the Capuchins decided to discontinue high school for the Whites because ‘it seemed to distract us from work with the Indians.’” It also proved to be a drain on the mission funds. The Commercial course was continued for Indians only.” On 20 September 1937, seven Cheyenne pupils returned to St. Labre to receive an education that extended beyond the eighth grade.<sup>225</sup>

By the postwar years, St. Labre offered a fully accredited elementary education from kindergarten to eighth grade and also “conduct[ed] a fully accredited four-year High and Commercial School. This school was started in 1947” and received full accreditation from the Montana Department of Public Instruction in June 1952. The total enrollment “for the scholastic year 1952–1953 reached 223.” In the fall of 1954, St. Labre opened a trade school with “accredited courses in Welding, Woodworking, and Automotives.”<sup>226</sup> The school continued to expand and in 1967, St. Labre introduced the Cheyenne Home

<sup>224</sup> “Ashland Indian Mission to Note Jubilee,” *The Eastern Montana Catholic Register*, 23 September 1959, folder 27, box 1, Diamond Jubilee Commemoration, St. Labre Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU; and Carlan Kraman, O. S. F., *A Portrait of St. Labre Indian Mission through One Hundred Years*, chpt. 9, folder 24, box 1, Published Histories, St. Labre Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU.

<sup>225</sup> Carlan Kraman, O. S. F., *A Portrait of St. Labre Indian Mission through One Hundred Years*, chpt. 9, folder 24, box 1, Published Histories, St. Labre Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU; and Connell-Szasz, *Education and the American Indian*, 33–34.

<sup>226</sup> *St. Labre Indian Mission* (Ashland, Mont.: Mission Press, 1960), folder 6, box 1, Publications, St. Labre Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU; and St. Labre Mission High School, *The Chief*, 1953, School Yearbook, folder 5, box 1, Publications, St. Labre Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU.

program “to care for native children who had no home, or whose parents could not keep them.”<sup>227</sup> Therefore, as America grew under the New Deal programs and found acclaim as a super power following World War II, St. Labre experienced massive growth.

Further, St. Stephen’s and St. Paul’s witnessed major developments.

St. Stephen’s introduced a high school program during the postwar period. On 15 May 1952, St. Stephen’s hosted its first prom for the high school boys and girls: “It started at 8:00 p.m. with a grand march and included such dances as the ‘Virginia Reel,’ the ‘Jessie Polka,’ the ‘Oxford Minuet,’ the ‘Circle Two-Step,’ and the ‘Waltz.’”<sup>228</sup> Then, on 27 May 1952, St. Stephen’s celebrated its first high school graduation. The graduates were June Chiefly, Nora Jenkins, Edwin Horse, and Theodore Bell.

In 1955, St. Stephen’s made a further move—the mission enrolled white students from Riverton and Lander, “which contributed to the growth of the school from an enrollment of 187 in 1955–56 to an enrollment of 355 in 1960–61 in grades one through eight.”<sup>229</sup> While *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) outlawed school segregation, “the fact remained that many American schools continued either by the design of their patrons, or by the geographical make-up of the population, to be predominantly of one race or another. . . . In the endeavor it was hoped that the two differing communities, that of the Indian on the Reservation, and the white in the nearby towns, especially Riverton, could work together on a common endeavor and learn from one another.” St. Stephen’s

<sup>227</sup> Selected issues of the periodical *Sandal Prints*, 1968–1984, published by the Capuchin Fathers, folder 23, box 1, Published Histories, St. Labre Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU.

<sup>228</sup> Franciscan House History, 1951–1957, roll 1, series 2, microfilm, Mission and School Reports, SSMR, RML, MU.

<sup>229</sup> For the statistics for the school records from 1900 to 1920, see *The Contribution of St. Stephens Mission to Arapaho Education, 1884–1914*, roll 1, series 8, microfilm, General Publications, SSMR, RML, MU; and Henry, “Catholic Missionaries on the Wind River,” 64–65. For the information after 1920, see *A History of Catholic Schools in Wyoming*, M.A. thesis, University of Wyoming, 1971, roll 1, series 8, microfilm, General Publications, SSMR, RML, MU. For the prom date and graduation, see Franciscan House History, 1951–1957, roll 1, series 2, microfilm, Mission and School Reports, SSMR, RML, MU.

High School, which received accreditation in 1957, also “sought to be a racially mixed school. While the proportion did not remain constant during the High School’s decade long existence, it generally was somewhere in the range of 60% Indian and 40% white. A ‘racially balanced’ School was a daring gamble at this time on a Reservation, in Fremont County, indeed in the United States itself.” The Jesuits believed that the school experience would help prepare the students for life beyond the reservation: “we brought the white man to the Reservation so that our Indians could become accustomed to white ways under less disturbed circumstances.”<sup>230</sup> They also felt that the Arapahos and Shoshones were more than capable “to compete with white students. . . . This was a momentous advance in the history of Catholic Indian Missions. No longer were the Indians to be on the defensive and isolated. Instead, contact and cooperation was the goal.”<sup>231</sup>

Unlike St. Stephen’s, the isolated St. Paul’s Mission’s never attracted many white students, but the school did strive to provide an education that was comparable to or surpassed the public school curriculum offered to white children. When Sister Giswalda arrived at St. Paul’s in 1936, she realized that the eighth grade students did not take “state-required examinations at the end of the eighth grade because none of them ever pass.” This news upset her greatly. She set to work strengthening the curriculum and established a “rigorous system of tests and drills to prepare the students for the exams. At the end of the year . . . all eight students passed with high marks.” These scholars proudly received their diplomas from Bishop Edwin V. O’Hara in May 1937 when the

<sup>230</sup>“The Beginnings,” roll 1, series 2, microfilm, Mission and School Reports, SSMR, RML, MU.

<sup>231</sup> Reverend Stephen V. Dillon, S.J., “Competition, Our Key,” *The Jesuit Bulletin*, 44:2 (1965): 7, 16–17, roll 1, series 7, microfilm, Jesuit Papers, SSMR, RML, MU.



Mission celebrated its Golden Jubilee, and the following school year, an excited group of ninth graders made their way to class. Mission High School had arrived!

The high school continued the core curriculum, but it also supported a typing class, a band, and a student magazine called *Mission Bells*.<sup>232</sup> In 1938, Fr. Sprague S.J. wrote:

The school has increased in the number of students to 147. There are now two years of high school course, fully accredited to the State Educational Department. Dramatics in high school hold a prominent place on the curriculum. Plays are given regularly with large crowds of people in attendance. Improved courses have been inaugurated in every branch of learning peculiar to the grade and high school. Religions is taught by the Sisters & supervised by the Fathers. The children come as far as 5 miles distance to attend classes, necessitating the maintenance of an adequate bus & bus schedule. Class rooms have been completely renovated from floors to ceilings.<sup>233</sup>

The incoming freshman class marked a milestone for the mission, but key federal legislation was also making an impact on the reservation at this time. In 1934, Congress passed the Indian Reorganization Act (IRA), which ended the devastating allotment of tribal lands and provided tribes with the tools for self-government. In 1940, after the Fort Belknap people voted to accept the IRA, Superintendent Clark asked the high school students to study the new “Charter, the Constitution and Bylaws of the Fort Belknap Reservation. The subject aroused the interest of the students immediately. They were enthusiastic in learning of the Indian Reorganization Act. . . . Then they organized a community council in the way the real council was elected. Each high school student was a candidate. Some represented the Assiniboine, some represented the Gros Ventre.”

The students prepared essays and political cartoons on the topic. This project was

<sup>232</sup> “Sister Giswalda, ex-principal, dies,” December 1988, folder 22, box 6, General Clippings, St. Paul’s Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU; and Hartmann, *As It Was*, 1:26.

<sup>233</sup> “Historia Domus (House Diary), June 1, 1935–January 1, 1938, also includes entries for 1939–1948,” folder 5, box 3, Journals, St. Paul’s Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU.

beneficial because it demonstrated that the students were capable of grasping the new legislation and would be ready to take part in tribal government when they reached adulthood.<sup>234</sup>

The first class to participate in the Indian Reorganization Act course—Rose Lame Bull, Ella Brockie, Florence Liberty, Cecilia Cuts the Rope, Elmer Main, James Spencer, and Stephen Gone—graduated from Mission High as seniors in the spring of 1941. They composed a class history recounting their time in high school:

It was the Fall of '37 . . . when eight freshmen entered Mission High School. . . . Four eager boys and four enthusiastic girls were initiated into the mysteries of algebra and Latin. Community Civics and Montana Life brought about many interesting discussions. . . . In the spring of '38 the class attended the Diocesan Eucharsitic Congress in Great Falls. This trip left a lasting impression on the minds of the Freshmen. . . . The sophomore year was an eventful one. . . . Basketball entered into the schedule for '38. Every free period saw a group of students hurrying over to the gym to practice for the band, which was organized by Brother Fox, S.J. The band played its first number on October 12, 1938, at the Columbus Day program. Business Arithmetic, Latin, Medieval History, English, and Ethics formed the scholastic program of most of the class. . . . In February the high school presented its first dramatic production, 'Hobgoblin House,' a mystery play in three acts. . . . During May, a Father-Son and a Mother-Daughter social were given. . . . Now the third year opened with seven juniors. . . . English, General Science, Indian Reorganization, Ancient History and Ethics were on the program. A student council was organized, and parliamentary meetings held. On February 27, the gym burned. The high school play 'Under Western Skies,' was a big success; it was played in Hays, Lodge Pole, Zortman and Fort Belknap Agency. . . . Seven anxious Seniors entered Mission High in September, 1940. New equipment and improvements were noticed. There was the library with a new collection of books and the commercial department with its new typewriters. The pick-up took the place of the gym. The program varied somewhat for, besides the regular courses offered—history, Latin, English, geometry, the students were introduced to the intricacies of typewriting, bookkeeping and shorthand. 'Camouflage,' a three-act comedy, was the 1941 class play. The Apologetics Contest, the C.Y.C. Rally, the trip to Helena, the part for the parents of the pupils, and the

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<sup>234</sup> Hartmann, *As It Was*, 1:39.

retreat brought the senior year up to the great day of Graduation, May 22, 1941.<sup>235</sup>

During that year, 142 students were enrolled at St. Paul's Mission. This figure is almost double the enrollment at any of the other schools on the Fort Belknap Reservation during the years directly before the United States entered World War II. Lodge Pole Government Day School had 78 students attending it; Hays Public School, 66; Beaver Creek Government Day School, 22; Kirkaldie Public School, 15. The next largest school was Harlem Public School, which is off the reservation. Harlem's enrollment was 133 students. The popularity of the mission is a testament to the mission's educational achievement. Sister Limana Kachelmeier described the "psychology of education at the Mission." She wrote:

The keynote of the psychology of education at the mission is **purposeful activity**. 'We learn to do by doing' is a cardinal principle of modern education." She continues, "Any lesson that makes the pupil THINK is of incalculable value. . . . Reading writing arithmetic, history, geography, and all the other subjects are kept in their proper place, and they are all made to work together for the progress of the child. Physical culture is also important. Good health is stressed. . . . The healthier a child is, the brighter he will be. Outdoor play has been encouraged. Besides that, basketball and other sports have found their place in the program. . . . Artistic culture is necessary for a full appreciation of life. . . .At the Mission, the choir, the band, and the Glee Club have contributed much to the education of the children. . . . Indian Arts and Crafts are taught by Mrs. Schultz, thus furnishing the children with a practical contact with the beautiful native art of the Indian.

Therefore, the school provided the students with a well-rounded curriculum. St. Paul's Mission also worked to improve parent involvement and organized a Parent Teacher Association in 1941.<sup>236</sup>

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<sup>235</sup> Ibid., 1:73-74.

<sup>236</sup> Ibid., 1:77-79.

After the United States declared war, the students formed a Victory Corps and collected scrap iron for the war effort. The name of the school newspaper transitioned from *Mission Bells* to *Victory Bells* and the staff sent issues to former students fighting overseas. In 1945, *Victory Bells* published “a letter to the boys over there.” The letter announced the increased high school enrollment (thirty students), the new staff members, and the courses being offered—”algebra, geometry, English II, English IV, Latin I, Spanish II, sewing, physical education, band, shorthand II, medieval history and manual training.” The letter continued, “Brother Fox has two bands this year, the seventh and eighth grades and the high school.” The students happily exclaimed that the school had bought a movie machine and they enjoy “movies every Wednesday and Sunday.” The letter concluded, “We have a home ec class this year. Remember the old garage beside the school? Well, this summer it was remodeled into a two-room home and the girls are learning how to keep house, but best of all, how to COOK! My, what good wives some husbands will have! Good-bye and God bless you until the next issue of *Victory Bells*; you will hear from us then.”<sup>237</sup>

During the postwar years, under the direction of Beatty, Indian education policy once again grounded itself in “education for assimilation,” specifically to train young Indians for urban employment. The innovative educational programs of the New Deal, which had sought to infuse cross-cultural education into the curriculum, implement teaching methods suited to Indian students, and solidify some of the objectives outlined in the Meriam Report, waned as the conflict overseas intensified. Following World War II, conservative politicians sought to end the federal government’s relationship with Indian tribes through termination. During the Cold War, the BIA initiated programs to

<sup>237</sup> Hartmann, *As It Was*, 1:98, 119, 149–50.

facilitate Indian urbanization. As Indians relocated to urban centers, the new direction of education in the postwar years emphasized training Indians for off-reservation life. After transitioning to a day school and introducing high school instruction, St. Paul's Mission chose to diversify its courses. The course offerings mirrored the class selection available at other schools off reservations. The high school curriculum included Homecraft Class, Science Class, Spanish Class, Typing, English, Economics, Shorthand, Algebra, Geometry, Business Class, and History. Many of these courses were well-suited to prepare students for jobs in America's cities.<sup>238</sup>

In September 1948, St. Paul's Mission started a homecraft course geared toward assimilation. The class was held in a building adjacent to the school called the House of Loretto. Just as Indian communities had always done, the high school now focused on teaching life skills; however, these lessons in housekeeping, family budgeting, gardening, canning, baking, and nursing now reflected a white perspective. A class period might address "how to take care of a sick person" or "how to host a party or luncheon." The class celebrated birthday parties, wedding anniversaries, and holidays: "Often the typing class or biology class would be invited to the house for a party. Then appropriate gifts would be brought. The business class pretended they had a telegraph office—telegrams would be sent to the family for special occasions. On birthdays or anniversaries, the typing class would wire flowers and pretend to be messengers delivering these items. In that manner they also learned to live in the future, a well rounded-out life in business and

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<sup>238</sup> Connell-Szasz, *Education and the American Indian*, 106, 111; and Jon Ille, "A Curriculum for Social Change: The Special Navajo Five Year Program, 1946-1961," in *The Indian School on Magnolia Avenue: Voices and Images from Sherman Institute*, ed. Clifford E. Trafzer, Matthew Sakiestewa Gilbert, and Lorene Sisquoc (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2012), 137.

at home. School and learning were fun!”<sup>239</sup> The class also served a practical purpose because the products made in class were sold to the community in order to raise funds for the mission. In 1949, the school opened Mary Ellen’s Gift Shop, which was located in the Mission attic. The homecraft class made items for sale, which included baked goods, canned fruits, and quilts, and the business class sold the inventory.<sup>240</sup> The House of Loretto is one example of how missions provided opportunities to recreate everyday experiences in order to prepare students for a future reflecting white standards. These life lessons, although they reinforced American ideals and etiquette rather than traditional customs, are fondly remembered by the Mission graduates.<sup>241</sup>

By holding the homecraft class in a physical structure depicting the ideal middle-class suburban home, the House of Loretto also functioned as a stark contrast to life on the poverty-stricken reservation. The miniature house “had a compact kitchen, a living room, two bedrooms besides a utility room. Kitchen cabinets and a modern range were installed. Business firms in Harlem and Havre donated wallpaper which the students put on themselves.” A family in Chinook generously donated unfinished furniture “for the living room, two bedroom sets, a kitchen and dining room ensemble.” The kitchen was fully stocked “with cooking utensils, everyday and special dishes—even every day silver with a beautiful set to be used only on special occasions! . . . Curtains soon graced the windows and the empty house began taking on the appearance of a cozy little home.”<sup>242</sup>

While the House of Loretto was renovated, fully-furnished, and picture perfect,

<sup>239</sup> Hartmann, *As It Was*, 1:178–79.

<sup>240</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:202.

<sup>241</sup> The House of Loretto shares many similarities with the practice cottages dedicated toward domestic instruction, which K. Tsianina Lomawaima describes in chapter 4 of her work on Chilocco Indian School, entitled *They Called It Prairie Light*.

<sup>242</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:178.

“reservation life was still decidedly primitive. A tiny one room cabin housed a family of twelve or more. . . . Wood for fuel was hauled down from the mountainside. . . . Water had to be carried great distances; a small kerosene lamp furnished the only light. Travel was on foot or horseback. . . . Poverty was taken for granted.”<sup>243</sup> The House of Loretto was a wonderful mirage in conjunction with the harsh reality of life on the reservation. The disparity between the well-supplied picturesque house and the classmates’ own homes demonstrated that the ideals envisioned by the schools did not always match with the actual experiences of the students. The course offerings, such as the Spanish class, also failed to align with life in Montana.

In the 9 December 1949 issue of the *Mission Bells*, James Shortman wrote, “We are learning Spanish. It is very interesting. It is fun to be called by our Spanish names. People say the Spanish language is becoming more useful right along. Formerly [*sic*] we learned Latin in our high school, but Spanish is supposed to be more practical around here.”<sup>244</sup> Its practical application in Montana can be debatable; however, the language course did provide a competitive edge against white students taking similar language requirements. Lacking bilingual textbooks, the high school never implemented a Native language course. Therefore, the course offerings mirrored the class selection found at other schools off reservations.

In February 1959, St. Paul’s Mission added shop class to its course offerings. Mr. Robert Morin taught the boys how to use and care for the tools. He showed them how to construct projects and fix household problems, imparting useful lessons for “future homemakers.” The crafts built by the students were sold to generate funds for the

<sup>243</sup> Hartmann, *As It Was*, 1:118.

<sup>244</sup> *Mission Bells*, 9 December 1949, vol. vi, no. 2, Mission High School, Hays, Montana, folder 6, box 6, Publications, St. Paul’s Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU.

school.<sup>245</sup> St. Paul's also hosted a science fair each year. The state-of-the art science lab, completed in 1960, is just one example of the school's commitment to providing resources that motivated students to acquire further education. Hildegard Thompson, Beatty's successor and director of the branch of education for the Indian Bureau from 1952 to 1965, urged Indian schools to implement courses of study that prepared students for college. The highly successful science program at St. Paul's was a step in that direction.<sup>246</sup>

Akin to St. Paul's course selection, by 1957, St. Labre high school offered courses on "religion, English, Latin, world history, American History, problems in government, general science, biology, physics, algebra, geometry, music, arts and crafts, besides the vocational courses of typewriting, shorthand, bookkeeping, mechanical drawing, general shop, automotive mechanics, welding, and home economics." Extracurricular activities included "basketball, football, dramatics, band, glee club, and crafts."<sup>247</sup> In 1959, the staff at St. Labre consisted of one priest, one lay brother, ten sisters, and three lay teachers to oversee 250 students enrolled in grade school, high school, or trade school. In 1950, only two students graduated from high school. In 1966, however, 34 students

<sup>245</sup> Hartmann, *As It Was*, 1:337, 2:434.

<sup>246</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:357; and Connell-Szasz, *Education and the American Indian*, 123, 136–37.

<sup>247</sup> "In the Light of the Franciscan Apostolate; St. Labre Indian Mission, 1883–1957," by Fr. Emmett Hoffmann, O.F.M. Cap. 1957, folder 18, box 1, Unpublished Histories, St. Labre Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU.



received their high school diplomas.<sup>248</sup> The school continued to grow by leaps and bounds and in 1973, “The school year began with a record enrollment of 900 children.”<sup>249</sup>

Although St. Stephen’s could not boast of an enrollment of nine hundred students, the school remained proud of its accomplishments. In 1964, St. Stephen’s grade school employed “a good staff of Sisters and several lay helpers, mostly contributing their services. The high school, coeducational and largely white in registration, has no Sisters but runs along very well, with graded sections and a large enough staff of scholastics, priests, laymen and laywomen to take care of a fairly large school.” By 1964, enrollment at St. Stephen’s had reached 125 students.<sup>250</sup>

Between the late nineteenth century and into the mid-twentieth century, St. Stephen’s, St. Labre, and St. Paul’s expanded their compounds, their staff, and their curriculum. They transformed from boarding schools into day schools, opened high schools, and diversified the student body. These schools also became fixtures in the landscape, gaining status as permanent institutions that the community took pride in. These schools developed family traditions as subsequent generations made their way through the mission halls. Students at all three schools achieved milestones. Joanne Bradley, a student at St. Paul’s Mission, wrote, “The last six week term holds a great deal in store for us. On May 1<sup>st</sup> the Junior-Senior Prom will be held; on May 11<sup>th</sup> the Senior Play will be presented; from May 19 to 21 we will have retreat; then examinations; and

<sup>248</sup> “In the Light of the Franciscan Apostolate; St. Labre Indian Mission, 1883–1957,” by Fr. Emmett Hoffmann, O.F.M. Cap. 1957, folder 18, box 1, Unpublished Histories, St. Labre Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU; and Carlan Kraman, O. S. F., *A Portrait of St. Labre Indian Mission through One Hundred Years*, chpt. 9, folder 24, box 1, Published Histories, St. Labre Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU.

<sup>249</sup> St. Labre Indian School, *The Morning Star People, 1973*, folder 8, box 1, Publications, St. Labre Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU.

<sup>250</sup> General Correspondence, 182–1865, roll 2, series 1-1, microfilm, Mission and School Correspondence, SSMR, RML, MU.

graduation with May crowning in the church on the evening of May 23<sup>rd</sup>.<sup>251</sup> Graduation solidified a student's accomplishment, but also spoke volumes for the institutions, their staff, and the community because without their support and dedication success would have been almost impossible.

### **Extracurricular Activities, 1920s-1960s**

Music programs thrived at all three schools during those decades. The Ursulines brought a small organ to St. Labre and taught the Cheyenne children to sing hymns and songs. In 1927, Fr. Benno Aichinger at St. Labre recorded that the school received the instruments requested for the brass band. St. Labre sent another appeal for band equipment in the *Indian Sentinel* in 1932 and "there was a very good response from benefactors." In 1949, Miss Rita Kachelmeier became the band director and chorus leader at Saint Labre. Under her direction, the school also organized a drum and bugle corps. The 1958 band, comprised of thirty-two students, "tied again for top rating in District Nine Music Festival held at Billings, Montana. The mission belongs to the D Division, enrollment less than one hundred in the high school. Eight high schools participated."<sup>252</sup> At St. Paul's Mission, choirs from high school and grade school took turns singing Sunday Mass.<sup>253</sup> St. Stephen's students also participated in band and drill team. Some of the St. Stephen's girls had the opportunity to perform their marching routines in "parades

<sup>251</sup> *Mission Bells*, 11 April 1952, vol. viii, no. 5, Mission High School, Hays, Montana, folder 6, box 6, Publications, St. Paul's Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU.

<sup>252</sup> St. Labre Indian School, *The Race of Sorrows*, 1956–1959, Newsletter, folder 7, box 1, Publications, St. Labre Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU; and Carlan Kraman, O. S. F., *A Portrait of St. Labre Indian Mission through One Hundred Years*, chpt. 9, folder 24, box 1, Published Histories, St. Labre Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU.

<sup>253</sup> Hartmann, *As It Was*, 1:194, 226, 242–43, 2:350, 352, 376, 388.

and other holiday festivities” in Lander and Riverton.<sup>254</sup> Pageants, plays, and stage productions were also significant events at all three schools

Sports programs, especially basketball, consistently remain very successful on the reservations. Sherman Alexie highlighted the prevalence and importance of basketball on the reservation in the classic *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven* (1993). The fast, quick-pace of Indian ball is mesmerizing and the players’ skills on the court continue to attract attention. From the St. Louis World’s Fair in 1904, when the Fort Shaw Indian School women’s basketball team earned the title of world champions, to the rise of Native American professional basketball player Shoni Schimmel in 2014, the accomplishments on the court continue to amaze, inspire, and solidify the importance of athletic programs within the schools.<sup>255</sup>

In 1920, Fr. Michael Hoferer, S.J., formed a boys’ basketball team that won against Riverton, 42–10. Prior to World War II, the basketball team would travel to play against other Catholic teams. In 1939, St. Stephen’s almost beat “the excellent shooters of the Jesuits’ Regis High School in Denver, itself a basketball powerhouse.” St. Stephen’s formed a football team in 1957. However, “the key to developing both Reservation and town loyalty to the new high school lay in basketball.” In 1958, “The Basketball teams continue to do well. The High School could be considered as Catholic State Champs as they defeated St. Mary’s of Cheyenne 41-40 on their court. St. Mary’s was ranked tenth of ALL the High Schools in the State.” Mission basketball excelled

<sup>254</sup> “Saint Stephens Indian School,” Bob Spoonhunter, roll 1, series 5, microfilm, Mission and School Publications, SSMR, RML, MU.

<sup>255</sup> Sherman Alexie, *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven* (1993; repr. New York: Grove Press, 2005); Linda Peavy and Ursula Smith, *Full-Court Quest: The Girls from Fort Shaw Indian School Basketball Champions of the World* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008); Jonathan Hock, film *Off the Rez*; and Larry Colton, *Counting Coup: A True Story of Basketball and Honor on the Little Big Horn* (New York: Warner Books, 2000). See also anthropologist C. Richard King’s works on the importance of sports among Indians.

during the high school era, “after only *one* year’s membership in its new conference, [the basketball team] proceeded to win the conference title and both district and state championship in its division in 1958. It repeated the feat in 1959.” In 1959, the St. Stephen’s basketball team “made up of both Indian and white players” accomplished something that “no Reservation team had ever done—it won the state Basketball championship at Laramie.”

The year 1959 was significant for St. Stephen’s because it marked the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the mission and “the Junior High basketball team won the Catholic State Championship and the High School boys basketball team won the State Class B Championship with a 27 to 1 record.” The championship win in basketball galvanized the spirit of St. Stephen’s and attracted athletes, as well as students, to enroll at St. Stephen’s High School. The following year, the basketball team clinched the title of State Champs again and “gave the School the State record for 45 consecutive wins in a major sport.” That same year, the boys also won the County Track Meet. The statistics demonstrate that St. Stephen’s had a phenomenal sports program with very talented athletes: “From 1958 to 1964, St. Stephens football team had a 31–7 record, were state runner-up winners during the 1961–1962 season, and undeclared state champions during the 1962–1963 season since the state did not hold class B state championship playoffs and St. Stephens was the only undefeated class B team. In basketball, St. Stephens held a 142–12 record and remained conference champs each year from 1958 to 1964. They were also state champions in 1959 and 1960.” In 1965, “the school with 130 students was advanced to Class A competition.” The 6 December 1968 issue of the St. Stephen’s paper, *Drum Beats*, announced the newly formed girls’ basketball team coached by

Pauline Warren. Basketball ushered in “a whole new generation of Indian youth to the possibilities of higher education and the friendship with non-Indians that would last a lifetime.”<sup>256</sup> E. J. Kurth, S.J. wrote to the Jesuit Provincial Daniel H. Conway, “With basketball tournaments all ‘behind us’ we enter into a period of more spiritual endeavors with the First Holy Communion, the Students’ Retreat, and some sort of Marian Celebration in May all in the planning stage.”<sup>257</sup>

To prevent the older boys from engaging in mischief, the friars at St. Labre introduced basketball in 1945. They became affiliated with the Montana Athletic Association in 1951. In 1953, “Walter Williams, an Alaskan Indian, came to coach the athletic teams at Saint Labre.” The boys’ basketball team earned the title of Montana State champs for the C Division in 1967 “and in 1977 they again won the state title, this time in the B Division. . . . The Saint Labre Girls’ basketball team placed 2<sup>nd</sup> in the state tournament in 1967.” In 1954, St. Labre started a football team “and with only 20 hours of practice the Saint Labre Eleven won their first game upsetting the veteran football team of Colstrip 20-0. That was a never-to-be-forgotten triumph.”<sup>258</sup> In 1958, “With great pride the Mission School can point to its basketball records, particularly during the past five years. The Braves played approximately ninety conferences, non-conference

<sup>256</sup> “The Beginnings,” roll 1, series 2, microfilm, Mission and School Reports, SSMR, RML, MU; Reverend Lowrie J. Daly, S.J. “For God and Country—The Story of St. Stephen’s Mission,” Jesuit Bulletin 39, no. 6 (1960): 6; General Correspondence, 1956–1960, roll 1, series 1-1, microfilm, Mission and School Correspondence, SSMR, RML, MU; House History/Historia Domus, Mission and School Reports, 1908–1981, 1983, n.d., roll 1, series 2, microfilm, Mission and School Reports, SSMR, RML, MU; Athletic Achievements, 1958–1964, roll 2, series 2, microfilm, Mission and School Reports, SSMR, RML, MU; *Drum Beats*, 6 December 1968, roll 1, series 5, microfilm, Mission and School Publications, SSMR, RML, MU.

<sup>257</sup> General Correspondence, 1951–1955, roll 1, series 1-1, microfilm, Mission and School Correspondence, SSMR, RML, MU.

<sup>258</sup> Carlan Kraman, O. S. F., *A Portrait of St. Labre Indian Mission through One Hundred Years*, chpt. 9, folder 24, box 1, Published Histories, St. Labre Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU; and St. Labre Mission High School, *The Chief*, 1953, School Yearbook, folder 5, box 1, Publications, St. Labre Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU.

and tournament games in District Five. They won over seventy-five per cent of these games.” During this road to victory, Coach Williams “stressed fundamentals and clean tactics” and their hard work paid off. Gordon Eull wrote in 1959, “Because of their natural agility and speed, the Indian boys are good at basketball. During the last five years the St. Labre Warriors have won more than three fourths of their games; have taken the district championship two years in a row; and have won a good-sportsmanship award.”<sup>259</sup> The community actively followed the basketball team’s progress and celebrated the students’ accomplishments on and off the courts. For example, “the parents of the St. Labre students sponsored a Pow Wow honoring the basketball players and cheerleaders” for a successful season.<sup>260</sup> St. Paul’s Mission also had a basketball team and cheering squad in 1960. In 1962, the mission hosted a boys’ track meet for all the schools in the surrounding area.<sup>261</sup>

The publication of yearbooks and newspapers proved another award-winning endeavor undertaken by the schools. In 1958, the St. Labre school paper, *The Arrow*, earned “a superior rating from the Montana Interscholastic Editorial Association.”<sup>262</sup> St. Paul’s school newspaper, *Mission Bells*, and the school yearbook, “The White Shield,” were All-State award winners numerous times throughout the 1960s.<sup>263</sup>

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<sup>259</sup> St. Labre Mission High School, *The Chief*, 1953, School Yearbook, folder 5, box 1, Publications, St. Labre Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU; “Ashland Indian Mission to Note Jubilee,” *The Eastern Montana Catholic Register*, 23 September 1959, folder 27, box 1, Diamond Jubilee Commemoration, St. Labre Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU; and Gordon Eull, “End of the Cheyenne Trail,” *Catholic Digest*, 1959, folder 22, box 1, Published Histories, St. Labre Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU.

<sup>260</sup> Ibid., and Carlan Kraman, O. S. F., *A Portrait of St. Labre Indian Mission through One Hundred Years*, chpt. 9, folder 24, box 1, Published Histories, St. Labre Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU.

<sup>261</sup> Hartmann, *As It Was*, 1:194, 226, 242–43, 2:350, 352, 376, 388.

<sup>262</sup> “Ashland Indian Mission to Note Jubilee,” *The Eastern Montana Catholic Register*, 23 September 1959, folder 27, box 1, Diamond Jubilee Commemoration, St. Labre Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU.

<sup>263</sup> Hartmann, *As It Was*, 1:194, 226, 242–43, 2:350, 352, 376, 388.

In addition to sports and journalism, the students had the opportunity to participate in numerous extracurricular endeavors. The activities listed in the St. Labre yearbook for 1953 were bugle corps, puppet show, Warriors basketball, B Squad, Senior Band, Junior band, glee club, “Book Worms,” and Today’s Secretaries.<sup>264</sup> St Labre formed a boy scout troop, and “the Scouts of St. Labre’s Troop 750 were honored at a banquet in the school cafeteria” on 8 March 1973. Scoutmaster Carl Nebel “presented the awards to the Scouts” and recounted their accomplishments, “The Troop participated in a Klondike Derby. . . . Campouts . . . . Service, too, was part of the past year’s Scouting program as the Troop cleaned all the litter from an eight mile stretch of Highway 212. . . . The highlight of the year came when we were able to send twenty-one Scouts to Flaming Arrow Scout Camp in the Bridger Mountains.” Saint Labre students won awards for debate club, spelling bees, and science fairs throughout the 1970s and “with a drill team, cheerleaders, proms, yearbooks, Saint Labre . . . [was] like any other high school anywhere in the country.”<sup>265</sup> From 1961 to 1963, students from St. Stephen’s earned “first and second places in the Fremont County spelling contest; a first place in zoology at the District Science Fair [in Powell on 28 March 1961] and a third place in the State Science Fair [in Casper on 8 April 1961]; and, a first place for mathematics at the Fremont County Science Fair.”<sup>266</sup>

Besides providing a vigorous academic environment, St. Paul’s Mission sponsored numerous events to connect with the Native community: the Thanksgiving

<sup>264</sup> St. Labre Mission High School, *The Chief*, 1953, School Yearbook, folder 5, box 1, Publications, St. Labre Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU.

<sup>265</sup> Carlan Kraman, O. S. F., *A Portrait of St. Labre Indian Mission through One Hundred Years*, chpt. 9, folder 24, box 1, Published Histories, St. Labre Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU.

<sup>266</sup> A History of Catholic Schools in Wyoming, M.A. thesis, University of Wyoming, 1971, roll 1, series 8, microfilm, General Publications, SSMR, RML, MU; and House History/Historia Domus, Mission and School Reports, 1908–1981, 1983, n.d., roll 1, series 2, microfilm, Mission and School Reports, SSMR, RML, MU.

Food Sale, the Easter dinner, Easter basket sales, and quilting bees. The House of Loretto spearheaded many of these social gatherings. For instance, in 1962, the Homecraft girls hosted a “Carnival of Fashions” show for the public. The girls modeled dresses that they designed and sewed in class. They also exhibited their quilts and the community voted to select the winners. The “Quilt and Style Show” put on by the Homecraft class was a huge success and became an annual event.<sup>267</sup> Just as the “Quilt and Style Show” became a tradition, the mission schools became a staple fixture intertwined with the communities. They became centers for learning and socializing. School spirit found expression in extracurricular activities, sporting events, and clubs.

In 1951, St. Paul’s Mission sponsored several clubs, “Merrymakers, SOS (Society of Scientists), Literary Club, Spanish Club, Glee Club, Dramatics Club.” The St. Paul’s History Club was very enthusiastic. Ironically, they acted out plays for historic American holidays, such as Columbus Day and Constitution Day. The next year, “The sophomores and juniors formed a club in honor of St. Thomas Aquinas.” Members of the Aquinas Club strove to emulate their patron, St. Thomas. The students also formed a Fatima Club, which promoted praying the Rosary daily. Clarence Talks Different wrote, “Eligible candidates will be officially initiated into the Fatima Club on November 21 at 7:00 P.M. This will be followed by a party in the House of Loretto. We aim to make ourselves better in all ways and to be a good influence on those around us.” The students also started the Crafty Crafters Club that “kept busy drawing, embroidering, molding, sewing, hammering, and what not,” while they waited for the school bus. The bus could not transport all of the students at once, so a portion of the students had to wait for the

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<sup>267</sup> Hartmann, *As It Was*, 2:384.



bus to return and the Crafty Crafters Club helped them pass the time. Other groups included the Audubon Club and the Sewing Club.<sup>268</sup>

Students actively participated in sports and clubs, which demonstrate their vested interest in the school. The Native community embraced the school spirit by attending school functions. As the school grew in enrollment and expanded its activities programs, the mission became an integral part of the community.

### **Conclusion**

St. Paul's, St. Labre, and St. Stephen's sought to mold the minds, spirits, and bodies of their students into productive Catholic Americans. As boarding schools in the late nineteenth century, these missions sought to strip children of their Indian identity. Beginning in the twentieth century, these schools offered a split-curriculum encompassing class work and manual labor in order to make students productive within the dominant society. Following the Meriam Report of 1928, many of these boarding schools transitioned into day schools, offered high school courses, and expanded their extracurricular activities program. The schools still operated on the premise of assimilation, despite reformers push for greater cultural sensitivity during the era of the New Deal. As the country expressed greater pride in being American following World War II and throughout the Cold War, St. Paul's, St. Labre, and St. Stephen's renewed its efforts to impart American ideals.

School was a place for learning, but also a place for socializing with peers.

Alumni forged fond memories and lifelong friendships at the mission schools. In 1952,

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<sup>268</sup> Hartmann, *As It Was*, 1:194, 226, 242–43, 2:350, 352, 376, 388; and *Mission Bells*, Mission High School, Hays, Montana, folder 6, box 6, Publications, St. Paul's Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU. In 1962, the Fatima Club and Aquinas Club adjusted their membership rules. Now only girls could join the Fatima Club and boys were in the Aquinas Club. Hartmann, *As It Was*, 2:373.

Larry LaVallie, as a sophomore at Mission High School, wrote in an article “Why I Come to School”:

First of all I come to school because my parents send me. I come to high school so that when I grow up I will find a place to work and make my own way through life. The things I learn are Ethics which teaches me how to live a good and holy life; English which helps me write intelligent letters and speak correctly; Science which shows me how to stay healthy and how to appreciate and use the God-given things around me; Homecraft which teaches me how to live a Christian family life when I have a home of my own.<sup>269</sup>

Ultimately, what the students took away from their experiences at the missions was an education for life, and many of them may have shared Lois Snell’s opinion when she graduated with the senior class of 1955, she wrote, “My years at Mission High have been most enjoyable.”<sup>270</sup>

<sup>269</sup> *Mission Bells*, 11 April 1952, vol. viii, no. 5, Mission High School, Hays, Montana, folder 6, box 6, Publications, St. Paul’s Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU.

<sup>270</sup> *Mission Bells*, 27 May 1955, vol. xi, no. 5–6, Mission High School, Hays, Montana, folder 6, box 6, Publications, St. Paul’s Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU.

## Chapter 4

### Transformation of Catholic Life at St. Labre Indian School, St. Paul's Mission, and St. Stephens Indian School

According to a study conducted by Georgetown University in 2012, 78.2 million Americans identify themselves as being Roman Catholic, which is approximately a quarter of the U.S. population.<sup>271</sup> The Catholic Church continues to draw people into the faith. Each person may be called to Catholicism for a different reason: the sense of belonging in a faith-based community; the comfort and joy found in the mystery of Jesus Christ; the need for moral direction; the solace found in the familiar rituals of the Mass; the meditative power of prayer; or another personal, and possibly inspirational, experience may have made a difference. Some men and women, like the missionaries who traveled to Indian reservations to establish missions and convert Native peoples during the latter part of the nineteenth century, are called to devote their lives to the Catholic Church. Others are drawn to sharing their beliefs and bringing more families to the Catholic faith.

Paul Two Kill, an Assiniboine, was instrumental in imparting the message of Catholicism to his people and even established a church in Lodgepole on the Fort Belknap Reservation. He recorded his conversion experience, which occurred in the spring of 1890:

On a very cold day with deep snow on the ground I made my way to a hill to make medicine. As was the custom I stayed there for four days and nights. I took no food or drink during this time. One night a coyote poked its nose to my leg; I hit his nose with a rock and drove it away. A bear came to me and lay down at my side. I was very cold. The bear kept me warm. He was very friendly. The full moon looked blue and seemed to

<sup>271</sup> Sarah Parnass, "By the Numbers: Catholics in America, accessed 24 February 2014, <http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/numbers-catholics-america/story?id=18619248>.

come towards me. The evening star shone like a big fire. The other stars shone like big lamps. Suddenly all changed. I had a picture of the Child Jesus on my person. The thought came to me that the evil spirits were afraid of the picture. This picture was given to me by Rev. Father Feusi of St. Paul's Mission. When I came home from the hills the Indians gathered about me to find out what I had learned of the spirits. I told them of the picture and they all agreed that the spirits feared the holy picture. This led me to the Catholic religion. On the 23d June, 1891 I was baptized by Father Feusi.<sup>272</sup>

Fr. Balthaaser Feusi welcomed many more Native people to the Catholic Church.

Missionaries sought to “save” a people who already had a strong spiritual tradition.

Compromises, syncretism, agreement, and disapproval ensued; however, the Second Vatican Council or Vatican II (1962–1965) officially opened a channel for dialogue between Catholics and Native people.

The Second Vatican Council brought about dramatic changes in the Roman Catholic Church throughout the world. The transformations decreed in Rome, although unsettling at first, positively affected mission schools in the American West. At St. Paul's Mission in Hays, Montana; St. Labre Indian School in Ashland, Montana; and St. Stephens Indian School in St. Stephens, Wyoming, for example, the Catholic priests and sisters demonstrated a greater appreciation for Native culture and language following Vatican II. This chapter will explore the indelible mark Vatican II left on these three schools, especially on the church buildings, the Mass, and the school staff.

### **Native Spirituality**

For Indians, the spiritual pervaded all aspects of life, so the thought of isolating religion seemed incomprehensible. In Catholicism, humans are stewards of God's

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<sup>272</sup> Memoir of Paul Two Kill anent his conversion, folder 14, box 6, Unpublished Histories, St. Paul's Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU.

creation, while Indians coexist in harmony with nature.<sup>273</sup> According to Vine Deloria Jr., religion can be viewed from two different lenses: space and time. Indian tribal religions revolve around sacred places, while Christian religions follow a temporal path.<sup>274</sup> For Native peoples, the spiritual world pervaded everything. The Cheyenne, for example, believe in one almighty being, Maheo, and “Four Sacred Persons reigned under Maheo and lived at the four different points of the universe. The four spirits represented all elements of the universe—the sun, moon, stars, and lesser powers who assumed animal forms.”<sup>275</sup> For Indians, the spiritual world co-exists with the physical world.

The tribes participate in specific ceremonies to facilitate communication with the spirits. The Arapaho, for instance, acquired religious power through vision quests, participation in the age-grade societies’ dance ceremonies, and care of the Sacred Pipe. Respect for the Sacred Pipe ensured the tribe’s well-being and solidarity. Buffalo hunts, ceremonial smoking, sweats, lodge dances, and the Sun Dance were rituals performed by the Arapaho. Sacred objects included “drums, whistles, rattles, paints, tobacco, various medicine bundles, and the Sun Dance Lodge,” while the object held in highest esteem was the Sacred Pipe. During ceremonies, which included painting rites, naming ceremonies, the Sun Dance, the sacred flatpipe, the sweat lodge, and fasting, the Arapahos’ “chief form of prayer” was through “sacred songs.”<sup>276</sup> Like the Cheyenne and Arapaho, the Gros Ventre, Assiniboine, Crow, and Shoshone all had a rich religious culture, which was tested with the arrival of the missionaries.

<sup>273</sup> Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 165–66; and Vine Deloria Jr., *God is Red: A Native View of Religion* (1973; repr., Golden, Colo.: Fulcrum Publishing, 2003), 86–89.

<sup>274</sup> Deloria Jr., *God is Red*, 61–75.

<sup>275</sup> Suzanne H. Schrems, “The Northern Cheyennes and the Fight for Cultural Sovereignty: The Notes of Father Aloysius Van der Velden, S. J.,” *Montana Magazine* 45 (spring, 1995):23.

<sup>276</sup> James Walter Hasse, S.J., “Northern Arapaho Religious Reorganization” (master’s thesis, St. Louis University, 1965), roll 2, series 7, microfilm, Jesuit Papers, SSMR, RML, MU; and Carl F. Starkloff, S.J. “Mission Method and the American Indian,” microfilm, Jesuit Papers, SSMR, RML, MU.

## Syncretism

Following the United States treaty period from 1778 to 1871, Catholic missionaries flocked to Indian reservations. Catholic priests sought full conversion in order to civilize the Natives. As scholars have argued, “Christianity and civilization were opposite sides of the same coin”<sup>277</sup> By influencing important leaders like Paul Two Kill and establishing missions in the center of Indian communities, Catholic churches took root. During the formation of the Catholic Church on the Wind River Indian Reservation, “A number of prominent Arapahoes were won over . . . to the new Faith, including such respected elders as Lone Bear. . . . Their acceptance of Catholicism did not, it seems, necessitate their making a choice for the Catholic religion at the expense of their own traditional religious Arapaho practices. Lone Bear could state over a generation after his Baptism in 1887: ‘I pray according to the way I was taught by the church and when I get through I pray my Indian way.’” At first, “the Mission leaders made little if any effort . . . to force their converts to choose between the practice of native and Catholic ways. Early Mission records indicate something of a ‘live and let live’ policy towards Arapaho customs as practiced by Catholic Arapaho, with the notable exception of Fr. Placidus Sialm, S.J.’s ‘condemnation’ around 1913 of the Sun Dance Center Pole as ‘the devil’s pitchfork.’”<sup>278</sup>

Indians, however, looked to the Catholic Church to reinforce Native values, serve as mediators, and strengthen community ties.<sup>279</sup> The missionaries’ generosity also

<sup>277</sup> Luke Eric Lassiter, Clyde Ellis, and Ralph Kotay, *The Jesus Road: Kiowas, Christianity, and Indian Hymns* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), 20.

<sup>278</sup> “The Beginnings,” roll 1, series 2, microfilm, Mission and School Reports, SSMR, RML, MU.

<sup>279</sup> Lassiter, Ellis, and Kotay, *The Jesus Road*, 50–64. Bonnie Sue Lewis states, “Only recently have historians begun to explore the role of Indian agency in Indian-white relations. Increasingly, American Indians are being viewed as more than just the victims of white cultural aggression. While James Ronda and James Axtell suggest that ‘Indians accepted only as much ‘civilized Christianity’ as they deemed

appealed to the Indians' concept of kindness.<sup>280</sup> Indians who embraced Catholicism did not disregard their Native identity and culture. Anthropologist Raymond DeMallie, biographer for the famed Lakota Black Elk, writes, "Christian churches provided institutional structures that were not merely tolerated but encouraged by the government, allowing communities to organize themselves, with leaders and spokesmen who could represent their interests. . . . Church activities helped structure reservation life and provided individuals with avenues to achieve respect and attain influence." According to DeMallie, the Church helped enhance a leader's reputation: "[Black Elk] was able to . . . fulfill the traditional role of a Lakota leader, poor himself but ever generous to his people. Churches, with the access they provided to resources, gave many Lakotas means to help their people in both the material and the spiritual senses. At the same time, these leaders gained prestige by earning the people's respect."<sup>281</sup> Historian Clyde Ellis demonstrates that "for Indian people generally—Christianity has been, and remains, a crucially important element in their lives as Native people. Its concern for community needs, its emphasis on shared beliefs, and its promise of salvation have helped to mediate life in a region long buffeted by limited economic development, geographic isolation, and cultural stress."<sup>282</sup> Although students at the Catholic missions attended Mass, recited daily prayers, sang religious hymns, and participated in religion classes, they still remained

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necessary,' Axtell does concede that the longevity of Indian congregations testifies to 'bona fide' Indian conversions. Drawing on anthropological studies and a trend toward ethnohistory, recognition of Indian agency has brought about a shift in focus to ways in which Indians remained Indians, despite missionization. It has also provided insights into ways Indians became and remained Christians, creating either an 'indigenized Christianity' or a 'Christianized indigenous religion.'" Bonnie Sue Lewis, *Creating Christian Indians: Native Clergy in the Presbyterian Church* (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 2003), 25–26.

<sup>280</sup> James Walter Hasse, S.J., "Northern Arapaho Religious Reorganization" (master's thesis, St. Louis University, 1965), roll 2, series 7, microfilm, Jesuit Papers, SSMR, RML, MU.

<sup>281</sup> Raymond J. DeMallie, ed. *The Sixth Grandfather: Black Elk's Teachings Given to John G. Neihardt* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 15, 23.

<sup>282</sup> Lassiter, Ellis, and Kotay, *The Jesus Road*, 18.

Indian. Historian James Treat states, “[T]o disregard Indian Christians, either as Indians or as Christians, is to deny their human agency, their religious independence, and—ultimately—their very lives.”<sup>283</sup>

Besides providing a setting to congregate and offering emotional support, embracing Catholicism could also signify tribal affiliation. For example, on the Wind River Indian Reservation, the majority of Arapahos are Catholic, while most Eastern Shoshones remain Protestant. James Walter Hasse, S.J., writes, “Another factor which may have contributed to the Arapahoe choice of Catholic Christianity was that of the long-standing enmity between the Arapahoe and the Shoshone. . . . Prejudice may not be a profound reason but it does seem to contribute another small factor toward an explanation on a natural level of the numerically greater preference the Arapahoe have had for Catholicism over Episcopalism.”<sup>284</sup>

Due to the missionaries extended presence, Christianity has become interwoven into the fabric of Indian culture, although “both sides made concessions.”<sup>285</sup> For example, the opening ceremony of a powwow generally includes a Christian prayer. Catholic Indians can interpret the intention of the Sun Dance, “which in Arapahoe is called the offering Dance,” as being “offered to the same God as that of the Catholic Church.” During the sacrament of Baptism, “a child is given an Indian name in addition to his Christian name. Usually the Indian name has greater religious significance.” On reservations, an overlay of beliefs with two parallel forms of worship is common: “Both

<sup>283</sup> Lewis, *Creating Christian Indians*, 26; and James Treat, *Native and Christian: Indigenous Voices on Religious Identity in the United States and Canada* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 10.

<sup>284</sup> James Walter Hasse, S.J., “Northern Arapaho Religious Reorganization” (master’s thesis, St. Louis University, 1965), roll 2, series 7, microfilm, Jesuit Papers, SSMR, RML, MU.

<sup>285</sup> Lassiter, Ellis, and Kotay, *The Jesus Road*, 19



of these [Christianity and Native religion] are accepted and practiced, but distinctly.”<sup>286</sup>

Historian Bonnie Sue Lewis asserts that “American Indian Christianity was based on a conscious choice. Where Indian religion no longer offered hope or solace, the new religion acted as an alternative. Where similar values were discovered . . . Indians Christianity built on parallels. . . . However, even when Indians claimed to have renounced Indian religious culture in favor of the missionaries’ Euro-American Christianity, American Indians went on to construct Christian Indian communities, with Indian leadership and vigorous Indian institutions that took pride in Indianness.”<sup>287</sup>

While fusion and syncretism were unavoidable, condoning Native religious practices depended on the temperament of the priests. In 1940, Fr. George Prendergast, S.J., mission superior at St. Stephens, “felt that the practice of the Sun Dance religion and the growing practice of the Peyote religion by those who also professes [*sic*] to be Catholic was, in effect, impossible to allow both from a doctoral and a pastoral viewpoint.” He did not tolerate the “false religions filled with superstition” and threatened to excommunicate his parishioners if they joined in any Native religious practices. He forced the Arapahos to choose between Christianity and Native spirituality.<sup>288</sup> Second Vatican Council would curb this intolerance.

### **Catholicism in the Schools**

From the boarding school era to the eve of Vatican Council II, Catholicism permeated throughout the mission schools. At St. Paul’s Mission, for example, the

<sup>286</sup> James Walter Hasse, S.J., “Northern Arapaho Religious Reorganization” (master’s thesis, St. Louis University, 1965), roll 2, series 7, microfilm, Jesuit Papers, SSMR, RML, MU.

<sup>287</sup> Lewis, *Creating Christian Indians*, 26–27.

<sup>288</sup> “The Beginnings,” roll 1, series 2, microfilm, Mission and School Reports, SSMR, RML, MU. In contrast, “The Jesuits of the 1980’s actively engaged in helping raise the Centre Pole and the Lodge at the annual Sun Dance.” Roll 2, series 7, microfilm, Jesuit Papers, SSMR, RML, MU.

boarding school officially opened on the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross on 14 September 1887. While operating as a boarding school, the boys and girls attended daily Mass in their respective buildings and on Sundays all of the school children attended Mass together in the church. Every day the students and staff received God's blessings before beginning their coursework and manual labor.<sup>289</sup> At St. Labre, mass was also mandatory. Despite the good intentions of the missionaries, the spiritual formation provided by the mission schools was meant to replace and discredit Native traditional beliefs. As one St. Labre alumna explains, "And so I was subjected to the Catholic religion. . . . We were told that if we did something bad, we'd go to hell . . . and I always thought that it was a really scary religion . . . I felt it was a real cruel . . . form of religion because we had to kneel down for hours upon hours and pray all the time. They taught us how to pray in their way, but it was empty because it was in English."<sup>290</sup> Missionaries, unable to see beyond their cultural prejudices, devoted their lives to transforming their students into fine Catholic Americans.

Some students, however, "were able to make connections across this cultural and religious divide. They saw in Catholicism a sense of the sacred that resonated with their reverence for creation."<sup>291</sup> During the Great Depression, the BIA, under the direction of John Collier, advocated for greater incorporation of Indian culture within the schools. Harkening back to the recommendations in the Meriam Report of 1928, the BIA leadership felt that a deeper connection needed to be made between Western and Native

<sup>289</sup> Hartmann, *As It Was*, 1:8, 11.

<sup>290</sup> Carol J. Ward, *Native Americans in the School System: Family, Community, and Academic Achievement*, Contemporary Native American Communities series, no. 16 (Lanham, Md.: AltaMira Press, 2005), 131–32.

<sup>291</sup> Reverend Randolph Graczyk, "Reflections on Catholicism and Native Belief," *St. Labre Indian School—A Bright Future Built on a Solid Past, 1884–2009* (Ashland, Mont.: St. Labre Indian School, 2009), 50.

culture. Catholic missions, however, remained focused on imparting the Catholic faith with little regard to Native beliefs. In 1936, St. Paul's Mission opened as a day school and the following year it began high school instruction. For the first ninth grade class, according to Sr. Clare Hartmann, their greatest accomplishment was attending the Eucharistic congress in Great Falls after months of practicing the Latin Mass in 1938. Catholic instruction remained paramount throughout a student's education.<sup>292</sup>

In the postwar years, Indian schools established courses, such as home economics, intended to promote assimilation. Mission schools incorporated Catholic teachings into these classes. In September 1948, as federal Indian education policy reoriented itself toward preparing students for mainstream society, St. Paul's Mission High offered a new course on Christian Family Living. Sixteen students enrolled in the homecraft class, which met in a newly built structure beside the school. The first class was on 8 September, the feast day of the Blessed Virgin Mary's birth. The class chose to call the building the House of Loretto in honor of Jesus' childhood home. Five dolls resided in the house—"Joseph Christian and his wife Mary, and three children, Mary Alice, Anne Marie, and John Joseph" for the students to use in role play. The sisters hoped that the House of Loretto would serve as an example of the proper Christian home and be an inspiration to the Native community. Each day the class said this pledge: "I pledge my head and my heart to the ideal of a Christian home, a home that not merely nourishes, clothes, and shelters the body that is destined to return to the earth; but above all else, cares for the soul that is destined to live and enjoy God for all eternity. I shall always uphold the ideals of Christian marriage. I shall speak with the greatest reverence of the Holy Sacrament of Matrimony and shall defend it whenever I have the occasion."

<sup>292</sup> Hartmann, *As It Was*, 1:26–27.

Students who enrolled in the Christian Family Living course received training on how to not only be good homemakers in mainstream society, but also how to be good, faithful Catholics.<sup>293</sup>

Afterschool activities like the Aquinas Club and Fatima Club continued to reinforce and support the student's spiritual development.<sup>294</sup> The curriculum and even the after-school activities reinforced the Catholic faith. Major events at the school included Christmas Mass, First Holy Communion, and the seniors' annual retreat. In 1954, Blanche Buckman wrote, "Mission High is now a member of the National Catholic Educational Association . . . . We are proud to belong to this association because we believe that religion is the basis of a thorough education."<sup>295</sup> Catholicism and education complemented each other; they were integral components in the formation process of well-rounded graduates. For instance, on 20 May 1960, May crowning and graduation took place simultaneously. After crowning the statue of the Blessed Virgin, the eighth graders and seniors received their diplomas. The seniors—Clinton Mount, Joe Iron Man, Norma Jean Gardipee, and William Talks Different—posed before the banner that read "To God through Mary."<sup>296</sup>

At St. Paul's, St. Labre, and St. Stephens, Catholic hegemony prevailed; the schools incorporated Catholic prayers, teachings, and worship into the curriculum to strengthen the child's faith. The three paternalistic missions offered numerous opportunities for students to receive spiritual formation; however, in the late 1960s, the

<sup>293</sup> Sister M. Giswalda Kramer, *That's My Baby* (Chinook, Mont.: Chinook Opinion, 1981), folder 21, box 6, Published Histories, St. Paul's Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU.

<sup>294</sup> Hartmann, *As It Was*, 1:242–43.

<sup>295</sup> *Mission Bells*, 21 May 1954, vol. x, no. 6, Mission High School, Hays, Montana, folder 6, box 6, Publications, St. Paul's Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU.

<sup>296</sup> Hartmann, *As It Was*, 354–55.

schools began “to work at inculturation, recognizing that the message of Jesus” must take root in the Cheyenne and Crow[, Gros Ventre and Assiniboine, Northern Arapaho and Eastern Shoshone] cultures” to ensure that it “develop[ed] on a firm foundation.”<sup>297</sup>

### **Second Vatican Council**

On 25 January 1959, Pope John XXIII made a startling announcement—an ecumenical council would convene to reform and renew the Catholic Church. Second Vatican Council, or Vatican II, assembled shortly before the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, the first Catholic elected to the White House, and in the midst of the Vietnam War, Civil Rights protests, and the threat of nuclear war. Many Natives had relocated to the cities with support from the Indian Relocation Act of 1956, certain “progressive” tribes like the Menominees and Klamaths struggled to maintain tribal autonomy and their economic welfare after termination, and Indian organizations sprang up to advocate for Native rights. Vatican II emerged during this tumultuous time in history and lasted from 11 October 1962 to 8 December 1965; it consisted of four formal council sessions, all conducted in Latin by 2,500 cardinals, archbishops, and bishops, and numerous informal gatherings for discussion and debate; and it resulted in “four constitutions, nine decrees, and three declarations.” Vatican II was a momentous event that impacted the Roman Catholic Church, “the world’s largest faith, more sweepingly than any other single event since the Protestant Reformation. It changed Catholicism’s relations with other Christian churches. . . . It set in motion, from Latin America to Eastern Europe, forces for social change that would alter the course of world politics.”<sup>298</sup>

<sup>297</sup> Graczyk, “Reflections on Catholicism and Native Belief,” 50.

<sup>298</sup> Richard R. Gaillardetz and Catherine E. Clifford, *Keys to the Council: Unlocking the Teaching of Vatican II* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2012), xi–xiv; Xavier Rynne, *Letters from Vatican City: Vatican Council II (First Session): Background and Debates* (New York: Farrar, Straus and

The Besl Family Chair in Ethics/Religion and Society at Xavier University Peter A. Huff calls Vatican II “the most important religious event of the twentieth century.”<sup>299</sup>

For Pope John, Vatican II was an *aggiornamento* (updating) of the Catholic Church. He described “the Catholic faith as both gift and task,” which meant the faithful should embrace Catholicism’s rich tradition and past, but they should also “live the gift of the Gospel” in the modern world. Pope John passed away before he could witness the full extent of the “breath of fresh air” surging through the Catholic Church. Pope Paul VI took up the challenge and saw Vatican II to completion. Vatican II changed the image of the church—no longer would it be a hierarchical structure, instead the church became “a spiritual communion and a people.” The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*) called for “restoration, progress, and adaptation” of the Mass. Following Vatican II, priests engaged with their parishioners by facing the congregation and celebrating Mass in the vernacular language, instead of Latin, “signal[ing] to worshippers that they were being included because they were a vital component of the service.” On 22 January 1965, for instance, Father Custer said Mass in English at St. Paul’s Mission. Churches removed the railing separating the parishioners from the altar and celebrants received Communion in their hands. The Second Vatican Council called on Catholic laypeople to become actively involved in liturgical worship.<sup>300</sup>

Following the Decree on the Appropriate Renewal of the Religious Life (*Perfectae Caritatis*), nuns exchanged their habits for everyday clothing, and “religious

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Company, 1963); Bill Huebsch, *Vatican II in Plain English: The Council* (Allen, Tex.: Thomas More Publishing, 1997), 77–78; and Peter Steinfels, “Across Four Decades, Just What Has Been the Legacy of the Second Vatican Council?” *New York Times*, 12 October 2002.

<sup>299</sup> Peter A. Huff, *Vatican II Its Impact on You* (Liguori, Missouri: Liguori Publications, 2011), 7.

<sup>300</sup> Huff, *Vatican II Its Impact*, 34–35, 42, 58, 60, 69–70; Steinfels, “Across Four Decades, Just What Has Been the Legacy of the Second Vatican Council?”; John Pope, “Vatican II Changed the Catholic Church—And the World,” *Huffington Post*, 11 October 2012; and Hartmann, *As It Was*, 2:423.

orders started taking on causes, even risking arrest, when they spoke out in favor of civil rights and workers' rights and against the war in Vietnam.” At St. Paul’s Mission, Sr. Clare Hartmann wrote that 30 July 1967 “was a red letter day in the lives of Sister Giswalda and Sister Clare—they had held out as long as they could. Now for the first time, they joined the others by putting on the new garb. Oh, how they missed the old, but obedience is greater than sacrifice. At this time, too, the Sisters could change their names by going back to their baptismal name if they wanted to. Sister Eugenio became Sister Janice, Sister Felix—Germaine, and Sister Michaelinda—Linda. Yes, times were changing; the Indian was adapting to a new culture and customs and so were the Sisters.”<sup>301</sup>

The Catholic Church embraced the modern world by becoming more engaged with “modern science, secular experience, and the insights of non-Catholic traditions.” No longer would the Catholic Church position itself above or apart from the modern world, rather it would be “in the modern world.” The Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity (*Apostolicam Actuositatem*) recommended that laypeople “take Christ into the world.” The Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity (*Ad Gentes*) promoted “global evangelization.” Vatican II reaffirmed the Catholic Church’s responsibility toward upholding social justice. The Decree on Ecumenism (*Unitatis Redintegratio*) encouraged Christian unity. In 2012, Thomas Ryan, director of the Loyola Institute for Ministry, stated, “The church sought to engage, not condemn.” This attitude extended toward other religions and fostered ecumenical unity. The Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions (*Nostra Aetate*) was revolutionary, stating that the Catholic Church “has a high regard for the manner of life and conduct, the precepts and

<sup>301</sup> Huff, *Vatican II Its Impact*, 66; and Hartmann, *As It Was*, 2:46.

doctrines which, although differing in many ways from her own teaching, nevertheless often reflect a ray of that truth which enlightens all men.”<sup>302</sup> This Declaration “uses such terms as esteem, respect, dialogue, proclamation, witness.”<sup>303</sup> Vatican II changed the appearance of the missionaries, the church, and the Mass; more importantly, it changed the way it perceived other cultures and faiths.

By emphasizing the dignity within each person, the Church could move forward to bridge the gap between themselves and American Indians. On 4 May 1977, the U.S. Catholic Bishops issued a statement seeking reconciliation for the “infrequent failures to respect the inherent rights and cultural heritage of our American Indian brothers and sisters.”<sup>304</sup> This willingness to seek greater participation and leadership from the Native community, while asking for forgiveness, was not limited to the decade following Vatican II. In 1992, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops printed the bulletin, “1992: A Time for Remembering, Reconciling, and Recommitting Ourselves as a People: Pastoral Reflections on the V Centenary and Native American People,” which called for “greater awareness and understanding, increased dialogue and interaction and a commitment to mutual respect and justice among diverse peoples. . . . History can be healing if we will face up to its lessons.”<sup>305</sup>

<sup>302</sup> Huff, *Vatican II Its Impact*, 66–68, 71, 72; Steinfels, “Across Four Decades, Just What Has Been the Legacy of the Second Vatican Council?”; and Pope, “Vatican II Changed the Catholic Church—And the World.” Despite the Catholic Church’s efforts to let in a breath of fresh air, “many would say there haven’t been enough changes regarding the status of women. This spring [of 2012], the Vatican orthodoxy watchdog launched a full-scale overhaul of the largest umbrella group of American nuns, accusing the group of taking positions that undermine church teaching and promoting several ‘radical feminist themes’ that are incompatible with Catholic teachings.” Pope, “Vatican II Changed the Catholic Church.”

<sup>303</sup> Pietro Rossano, “Christ’s Lordship and Religious Pluralism,” roll 1, series 1, microfilm, Correspondence, SSMR, RML, MU.

<sup>304</sup> United States Catholic Conference, *Statement of U.S. Catholic Bishops on American Indians* (Washington, D.C., 1977).

<sup>305</sup> Marie Therese Archambault, Mark G. Thiel, and Christopher Vecsey, eds. *The Crossing of Two Roads: Being Catholic and Native in the United States*, American Catholic Identities: A Documentary History series (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2003), 221.



## Vatican II, “a Breath of Fresh Air” or a Gale Force?

The Second Vatican Council disrupted the Roman Catholic Church throughout the world. By reorganizing the church, a schism developed between the younger, progressive priests and the pre-Vatican II priests. Just as Native peoples witnessed a divide between progressive and traditional Indians over allotment, New Deal legislation, and termination, priests and nuns at mission schools encountered similar factions within their orders and the larger religious community. Converted Catholic Natives had to adjust as well. The changes decreed in Rome, although unsettling at first, enriched mission schools in the American West.<sup>306</sup>

Second Vatican Council ushered in a new form of worship that was often disconcerting to the Indians. Flood writes, “The Northern Cheyenne and Crow people were simply bystanders in this bewildering confusion of changes within the Church. They had grown accustomed to and loved the old, mystical rituals of the Church, as well as those of their native religions.”<sup>307</sup> The priests disregarded the familiar and beloved Latin services, novenas, and Benedictions without any explanation:

A quiet scandal ensued among the elder tribal members who had loved the mysteries of the Latin Mass, including a priest holding up the shiny, gold Monstrance (large cross with the Eucharist at the center) in front of the procession. Bisco Spotted Wolf remembered: “I felt something special when they held it up. It glittered in the sun coming through the windows. When I saw that, it was like a blessing from “Maheo” (God). . . .The Cheyennes shook their heads and asked each other: “Why have the priests changed their religion?” Some became cynical and stopped going to Church on a regular basis. Others merely shook their heads and watched the priests playing guitars and wearing modern vestments. After many years of close observation, they already knew that white people were strange. Why should priests be any different?”<sup>308</sup>

<sup>306</sup> Flood, *Renegade Priest*, 133.

<sup>307</sup> *Ibid.*, 134.

<sup>308</sup> *Ibid.*, 135.

Although the changes proved unsettling at first, the new attitude embracing other religions was refreshing. Priests could no longer preach “that the Catholic Church was the only true religion.” Second Vatican Council declared:

The Catholic Church “rejects nothing that is true and holy in (other) religions. She regards with reverence those ways of action and of life, those precepts and teachings, which though differing in many aspects from the ones she holds and sets forth, nonetheless often reflect a ray of that truth which enlightens all men.” The new rules repudiated, “. . . any discrimination or harassment . . . because of their race, color, condition in life, or religions.”<sup>309</sup>

Native religion could no longer be condemned and the Catholic Church could now make a concerted effort to intertwine Native practices into Catholic worship. Smudging, offerings of sweet grass, Native songs, and drum circles began to emerge as part of the Catholic service.

In 1965, after Carl F. Starkloff, S.J. was ordained a priest, he went to the Wind River Reservation, where he witnessed “a ‘paradigm shift’ in consciousness, in that it [Vatican II] began to advocate listening to traditional cultures and spiritualities, not simply as objects of study, but as ‘subjects’ of history and as partners in a conversation.”<sup>310</sup> During these conversations with Native spiritual leaders, St. Stephens inaugurated new policies, “The use of drums in church, especially at funerals, received nearly universal Arapahoe approval as early as 1970, and the practice of ‘cedaring’ or ‘smudging’ (incensing native style) was widely accepted as constitutive of the opening penitential rite of the Eucharist.”<sup>311</sup> On 21 September 1975, Catholic Bishop Eldon B. Schuster wore “beaded buckskin vestments” during the Mass of dedication for the new

<sup>309</sup> Flood, *Renegade Priest*, 134.

<sup>310</sup> Carl F. Starkloff, S.J. “Hindsight and Foresight: The Catholic Church and Native North Americans, 1965–1997,” *U.S. Catholic Historian*, (spring, 1998), 110.

<sup>311</sup> Starkloff, “Hindsight and Foresight,” 114.

elementary school at St. Paul's Mission.<sup>312</sup> At St. Stephens, Father Zummach received the Indian name "Big Eagle" and a "headpiece made with eagle feathers given to him by The People. He wore Indian-beaded vestments, along with buckskin moccasins and gloves. Rather than English, the native languages of the Arapaho and Shoshone participants were used in the greetings, and in the repeated invitations to prayer Big Eagle extended to the congregation. The incense anointing were made . . . with the traditional cedar-incense of The People."<sup>313</sup> Incorporating Native traditions into the Mass was an important step, but changing the physical structures to reflect Native spirituality demonstrated the Church's commitment to fostering a stronger connection between Catholicism and Native beliefs.

### **A New Church**

St. Labre Church, finished in 1971, "remains today one of the most impressive Catholic churches in America. Inside, Christ is represented on the processional cross as a Cheyenne Dog Soldier." Dog Soldiers protected their people and refused to leave the field of battle until all of the women and children found safety. They were willing to die for their people, just as Jesus Christ sacrificed Himself on the cross for His people. "The new Church built in the form of a tipi or Medicine Lodge" has a circular floor plan and the walls, "made of local Montana dolomite, rich in earthen colors," gradually rise up to form a peak. A wooden beam serving as the center lodge pole advances "through the ceiling skyward," and stands "in the smoke hole of the tipi. The shorter beam, visible from the outside of the church, formed the Cross. On either side of the Cross beam, glittering stained glass windows displayed the seasonal colors of the year. Many other

<sup>312</sup> "Hays school: cause for celebration" *Great Falls Tribune*, October 2, 1975, folder 22, box 6, Clippings, St. Paul's Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU.

<sup>313</sup> "A Pastoral Appreciation" *The Wind River Rendezvous*, vol. XXVIII, no. 3, summer 1998, p. 8.

Cheyenne symbols graced the church, including petroglyphs of the Stations of the Cross incised in rock by student artists.”<sup>314</sup>

The church is a focal point of the St. Labre campus (see Appendix, figure 8). It serves as a constant reminder to students of the rich spiritual life offered at St. Labre. The cross at the top of the church actually extends out horizontally, rather than vertically, “This was done intentionally to symbolize that Christ’s love and care extends beyond the Church, beyond the campus, and into the Northern Cheyenne and Crow Indian Reservations.” To some students, staff, and faculty, this is a comforting thought; however, “today, some Northern Cheyenne view the cross of the St. Labre Church as representing the burden they carry as a people, brought on by St. Labre during the boarding school era.”<sup>315</sup> Catholicism can provide solace and strength, enriching a person’s life; for others, it denotes another abrasive reminder of assimilation policies. Vatican Council II tried to bridge these gaps by inviting the Indian community to share their input.

The church at St. Stephens provides another example of this dialogue. Beginning in 1970, Arapaho artist Raphael Norse, decorated the exterior of St. Stephens church “with designs symbolic to his culture.”<sup>316</sup> The latest renovation of the church occurred in 1995 (see Appendix, figure 9). The church is simple, but the artistic design is superb. The paintings and motif syncretize Catholic and Native beliefs, which leave an awe-inspiring impression. Every detail within the church is infused with Catholic and

<sup>314</sup> Flood, *Renegade Priest*, 135–36; and Carlan Kraman, O. S. F., *A Portrait of St. Labre Indian Mission through One Hundred Years*, folder 24, box 1, Published Histories, St. Labre Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU.

<sup>315</sup> Chelsea DeWeese, “Finding the Funds: St. Labre school has raised millions to help Northern Cheyenne youth. But at what cost to their culture?” *Perceptions*, 2005 Native News Project, accessed at <http://native news.jour.umt.edu/2005/Inc.htm>.; and *St. Labre Indian School—A Bright Future Built on a Solid Past, 1884–2009*, 55.

<sup>316</sup> *The Wind River Rendezvous*, vol. XXVII, no. 2, April/May/June 1997.

Arapaho symbolism. For example, the baptismal font and altar are shaped like drums. The ceiling depicts a cross “formed by the joining of four duplicates of an Arapaho symbol for a person. The base of each design is standing at the four directions of the earth. The white line running through the center of each of the person-symbols or branch of the Cross symbolizes that Christ should be our center and the guiding force in our lives.” Intersecting bare tipi poles frame the crucifix behind the Altar because “in the past, bare tipi poles left standing was an indication that the tribe or family had to pack up and leave quickly, usually to escape some impending danger. The Crucified Christ hanging over the bare tipi poles symbolizes that no matter what calamity befalls us, Christ is always with us and will see us through the dark times in our lives as well as the good.”<sup>317</sup> The church’s interior and exterior is a testament to both Arapaho culture and Catholic beliefs (see Appendix, figure 10).

The church and mission compound are still operational, but the Catholic school no longer exists. Facing financial constraints and invigorated by the Indian Self-Determination and Educational Assistance Act of 1975, St. Stephens became an Indian-controlled contract school on 1 June 1976. Although the students did not receive Catholic instruction in the classrooms, St. Stephens Church continued to meet the needs of its parishioners and to integrate more culturally-relevant components into the Mass.

### **A New Mass**

According to *The Wind River Rendezvous*, “Vatican Council II was historic in so many ways, but in no way did it have a greater impact on missionary work than when it cleared the way for vernacular languages in the liturgy and for the greater use of local symbolism.” At St. Stephens, “native symbols, art, music, and prayer forms” have been

<sup>317</sup> *Saint Stephens Catholic Church: Something Old Made New* pamphlet, Personal Collection.

incorporated into Catholic functions. For Christmas midnight Mass in 1970, the Indian choir sang *Adeste Fideles* in Arapaho, while the Indians reenacted the Nativity scene in traditional Native attire with an Infant Jesus resting in a cradle board inside an authentic tipi. In 1978, the Arapaho Catholics “began to work on a complete Arapaho version of the Mass,” which was celebrated on 17 September 1980. During the translation of the Mass, the priests could truly appreciate that “the Arapahoe language is [rich] in religious symbolism” and “very often grasped a theological truth better than an English expression might.”<sup>318</sup> Reverend Joseph Damhorst, S.J. and Reverend Carl Starkloff, S.J. said the first Arapaho Mass, accompanied by catechist and adviser Ernest Sun Rhodes, adviser Scott Dewey, and servers Lloyd Wallowing Bull and Dallas Littleshield.<sup>319</sup> Besides saying Mass in Arapaho, St. Stephens also recruits “tribal elders and others to do Arapaho prayers, cedar blessings, sweet grass blessings and waterway ceremonies and to deliver special sermons and talks. Drums are often used in church, as are flutes.” These measures are just one step in the right direction, but “adaptation of the Liturgy and native catechesis are two important efforts that need to continue.”<sup>320</sup>

Although these changes—Native art and symbols infused onto the church walls and Native cultural elements embedded into the Mass—bring the Catholic Church closer to the Native community, very few Natives are entering religious orders. On 14 July 2007, Sister Florence Petsch, OSF, a Shoshone tribal member from the Wind River Reservation, celebrated her Silver Jubilee as a Sister of Saint Francis at St. Stephens

<sup>318</sup> House History/Historia Domus, Mission and School Reports, 1908–1981, 1983, n.d., roll 1, series 2, microfilm, Mission and School Reports, SSMR, RML, MU; and *The Wind River Rendezvous*, vol. XI, no. 2, March/April 1981.

<sup>319</sup> Starkloff, “Hindsight and Foresight,” 112.

<sup>320</sup> Joanne T. Asperheim, “Native American Catholics—Blending Traditions,” n.d., roll 1, series 8, microfilm, General Publications, SSMR, RML, MU.

Mission. The joyful celebration included a mix of traditional songs performed by “The Eagle Drum Group” and religious songs sung by “a string quartet of Franciscan sisters.”<sup>321</sup> This festive event not only honored her, but also bore witness to the infusion of traditions in the church today.

St. Paul’s and St. Labre also integrated Native beliefs and practices into its Catholic worship. At these two missions, where Mass is part of the school routine, the restructuring of the religious service allows for a harmonious balance. Students no longer associate Catholicism as a faith meant to usurp traditions, but as a belief system meant to work in conjunction with Native spirituality. Vatican Council II paved the way for greater syncretism between Native and Catholic spirituality.

#### **New Recruits to the Missions—Jesuit Volunteer Corps**

Unlike other Christian missionaries, the Catholics who founded the fledgling missions were not lay men and women; rather they were priests and religious sisters. Eventually lay men and women helped assist the priests and sisters. Vatican II, however, promoted lay involvement in social justice movements and Catholic lay volunteers became more involved at the three mission schools. Jesuit Volunteers, in particular, became a permanent part of the staff at St. Paul’s Mission and St. Labre Indian School following Vatican Council II.

Jesuit Volunteers are an integral part of the history of St. Paul’s and St. Labre’s schools. In Hays, a remote, rural town, St. Paul’s Mission has a difficult time recruiting teachers and an extremely challenging time securing the funds to pay teacher salaries. Since the mission cannot feasibly pay teacher salaries, the school could not operate without the volunteers. St. Paul’s and St. Labre’s stories would be incomplete without

<sup>321</sup> “Silver Jubilee,” *The Wind River Rendezvous*, vol. XXXVII, no. 3, summer 2007, p. 4.

acknowledging the Jesuit Volunteers' presence, responsibilities, and impact at the schools.

The Jesuit Volunteer Corps, a Roman Catholic organization, originated in Alaska during the mid-1950s under the guidance of the Jesuits, the Sisters of St. Ann, and the Ursuline Sisters. Since 1886, the Jesuits had been working with Alaskan communities to promote educational opportunities for Native children. In 1956, a Jesuit school opened its doors to the children living in Copper Valley, Alaska, which lies approximately 170 miles east of Anchorage. The Jesuit colleges and the St. Ann Sisters recruited young non-Native Catholic college graduates to fill the teaching positions at the new school. These young volunteers not only taught; they also helped build the school with construction material left over from the recent Korean War. In the process, they endured freezing temperatures, few showers, and a lack of running water. During the 1960s, Fr. Jack Morris, S.J., a teacher at Copper Valley School, provided a name—JVC—for the Alaskan volunteers, and thus “JVC Northwest” came into being.

In 1965, Father Morris established the organization's administrative headquarters in Portland, Oregon, and became the director of JVC. Over time he guided the fledgling organization into a prosperous volunteer program.<sup>322</sup> As Father Morris would later claim, “The Jesuit Volunteer Corps was twice as old as the Peace Corps, twice as tough and 10 times more rewarding.”<sup>323</sup> After JVC formed in Copper Valley, the program began to

<sup>322</sup> Ed Langlois, “Jesuit Volunteers to Fete One of its Founders,” *Catholic Sentinel*, October 19, 2007; Judy Coode, “Ruined for Life: The Jesuit Volunteer Corps Celebrates 50 Years of Changing Lives Through Service,” *Sojourners Magazine*, August 2006, 32–6; and Elizabeth Elliott, “Jesuit Volunteer Corps Celebrates 50 Years of Service,” *News of the Northwest Jesuits*, (spring 2006), [http://www.nwjesuits.org/newsPub/2006%20Spring/Spring06\\_NWJ\\_14-15.pdf](http://www.nwjesuits.org/newsPub/2006%20Spring/Spring06_NWJ_14-15.pdf).

<sup>323</sup> Langlois, “Jesuit Volunteer Corps—50 Years of Nitty-Gritty Service.”



extend beyond Alaska.<sup>324</sup> It soon took root in the Pacific Northwest and eventually crystallized into “the largest full-time lay Catholic volunteer program in the United States.”<sup>325</sup>

By the 1960s, as JVC developed in Alaska, the Jesuits and Sisters of St. Francis, including Sister Giswalda Kramer and Sister Clare Hartmann, continued to dedicate their time and energy to St. Paul’s Mission. VISTA workers also taught, organized activities for the students, and helped 4-H members at St. Paul’s.<sup>326</sup> By 1969, JVs began teaching at Mission Grade School and High School. On 10 October 1969, Father Morris came to Hays to induct the lay teachers into the Jesuit Volunteer Corps. He gave each of them a mission cross.<sup>327</sup> Margaret Hickey was one of the volunteers who received the mission cross, and she decided to stay for a second year of JVC (1970–71).<sup>328</sup>

From 1970–1971, the JVs at St. Paul’s Mission included Hickey, who acted as the librarian and taught seventh and eighth grade; Patrick Heraty, who taught physical education, mathematics, ethics, economics, and offered guidance counseling; Shelley Burrus, who taught Spanish, physical education, and also offered guidance counseling; Dennis Duffell, who taught grade school science; Jean Wiest, who taught third and fourth grade; and Ann Bellanti, who taught fifth and sixth grade.<sup>329</sup> The JVs became an essential part of the Mission staff. They were more than teachers, for they also served as

<sup>324</sup> By 1968, JVs diligently worked in Copper Valley, Alaska, St. Mary’s, Alaska, Fairbanks, Alaska, and at St. Mary’s Indian School in Omak, Washington. See, Jack Morris, SJ, “Reflecting on 50 Years,” *Focus: Jesuit Volunteer Corps Northwest* 51 (spring 2006): 1, 14.

<sup>325</sup> Simon Hendry, SJ, “‘Ruined for Life’: The Spirituality of the Jesuit Volunteer Corps,” (PhD diss., Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, Calif., 2002), 2.

<sup>326</sup> Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) was founded in 1965 and is now a part of the AmeriCorps network of programs. For more information, see the official website, <http://www.americorps.org/>.

<sup>327</sup> Hartmann, *As It Was*, 2:464–76, 503. Currently, JVs receive their mission cross at the end of orientation.

<sup>328</sup> After Hickey’s JVC experience, she married into the community. I had the privilege of teaching her grandson, Paul Doney, when he was a kindergartener (2004–2005).

<sup>329</sup> Hartmann, *As It Was*, 2:530; and Margaret Matt, current JV, e-mail to author, March 31, 2008, Mission Grade School, Personal Collection.

role models for the students. For example, a graduate of Mission High School fondly remembers Shelley Burrus. According to the former graduate, Miss Burrus was like a big sister to her. Later in life, the alumna named her daughter after this inspirational woman.<sup>330</sup>

The six JVs who worked at the Mission taught in various capacities, either at the grade school, middle school, or high school, from 1969 through 1974. After the Mission High School burned down on 5 December 1973, the 1973–1974 school year resumed inside the cramped quarters of temporary trailers. The students persevered, along with the last group of JVs who taught high school at Hays, Montana. On 20 May 1974, the final graduating class received their diplomas from Mission High. After the fire destroyed the high school, the Mission continued to operate, educating students enrolled in first through eighth grades.<sup>331</sup> Five Jesuit volunteers (Sister Kathleen Kane, Meg Dowdell, Bryan Callahan, Bob Hogan, and William Chambers) celebrated the dedication of the new elementary school at St. Paul’s Mission on 21 September 1975. Kane and Dowdell worked as teachers; Callahan oversaw “general maintenance and buildings in addition to driving a school bus;” Hogan ran the school ranch and farm and drove a school bus; and Chambers coached and taught physical education.<sup>332</sup>

In 1980, three Dominican sisters arrived at St. Paul’s Mission.<sup>333</sup> At the time, the grade levels were paired together, so the JVs and Catholic sisters were expected to teach a wide breadth of material. For instance, Sister Helen taught first and second grade,

<sup>330</sup> Mission Grade School, Personal Collection.

<sup>331</sup> Hartmann, *As It Was*, 2:582–99.

<sup>332</sup> “New Mission School is blessed” *Montana Catholic Register*, October 2, 1975, folder 22, box 6, Clippings, St. Paul’s Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU; and “Mission School Dedicated,” *Montana Catholic Register*, 2 October 1975, folder 22, box 6, General Clippings, St. Paul’s Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU.

<sup>333</sup> These dedicated sisters would eventually replace the Franciscan nuns in Hays, Montana.

while a JV was in charge of third and fourth grade, and so forth. Besides teaching, JVs drove the school bus and maintained the school, which included cleaning the bathrooms on Fridays. One JV offered a shop class to the seventh and eighth graders, while another JV taught physical education.<sup>334</sup> Throughout the late twentieth century, the sisters and JVs assumed numerous responsibilities at the mission school.

In 2003, JVC Northwest informed the JVs in Hays that the administration had decided to close the placement. Due to a shortage in applicants for JVC, a lack of funds, and the belief that the jobs were not challenging enough, JVC Northwest would not send new JVs for the 2003–2004 school year. The 2002–2003 Hays JVs, which included Jess St. Jean and Laura Manning, were irate because they loved their students and Mission Grade School. Sister Helen was distraught because it seemed impossible to recruit teachers to such a remote area. Worried that the children would suffer without competent teachers, Manning and St. Jean, along with a former JV from St. Labre, decided to stay a second year in Hays as employees of the Diocese of Great Falls. Although their loyalty remained with the school, rather than with JVC, the former JVs understood that JVC helped sustain Mission Grade School. Therefore, Sister Helen worked to secure JVs for the upcoming year, while the former JVs rewrote the job descriptions, emphasizing the challenging, yet rewarding, nature of being a teacher.<sup>335</sup>

Then in August 2004 four female volunteers—Barb Lea, Megan Rafferty, Maureen Gardner, and Donna Schank—were assigned to Hays. Previously, JVs were selected to be teachers in charge of a grade level, but this year was different. Two new positions, a reading specialist and a librarian/elementary aide, were created as Native

<sup>334</sup> Mission Grade School, Personal Collection.

<sup>335</sup> Ibid.

teachers from within the community were hired for the third and fourth grade positions.<sup>336</sup>

The faces, the names, and the personalities of the JVs at Hays have changed over time, but JVs continue to teach at Mission Grade School. For first-year teachers, the road is always bumpy, but the teachers and the students soon adjust to each other. The job of a teacher extends beyond the last bell. JVs, along with the other teachers, grade the papers, prepare for the next day of class, organize the arts-and-crafts projects, and clean the classroom. In addition, JVs run Honor Night in the gym on Thursday evenings. This night of games serves as a reward for those students who completed all their homework and behaved well throughout the week. Sometimes JVs schedule a roller skating night in the recreation center for all the students. Also, there is Turkey Bingo, the Christmas show, First Holy Communion, and Graduation to look forward to. The JVs maintain a busy schedule but thoroughly enjoy their time with the children and the larger community. In the end, the JVs probably learn as much from the “Mission Macaronis,” as Sister Helen fondly calls the children, as the students learn from them.

The little community of Hays is integrally linked with the Jesuit Volunteers. Since 1969, JVs have established a constant presence at St. Paul’s Mission. The volunteers help form the backbone of the primary education system at the school. For instance, JVs first taught Joan Racine, then her children, and now her grandchildren. Her sister-in-law was also a JV. Although different volunteers come and go, JVs continue to

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<sup>336</sup> Ibid. I am a former JV and worked as a kindergarten teacher at Mission Grade School in Hays, Montana, from 2004–2006.

arrive each year, just as Mission Grade School continues to endure. And the people of Hays generously welcome each new group into their homes and their hearts.<sup>337</sup>

St. Labre Indian School, approximately three-hundred miles southeast of Hays, Montana, also recruited volunteers. Many volunteers, like Viola Campeau from Minneapolis, have given one, two, or more years of their lives to serving at Saint Labre Mission. A nurse by profession, Campeau volunteered in 1957 as the kindergarten teacher with “twelve 5 year old Cheyennes, two of whom knew no English.” After the first year as an unpaid volunteer, she was hired as the school nurse; she retired in 1983. Campeau is only one of the many volunteers to work at St. Labre. During the 1970s, JVs began arriving in Ashland: “In one year alone, 1978, there were eleven volunteers. Six of them taught in the school, one was a registered nurse and four worked in Cheyenne Homes as tutors, house-parents or maintenance personnel. Almost all of the volunteers have come through the Jesuit Volunteer Corps with headquarters in Washington State. Each receives food, lodging and a small monthly allowance, very little in comparison to the worth of their contribution to the life of the mission.”<sup>338</sup> Since the 1970s, the JVs have interacted with the young students on a daily basis, sharing their joys and frustrations.<sup>339</sup>

For JVs living in a small town, the role of a teacher extends well beyond the work environment. But, unlike Hays JVs, whose jobs follow the same schedule and take place in the same building, St. Labre JVs are dispersed to different placements and work varying hours. In 2004, seven JVs—Jeanette Meleen, Felisa Javier, Regina Braidotti, Eric Holt, Pete Rakowski, Theresa Engel, and Sarah Knuth—journeyed to St. Labre

<sup>337</sup> Mission Grade School, Personal Collection.

<sup>338</sup> Carlan Kraman, O. S. F., *A Portrait of St. Labre Indian Mission through One Hundred Years*, chpt. 9, folder 24, box 1, Published Histories, St. Labre Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU.

<sup>339</sup> Davis, *Native America in the Twentieth Century: An Encyclopedia*, 101.

Indian School. Like the Hays JVs, Braidotti and Engel worked in the elementary school. As reading specialists, they spent their time helping students improve their reading skills. But when school ended for the day and Braidotti and Engel went home, Knuth and Rakowski began their job. These two were dormitory assistants from three o'clock in the afternoon until ten o'clock at night. Many students, such as those from the Crow Reservation who lived a good distance away, boarded at St. Labre during the school week. The JVs served as mentors by assisting the children with their homework during the study hour or by providing recreational opportunities, such as movie nights. The other position open for JVs in 2004 was at the Tall Whiteman Youth and Eagle's Nest Group Homes.

Agents from St. Labre Youth and Family Services place children in the group home if no other option exists for them. For instance, if a child's mother entered drug rehab initially for a year, and other relatives were unable to provide for the youngster, social services sent the child to the group home. Children from ages six to seventeen live in the group homes, and, especially for the little ones, the JVs become pseudo-parents.

For example, JV Meleen served as a houseparent assistant at the boy's group home. Meleen helped the boys with their homework, met with the teachers during parent/teacher conferences, made sure the boys cleaned their rooms, and helped the little ones get ready for bed. She was at the group home from three o'clock in the afternoon to ten o'clock at night from Sunday through Thursday. Meleen enjoyed spending Sundays with the children because they would go hiking, ride bikes, or bake cookies. At first Meleen was upset that she worked exclusively with boys and the all-male staff at the

group home, but overtime she discovered that she loved being the female influence on these boys' lives.<sup>340</sup>

The 2007–2008 JVs included Matt Altieri and Michelle Shortsleeve, the dormitory assistants, Cassie McHugh, a houseparent; Stephanie Pang and Susan Foster, the reading clinicians; and Joe Witiw, a high school tutor. These Ashland JVs maintained a web log of their experiences at St. Labre, which provides insight into some of the duties of the dormitory assistants. For instance, Altieri and Shortsleeve were expected to plan an advent service for 19 December 2008. Altieri admits, “Frightened by the prospect of forced prayer with kids already anxious for break and hyped up by classroom parties with too many candy canes, we decided on the only alternative: a pageant.”<sup>341</sup> The performance was a success.

Another endeavor for the two dorm assistants was resurrecting Dorm Council. In January 2008, Shortsleeve wrote, “Years ago, St. Labre had a Dorm Council. This fall, as Matt and I watched the kids come home from school and plop in front of the TV, as we watched them struggle—on their own—with the same subjects, we decided the dorm needed social and academic leadership. As JVs, sometimes our ideas are cool, and other times, well, we’re the JVs.”<sup>342</sup> Altieri and Shortsleeve accepted eight students for the new Dorm Council and the first objective of the council was to alleviate boredom in the dorms, “In January, the Council ran a successful pool tournament and a great game night in which 23 of 35 dormies participated. (The activity was thought up, planned and executed by two Dorm Councilors.) The girls met the boys in a heated game of Charades

<sup>340</sup> St. Labre, Personal Collection.

<sup>341</sup> The Ashland JV Experience ‘07, <http://ashlandjv.blogspot.com/>.

<sup>342</sup> Ibid.

with a free pass from study hour at stake.”<sup>343</sup> Altieri and Shortsleeve also directed a hike, a sledding adventure, and other activities during the winter, while hosting weekly flag football games for the dorm residents.

According to Meleen, the JVs are very important to the St. Labre community because they provide diversity within the small population. Coming from New Orleans, Meleen helped change the dynamic of the group home.<sup>344</sup> Just as the volunteers give of themselves, the community, in return, always gives back. St. Labre Indian School and Mission Grade School graduates will always associate Jesuit Volunteers with their school experience.

### **Spiritual Formation at School Today**

As Catholic schools, St. Labre and St. Paul’s continue to provide a faith-filled education. Daily prayers, religious education classes, school Masses, and service-oriented projects, strengthen student’s values and promote family community spirit. St. Labre prides itself in offering “a quality education” that “feed[s] the spirit as well as the mind.” For example, during Catholic Schools Week in 2007, the students celebrated Mass, while also demonstrating their respect for their Native culture: “the St. Labre student drum group and several dancers provided a cultural flair” to the Mass. These participants celebrated St. Labre as a Catholic school, but also as a school that respected and promoted Native culture.

Vatican Council II led the way for greater flexibility within the Mass and stronger appreciation of other cultural practices and beliefs. Following the restructuring of the Roman Catholic Church during the 1960s, students attending Catholic mission schools

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<sup>343</sup> Ibid.

<sup>344</sup> St. Labre, Personal Collection.



took part in a new Mass infused with Native cultural elements within churches that incorporated Native art and symbols. Vatican Council II encouraged lay involvement, which prompted Jesuit Volunteers to devote time to the mission schools. Vatican Council II rejuvenated the church and in the process reinvigorated the schools. St. Paul's and St. Labre remain steadfast beacons for Catholic education; however, Vatican Council II demonstrated that they can simultaneously nourish Catholic and Indian identity formation.<sup>345</sup>

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<sup>345</sup> <http://www.stlabre.org/discover/culture/culture.html#.U5DbjShIWaU>, accessed 5 June 2014; and <http://www.stlabre.org/discover/publications/spring-2006.pdf>, accessed 11 February 2015.

## Chapter 5

### **Embracing Being Native: Self Determination at St. Paul’s Mission, St. Labre Indian School, and St. Stephens Indian School**

On 7 May 2009, the Northern Arapaho Tribe completed “a 16-foot-tall buffalo hide tepee, becoming the first tribe in 130 years to create a tepee in an entirely traditional fashion.” Over the course of those 130 years, Indians continued to pitch tipis; however, with the decimation of the buffalo by the 1890s and government restrictions on Indian traditional practices, fewer tipis appeared across Indian Country. Without vast herds of buffalo at their disposal, Indians were forced to use light-weight canvas as a substitute for hides. Since canvas could not withstand stakes being driven through it, “peg loops were introduced, and the pattern of the smoke flaps became trimmer and more standardized.” Eventually hide tipis became relics of the past, until the students at St. Stephens Indian School, along with elders, teachers, specialists, and community members, accomplished the feat—constructing their own traditional buffalo-hide tipi.

Lacking instructional manuals, but equipped with the determination to regain a part of their culture, the Northern Arapaho began the process almost a decade earlier in 2000. The first step involved acquiring knowledge on traditional tipis. St. Stephens’s teachers and students, accompanied by elders, traveled to Washington, D.C., in order to observe one of the few remaining authentic tipis from the 1800s on display at the Smithsonian Institution. They researched extensively, consulted with expert tanner Larry Belitz of Hot Springs, South Dakota, and conducted oral interviews to uncover a traditional building technique. The process was lengthy. It began with the acquisition of twelve buffalo hides and involved soaking the hides in the river, scraping the skins with

elk horn tools and rocks, and sewing the hides together with sinew. The next step entailed crafting the structure of the tipi. The drum keeper and high school culture teacher Eugene Ridgely III made the seenook, a thirty-five foot long braided hide rope, to fasten the nineteen wooden tipi poles at the top. Finally, the participants placed the buffalo hide on the structure.<sup>346</sup>

Seven May was a historic moment for the Northern Arapaho Tribe, but it commemorated more than the creation of the traditional three-pole base tipi by St. Stephens Indian School. Completion of the tipi reiterated the cultural meanings of this singular dwelling: “The old-time tipi was a temple as well as a home. The floor of the tipi represented the earth on which we live, the walls of the tipi the sky, and the poles the trails from earth to the spirit world.”<sup>347</sup> Besides reviving traditional techniques of tipi construction, the lengthy process helped students reconnect with their rich heritage. Further, this moment celebrated the school’s concerted effort to bring Native culture to the forefront of its educational mission.

This renewed spirit to reinforce the students’ Indian identity began to gain strength during the 1960s and 1970s. It has grown stronger with each passing decade. The Kennedy Report, which appeared in 1969, chastised Indian schools for programs geared toward assimilation and advocated for Indian self-determination in education. Following the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975, Indians

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<sup>346</sup> Margaret Matray, “Northern Arapaho’s Buffalo Hide Teepee Helps Tribe Link with Past,” *Casper (WY) Star-Tribune*, May 10, 2009, accessed at <http://www.st-stephens.net/education/components/scrapbook/default.php?sectiondetailid=7&>; and Reginald and Gladys Laubin, *The Indian Tipi: Its History, Construction, and Use*, 2d ed. (1957; repr., Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1977), 3. 13, 201. An authentic tipi is not a symmetrical cone, rather it “is a titled cone, steeper at the back,” and this design allows for greater ventilation by channeling the smoke away from the tent. According to Reginald and Gladys Laubin, twelve buffalo hides encircled a lodge approximately fourteen feet across.

<sup>347</sup> Laubin and Laubin, *The Indian Tipi*, 108.

gained greater influence over their children's education. St. Labre Indian School, St. Paul's Mission Grade School, and St. Stephens Indian School integrated Native culture and language programs into their schools; welcomed Native faculty, parent participation, and Native authority over the schools; and paved the way for higher academic achievement during the last fifty years. Changes, such as St. Stephens's transition to an Indian-controlled contract school or St. Labre's sponsorship of the Beadwork Institute, demonstrate the schools' desires to better nourish the concept of being Native. In the process, the communities have claimed these schools as their own.

### **The Self-Determination Era at the Federal Level**

By taking the initiative to revive the traditional method of building a tipi, St. Stephens Indian School successfully embraced the ideals of self-determination and cultural revitalization and championed the importance of integrating Native traditions within their education. This is a huge accomplishment considering the bleak history of Indian education. Since the arrival of Europeans, the flaws had long been apparent but they were highlighted in 1928, when the Meriam Report chastised federal Indian schooling and recommended that Native people be actively involved in educational planning and school administration. As late as the 1960s, the prospects for culturally sensitive Indian education still seemed dim. Schools continued to suffer from inadequate funding and students experienced only limited exposure to Indian culture.

During the postwar years, the BIA attempted to retain complete control of the reservations, approving and overseeing all funds, programs, jobs, and even tribal land. Indian veterans, however, had become accustomed to equal treatment in the armed forces. When they returned home they demanded greater rights for themselves and their

people. As America's position in the world flourished, the dominant society believed integration "into the larger society was both inevitable and good." Slowly the Red Power movement emerged to counter the dominant society's forced assimilation. In the early 1960s, regional protests, such as the Pacific Northwest "fish-ins," arose to protect treaty rights. Native activism, however, gained greater notoriety during the Indian takeover of Alcatraz Island in 1969. The American Indian Movement (AIM), which had formed a year earlier, galvanized protests across the nation—a demonstration at Plymouth Rock in 1971; the Trail of Broken Treaties in November 1972, which culminated in the BIA takeover in Washington, D.C.; and the standoff at Wounded Knee in the spring of 1973. By the mid-1970s, "the modern Indian movement had crystallized."<sup>348</sup>

Responding to the new mood, Indian schools began to implement radical initiatives designed to strengthen Native culture in the education system. In 1964, the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) programs, under President Lyndon B. Johnson's War on Poverty campaign, paved the way for more tribal control over federal funds. With OEO financial support and a BIA building, Navajos took the initiative and opened their own school, Rough Rock Demonstration School, which began instruction under an all-Navajo school board in 1966. Rough Rock Demonstration School may have set a precedent, but other Indian schools across the country remained problematic.

In the late 1960s, several U.S. senators called for a study of Indian education. Echoing the Meriam Report's critiques, the Senate study "Indian Education: A National Tragedy—A National Challenge" or Kennedy Report, which appeared in 1969, called for major changes. This included Indian parent involvement and community support for

<sup>348</sup> Charles F. Wilkinson, *Blood Struggle: The Rise of Modern Indian Nations* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2005), 21, 103–4, 129, 132–49, 177, 189, 284–85.

schooling, more federal funding, and a curriculum geared toward Indians. The Kennedy Report, which emerged from a special subcommittee on Indian education chaired by Senator Robert Kennedy and later Senator Edward Kennedy, denounced historical federal education policies directed toward Indians, arguing that they supported “coercive assimilation” that was detrimental for Native students.

The Kennedy Report received wide spread attention and spurred the drive for Indian self-determination in education. In order to address the needs of Indian children and promote the infusion of tribal culture in school, Native educators took the lead in the movement by founding the National Indian Education Association in 1969, soon followed by the Coalition of Indian Controlled School Boards in 1971. Recognizing the positive effects of the OEO, the federal government began to adopt this unprecedented approach to Indian policy. Spearheading this approach, President Richard M. Nixon delivered a seminal Message to Congress in July 1970, which endorsed a revolutionary Indian policy advocating for greater tribal control on issues that affected Native people. Nixon dubbed it Indian self-determination without termination.

By the early 1970s, Congress had begun to add its voice. In 1972 it passed the Indian Education Act, which appropriated funds to support Native control of public schools under the direction of the newly formed Office of Indian Education. In 1975, Congress passed the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act [P.L. 93-638]. Signed by President Gerald R. Ford, the Indian Self-Determination Act enabled tribes to sign contracts with the BIA to run their own schools. This momentous measure introduced tribal contracting with the federal government, empowering tribes to operate their own education, health, welfare, and other service programs. Before its passage,

federal agencies had planned and managed all of these programs. The 1975 law said that tribes could contract directly with federal agencies, obtain funding, and direct their own programs.<sup>349</sup>

Although these crucial measures modified the old policy of paternalism, thereby opening many schools to local control, the Indian schools themselves still struggled to meet the needs of Native students. The Indian Nations at Risk Task Force, co-chaired by former Secretary of Education Terrel H. Bell and Dr. William Demmert (Oglalla Sioux and Tlingit), released the report “Indian Nations at Risk: An Educational Strategy for Action” in 1991. The report stressed the importance of early childhood education, bilingual courses, teachers who were highly trained and considerate toward Native students, community/parent involvement, and a learning environment that valued Native culture in order to meet the needs of Native students. Following the release of the Task Force report, members of the White House Conference on Indian Education met and elaborated upon the Task Force’s goals by calling for an Independent Board of Indian Education, which never materialized. In 1995, Indian educators at the “National American Indian/Alaska Native Education Summit” crafted their own policy statement on Indian education, the Comprehensive Federal Indian Education Policy Statement (CFIEPS), which President Bill Clinton signed into law on 6 August 1998. This was a historic moment, because as historian Margaret Connell-Szasz points out, “It had lifted the dialogue from one of dependency to one that demonstrated government dealing with

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<sup>349</sup> Sonciray Bonnell, “Chemawa Indian Boarding School: The First One Hundred Years, 1880 to 1980” (master’s thesis, Dartmouth College, 1997), 107–8; Sally Hyer, *One House, One Voice, One Heart: Native American Education at the Santa Fe Indian School* (Santa Fe: Museum of New Mexico Press, 1993), 72; Wilkinson, *Blood Struggle*, 197, 281, 284–87; Connell Szasz, *Education and the American Indian*, 150, 197–200; Margaret Connell Szasz, “The Path to Self-Determination: American Indian Education, 1940–1990” in *One House, One Voice, One Heart*, Hyer, 97–98; and <http://www.bia.gov/cs/groups/mywcsp/documents/collection/idc017334.pdf>.

government, a level unimaginable in earlier generations.” The executive order led the way for stronger partnerships between tribes and the federal government on education issues.<sup>350</sup>

### **Early Integration of Tribal Culture in Missions**

Well before the historic changes brought about by the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act, certain mission schools had introduced Native culture into the curriculum. In 1940, Mrs. Jennie Bad Road, a resident of Hays, taught “old Indian arts” at St. Paul’s Mission. St. Paul’s Mission teacher Sr. Clare Hartmann recounted that “The junior and senior high school pupils are making buckskin sewing boxes in their arts and crafts class.” During one class, “they spent 45 minutes watching Mrs. Bad Road scrape a buffalo hide.” Student reactions to this project illustrated the inroads of historic assimilation policies. After the demonstration, one puzzled female pupil exclaimed, “Why do we have to watch scraping and tanning buffalo hides? We aren’t going to do that; we are modern Indians!”<sup>351</sup> On the other hand, St. Paul’s High School remained committed to preparing their modern Indian students for mainstream society, especially after Commissioner of Indian Affairs Dillon S. Myer (1950–1953) demanded an end to the federal government’s responsibilities to tribes and the rapid assimilation of Indians into urban American society. While termination and relocation programs reverberated throughout Indian country, the faculty at St. Paul’s, nevertheless, understood the value in reaffirming the students’ tribal identity. Sr. Clare mentions that in 1968, as Indian

<sup>350</sup> Connell Szasz, *Education and the American Indian*, 201, 217–19, 221, 226, 231–32, 233 (quoted).

<sup>351</sup> Hartmann, *As It Was*, 1:50, 55, 63, 65.



activists in Minneapolis created the American Indian Movement, “the Mission was [still] the only school in Montana with a class in Indian Culture.”<sup>352</sup>

By 1969, Sr. Clare had revitalized her American history high school course. Her revised history class intended to generate pride in being Native. The timing was ideal; the media attention on the Indian occupation of Alcatraz on 20 November 1969 garnered a growing national awareness of the clamor for Indian rights. In Sr. Clare’s course, instead of focusing on the trajectory of white men through American history, the juniors and seniors studied Indian history. Sr. Clare collected stories from Gros Ventre elders and read them to the class. The students discussed the stories and also composed summaries of them. In 1972, Sr. Clare also asked each student to compile “two biographies of older citizens in the community” for a project in the Gros Ventre history and culture class.<sup>353</sup>

St. Labre Indian School and St. Stephens Mission also integrated cultural programs into their curriculum before the congressional self-determination legislation of the 1970s. In 1970, the third, fourth, and fifth grade students at St. Labre studied the Cheyenne language. Besides the new language course offered in the primary grades, Cheyenne high school students formed an Indian Club in 1973, the same year that AIM and its followers occupied Wounded Knee. The Indian Club planned activities, including “a handgame in the school’s bandroom.” The following year, “an annual Indian Heritage Day in October was put on the [St. Labre] school calendar.”<sup>354</sup> Similar modifications

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<sup>352</sup> Ibid., 2:483.

<sup>353</sup> Ibid., 2:502, 557.

<sup>354</sup> Carlan Kraman, O. S. F., *A Portrait of St. Labre Indian Mission through One Hundred Years*, folder 24, box 1, Published Histories, St. Labre Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU; and St. Labre Indian School, *The Morning Star People, 1973*, folder 8, box 1, Publications, St. Labre Records, Oregon Province,

took place at St. Stephens. Father Len Murray, the superior of the mission in 1969, stated, “There has been a change in attitudes in the last ten years. . . . The emphasis now is on making the Indians conscious of their own culture and language so they will respect their ancestors.”<sup>355</sup> In 1969, St. Stephens offered a beadwork class for the girls scheduled “during the last period every Friday throughout the coming semester.” St. Stephens’s newspaper, *Drum Beats*, announced “Mrs. Little (the instructor) will probably teach the Arapahoe style, but she is also qualified to teach the Shoshoni. Also beginning this semester, an Arapahoe language course will be given to the 1st and 2nd graders. The teacher will again be Mrs. Little.”<sup>356</sup> In 1973, “Pius Moss, a descendant of Chief Black Coal and an active member of St. Stephens, began teaching Arapaho Language and Culture in the classroom—a language he had been punished for speaking when he attended St Stephens Grade School as a child. This policy change was welcomed by both the Native Americans and the school personnel.” Moss supplemented the language component with course materials generated from interviews with tribal elders.<sup>357</sup>

During the 1970s, St. Stephens took part in the Follow Through program under the direction of Sr. Patricia Kidd. This program extended the federal services that children received in the Head Start program. Students in kindergarten through third grade participated in Follow Through, which promoted stronger parental involvement and

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FCLSC, GU. Sr. Carlan Kraman recounts that “Beginning in 1968 the Cheyennes were invited to have their annual summer pow-wow on the mission grounds.”

<sup>355</sup> Flasch (Hendrickson), Barbara L., *For God and Country: The Changing Role of St. Stephen’s Mission*, M.A. paper, University of Wyoming, 1973, roll 1, series 8, microfilm, General Publications, SSMR, RML, MU.

<sup>356</sup> *Drum Beats*, 25 January 1969, roll 1, series 5, microfilm, Mission and School Publications, SSMR, RML, MU.

<sup>357</sup> “Change in Direction” *The Wind River Rendezvous* July/August/September 1984, No. 3, p. 17; and Flasch, “‘For God and Country’.” *The Wind River Rendezvous* attributes the language and culture course to Pius Moss, while Barbara L. Flasch wrote, “Leonard Moss, an Indian teacher at the school since 1971, teaches a course in Indian history and culture. . . . Mr. Moss interviews elderly people in the tribe” (ibid.).

stressed “group cooperation over individual competition.” It moved away from assimilationist educational policy that emphasized individual property, ownership, and accomplishment over tribal land and the importance of the community.<sup>358</sup> On 21 May 1970 President Nixon encouraged Congress to pass the Emergency School Aid Act (ESAA) to help facilitate desegregation and promote better education for all Americans. By 1976, with support from the ESAA, St. Stephens had introduced Career Education. The program facilitated guest lectures and field trips that brought students out of the classroom and in contact with everyday job experiences at a variety of places—a farm, packing company, library, dairy, and bank. St. Stephens, like other Indian schools, adeptly took new federal funding initiatives and used them to their benefit.<sup>359</sup>

Throughout the 1970s, all three mission schools made a concerted effort to integrate Native language and culture into the school curriculum. Besides implementing specific classes geared toward the Native students, the three schools demonstrated further compassion and cultural awareness that celebrated being Indian. Indian dances were held at all three mission gyms.<sup>360</sup> In 1972, St. Stephens, which educated 250 students in kindergarten through eighth grade, summarized its objective. It could easily apply to all three schools: “Our goal is to treat and interact with the Indian as a person of great worth, to promote a collective and individual sense of Indian identity and meaning by instilling pride in race in conjunction with love for Christ and His Church.”<sup>361</sup> The cultural renaissance linked with Red Power meant that the mission schools no longer sought to

<sup>358</sup> Jane Priwer, “Rendezvous at Wind River,” *St. Louis University Magazine*, 48:1 (1974): 4–9, roll 1, series 8, microfilm, General Publications, SSMR, RML, MU.

<sup>359</sup> *The Learning Tree*, vol. 1, no. 14, December 9, 1976, roll 2, series 8, microfilm, General Publications, SSMR, RML, MU.

<sup>360</sup> St. Labre Indian School, *The Race of Sorrows*, 1956–1959, Newsletter, folder 7, box 1, Publications, St. Labre Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU.

<sup>361</sup> General Correspondence, 1972–1973, roll 2, series 1-1, microfilm, Mission and School Correspondence, SSMR, RML, MU.

eradicate Native identity; they had become places for students to reconnect with their Native roots.

### **Taking Ownership of the Schools**

In 1965, St. Stephens High School “was flourishing and graduated 33 students”; however, by 1967, limited finances had forced St. Stephens to downsize by eliminating the tenth through twelfth grades.<sup>362</sup> In 1974, Father Killoren, the superior of the mission, informed the superintendent of the school Fr. Anthony J. Short that the prospects for the mission appeared dim; by 1976 it seemed that the school’s meager income would not be able to cover the cost of the school. Faced with this dilemma, the school staff, mission employees, Indian parents, and parishioners met multiple times to discuss the options for St. Stephens. The Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975 suddenly provided a viable solution. The final decision, effective on 1 June 1976, “turned the School over to a private Corporation, the St. Stephens Indian School Educational Association, whose majority was Indian.” With support from the Arapaho and Shoshone Business Council, the board of directors for the St. Stephens Indian School Educational Association “submitted a proposal to the United States Bureau of Indian Affairs” to acquire “funds to operate the School as a private, Indian controlled effort.” When the proposal was accepted, St. Stephens Indian School became a BIA contract school. “Basically, a ‘contract’ school means that the word ‘Indian’ in the title of the old Mission school refers not only to a school for Indians but also a new and exciting educational enterprise controlled by Indians. The new owners are some 120 residents of the Wind River Reservation.” The financial plight at St. Stephens, which at first

<sup>362</sup> Summary History of the Mission, 1960–1970, roll 1, series 2, microfilm, Mission and School Reports, SSMR, RML, MU.

appeared to signify failure, now presented the community with “a unique opportunity . . . to assert Indian control and operation of the School.”<sup>363</sup>

Although embracing the tenets of self-determination, St. Stephens did not abandon its past. The “Goals, Objectives, Standards” memo, circulated by Saint Stephens Indian School, stated:

We also wish to maintain the values and traditions that Saint Stephens has engendered for the last 88 years. These too, are now a part of the rich heritage of our Arapaho and Shoshoni peoples. For one whole year now our board has been meeting formally. Through discussions, opinionaires, questionnaires, home visits, and hundreds of meetings we listened to the community. Over and over we heard the same comment. “Keep Saint Stephens the way it has been.” We think they mean keep the traditions and the values, and keep the dedicated staff. In a way, then, Saint Stephens will remain as it is. But it will be different. So with the continuance of a dedicated staff, but with the addition of substantial funding, and with a new-founded pride in our heritage and the desire to instill this pride in our youth, Saint Stephens can reach the height of our Indian Community’s desires and expectations.<sup>364</sup>

Under the new system, initially the faculty remained unchanged, and “the board retained the nun superintendent and several nun teachers.” However, by 1983, only two sisters remained, and over time “more and more of the staff were themselves Indian, a considerable number actually being St. Stephen’s graduates.”<sup>365</sup>

Yet another question remained—how to instill Catholic values at St. Stephens Indian School. Faced with the decision to become a contract school supported with

<sup>363</sup> “Indian Power Saves a School,” n.d., 7 pp. [typescript], roll 2, series 7, microfilm, Jesuit Papers, SSMR, RML, MU; “The Founding of St. Stephen’s A Shared Memory,” roll 1, series 2, microfilm, Mission and School Reports, SSMR, RML, MU; St. Stephens Indian School, by Bob Spoonhunter, series 5, microfilm, Mission and School Publications, SSMR, RML, MU; and “Change in Direction” *The Wind River Rendezvous* July/August/September 1983, No. 3, p. 18.

<sup>364</sup> “Goals, Objectives, Standards,” series 4, microfilm, Proceedings, SSMR, RML, MU.

<sup>365</sup> “The Founding of St. Stephen’s A Shared Memory,” roll 1, series 2, microfilm, Mission and School Reports, SSMR, RML, MU; St. Stephens Indian School, by Bob Spoonhunter, series 5, microfilm, Mission and School Publications, SSMR, RML, MU; and *Phi Delta Kappan*, November 1980, roll 2, series 8, microfilm, General Publications, SSMR, RML, MU; and “Change in Direction” *The Wind River Rendezvous* July/August/September 1983, No. 3, p. 18.

federal government funding, the mission circulated a poll to determine if St. Stephens's parents still wanted the mission to continue teaching Catholic doctrine. The results of the poll "indicated that about 90% of the 100 families whose children attended St. Stephens wanted the school to be a Catholic school." An overwhelming majority of Arapaho people approved the fostering of Catholic traditions in the community. The community's decision to retain Catholic instruction in the new Indian-controlled school "might seem strange . . . , especially when you consider that such traditions are of fairly recent origin in Indian life. The answer seems to be that such traditions are now seen as part of the Indian traditions. . . . The maintenance of a religiously centered value system is seen as far more favorable to Indian ways than the more 'modern' and secular system of the public schools."

Clearly St. Stephens Indian School could not teach religion in the classrooms, since the federal government provided financial support. Instead, in 1976, the school initiated a "release time" program for religious instructions, whereby students with parental approval could "attend biweekly religious education classes in a classroom still owned and operated by the Mission." St. Stephens Mission itself paid the salary of the religious education teachers and "over 98% of the parents" enrolled their children in religious instruction. State law allows for only one hour per week for release time; however, since the school is located on the reservation the school board granted permission to meet up to three hours per week. The Jesuits and sisters continued to oversee the "chapel, craft shop, alcoholism center, home visitation program, mail room, adult education, poor relief—all supported by private donations. In these activities, as in

the school itself, Native American traditions and values are celebrated, not obliterated.”<sup>366</sup>

Like many other Indian schools across Indian Country during this transitional period from 1976 to 1983, St. Stephens—supported by Superintendent Sr. Joyce Duroake and an energetic Indian School Board led by Arapaho chairman John Warren, Sr.—”developed its own Indian oriented curriculum.” This shift in focus spurred a culture studies course, an Indian dance group, and the approval of the Bilingual Curriculum Enrichment Project to gather and hold Native materials to be utilized in the classroom in 1982. That same year, Eugene Ridgley, Gail Ridgely, and Cindy Collins also organized a bilingual choir. In 1983, the school board, with federal support, supervised the construction of a new building “a quarter of a mile away, in a pasture leased [for \$1 a year] from the Mission.” For the first time, “an all Indian Administration headed by Arapaho Louis Hendley took over the day to day operation of the [newly relocated St. Stephens Indian School] grade school.”<sup>367</sup>

Parents and other tribal members actively participated in formulating school policies and procedures by voting for school board members and joining the Parent Teacher Association. The teachers also made a concerted effort to visit students and their families in their homes. Parents chose to support and enroll their children at St. Stephens not because they had to, but because they wanted to. They were free to send their

<sup>366</sup> Anthony J. Short, “Indian Power Saves a School,” *Momentum*, December 1976, pp. 37–42, and “Indian Power Saves a School,” n.d., 7 pp. [typescript], roll 2, series 7, microfilm, Jesuit Papers, SSMR, RML, MU; Bernard D. Pagan, S.J. to Anthony J. Short, S.J., April 6, 1976, series 4, microfilm, Proceedings, SSMR, RML, MU; and *Phi Delta Kappan*, November 1980, roll 2, series 8, microfilm, General Publications, SSMR, RML, MU.

<sup>367</sup> “The Founding of St. Stephen’s A Shared Memory,” roll 1, series 2, microfilm, Mission and School Reports, SSMR, RML, MU; St. Stephens Indian School, by Bob Spoonhunter, series 5, microfilm, Mission and School Publications, SSMR, RML, MU; “Bilingual—Title IV Parents’ Newsletter,” Vol. 1. No. 3, April 1983, series 5, microfilm, Mission and School Publications, SSMR, RML, MU; and “Change in Direction” *The Wind River Rendezvous* July/August/September 1983, No. 3, p. 18.

children to the public schools in nearby Riverton, Lander, or Fort Washakie, “but ‘almost without exception,’ [Robert T.] Reilly observes, ‘parents who feel strongly about such things as academics and discipline opt for St. Stephens.’”<sup>368</sup>

In 1982, former principal and board-appointed administrator Sister Joyce Durosko addressed the accomplishments made since the transition to a contract school. She stated,

The “Second Hundred Years” of educational programs in St Stephens Indian School is off to a wonderful start. I am pleased with the record achieved by our people; I see good reasons to be hopeful for the future. Our students are now on a comparable level, in reading and math, with the national norms. Absenteeism, once a major problem, has been reduced to about 9%—which is below the national level. Further, our school programs, Pre-school through 9<sup>th</sup> Grade, show a substantial increase in enrollment. On our school staff of some 67 people, there are 49 Native Americans. Our principal, Mr Louis Headley, is a Northern Arapaho, and three other professionally qualified Native Americans of this reservation hold key positions in administration. With the special help of Central Wyoming College and the University of Wyoming, we have moved to the realistic creation of a ‘Native Teachers Corp’—all 19 of the Teachers Aids in our school are local Indians, and by 1983 they will be at their junior year level of work for a college degree in Education.<sup>369</sup>

The second hundred years at St. Stephens Indian School was “off to a wonderful start.”

The Native community had demonstrated that they could effectively oversee the school, integrate more Native staff, and offer a curriculum that could meet the needs of its students in a decidedly changing Indian Country.

While faculty, parents, and students at St. Stephens were deliberating the future of their school in 1974, St. Paul’s Mission was facing its own crucible. On the morning of 5 December 1973, flames engulfed the Mission High School structure. After the school was reduced to rubble and ash, the grade school students finished the 1973–1974 school year at Hays Public School. The high school students, however, refused to enroll at the

<sup>368</sup> *Phi Delta Kappan*, November 1980, roll 2, series 8, microfilm, General Publications, SSMR, RML, MU.

<sup>369</sup> “St Stephens Indian School” *The Wind River Rendezvous* April/May/June 1982, No. 2, p. 13.



public high school in Harlem, Montana: “All unbeknown to the teachers, several of the high school students had gone to the Council and demanded that they bring in portable classrooms so that Mission High could continue until the end.”<sup>370</sup> Although the high school remained in operation in three portable classrooms for the second semester, the bishop, priests, sisters, and community reached the decision to terminate the high school and build a new mission grade school.

On 26 August 1975, Mission Grade School officially opened its doors. On 12 September, Bishop Eldon B. Schuster “arrayed in War bonnet and bead work, accompanied by Tall Chief in Indian regalia, both mounted on horses, led the pompous parade of festive cars, horseback riders, and singers.” Those in attendance received lunch, while “dances were performed . . . and ended with a welcome dance and song.” Later that evening, Elmer Main adopted Sister Benno into the Gros Ventre Tribe. The next morning was Dedication Day, which entailed Mass in front of the new school with “guitar music; honor song, and sweet grass”; speeches; the gift of a “beautiful buffalo robe which was hung in the corridor of the school until the gym was complete”; and a potluck. A combination of Indian and Catholic ceremonies dedicated the opening of the new school building.<sup>371</sup> Throughout the two-day celebration, the Native community claimed St. Paul’s Mission as Gros Ventre.

Although the community appropriated the school as their own, the grade-level teachers remained white. In 2004, after over one hundred years of instruction, Joan Racine and Vivian Webb, members of the Gros Ventre Tribe, accepted full-time teaching positions at St. Paul’s Mission. As the first certified Native teachers at the school, their

<sup>370</sup> Hartmann, *As It Was*, 2:585–86.

<sup>371</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:614–15.; and “Hays School: Cause for Celebration,” *Great Falls Tribune*, 2 October 1975, folder 22, box 6, General Clippings, St. Paul’s Records, Oregon Province, FCLSC, GU.

presence is significant. They are not the first Native employees; others Natives have served in various capacities as coaches, teacher aids, support staff, cooks, janitors, and as teachers in the specialty classes. Racine and Webb, however, as the fourth and third grade teachers, respectively, can impart knowledge to their impressionable students and show them the value of learning. They have sought to integrate the Gros Ventre language, traditional stories, and culture into the classrooms (see Appendix, figure 11). Joan's grandma graduated from St. Paul's; Joan graduated in 1972, and her grandkids are now the fifth generation attending St. Paul's. Joan explained that she applied to teach at the mission because it offered more administrative support than the public schools. The principal, Sr. Helen, stands behind the teachers. She holds the teachers to a high standard and keeps the students in line. The combination of strong leadership and structure makes the school a very pleasant and productive place to work. Besides the three religious sisters, Joan and Vivian have the longest tenure as faculty at the mission, which means first-year teachers look to them for guidance and advice. Their continuity at the school, their connection to the reservation, their willingness to share their knowledge, and their devotion to the students makes an impact.<sup>372</sup>

Before the 2008–2009 school year, a few boys broke into the mission; a fire ignited, and it burned the school to the ground (see Appendix, figure 12). The mission staff faced the daunting task of teaching in a temporary facility—the Community Center—with limited supplies. Margaret Matt, the second grade teacher at the time, admits, “We taught in cramped spaces, but with the children eager to learn and support from the community, we were able to make the best of the situation.” The community encouraged the sisters to rebuild, arranged fundraising events, and participated in the

<sup>372</sup> St. Paul's Grade School, Personal Collection.

planning and building of the new school. The largest kindergarten class, twenty-six students, enrolled at the Mission for the 2009–2010 school year, and in January 2010, the students and teachers joyfully began class in their brand new building with school Wi-Fi, computers in each classroom, a terrific library, large gym, Title One classroom, resource room, science room, and faculty lounge (see Appendix, figure 13).<sup>373</sup> Although Mission Grade School remains a private school under the Catholic diocese of Great Falls, generation after generation of students continue to attend St. Paul’s Mission, which has created a bond between the community and the school. Ultimately, it was the outpouring of community support that made the new building a reality for Mission Grade School.

While St. Stephens transitioned into a contract school and St. Paul’s remained a private school, St. Labre followed St. Stephens lead, but resumed its place as a private institution. St. Labre operated as a contract school with the BIA from 1978 through 1984. St. Labre Mission leased the facilities, while a community-elected school board oversaw the school. Under the contract, the federal government provided \$400,000 per year to run St. Labre. In 1985, the Catholic diocese of Great Falls again assumed control over the school, while “a community advisory board, elected mostly from the Northern Cheyenne Reservation area but including one member from the Crow Tribe, provided input to the school management.” Restored to private school status, “its budget increased to \$1.7 million.” At this time, the faculty and staff consisted primarily of non-Indian personnel, “there was one Cheyenne and one Sioux teacher, one Cheyenne counselor and

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<sup>373</sup> Margaret Matt, *Regis University Magazine* 20, no. 1 (fall 2011): 29.

15 Cheyenne paraprofessionals.”<sup>374</sup> By 2010, however, 53 percent of the 295 St. Labre employees were Native Americans.<sup>375</sup>

As a private school, St. Labre has maintained a flourishing fundraising campaign, and generous donations enabled the school to build a brand new dormitory (see Appendix, figure 14). On 23 September 2011, the St. Labre drum circle opened the dedication celebration of the new dorm. Executive director Curtis Yarlott provided the opening remarks, thanking those who had made the construction possible, remarking that the dorm has been a ten-year process, and reminding the assembled guests that according to Crow tradition we have three mothers: biological mother, earth, and home. Using kinship terms, he equated the St. Labre dormitory with an aunt or foster mother. Yarlott quoted Winston Churchill who once said, “We shape our buildings and then our buildings shape us.” According to Yarlott, the dorm symbolically stands for the convergence of two cultures, the circular shape of the entrance represents Native culture and the square shape represents western tradition. These two forms come together in the center at the chapel because, as Yarlott mentions, “for us here at St. Labre, faith is the anchor that ties those together. . . . When we can bring together the strengths of our two cultures and tie it together by an anchor of faith . . . that is when we and our children can soar the highest.” Following Yarlott’s remarks, the dorm council president gave a speech, Father Pascal Siler offered a blessing, Charles Little Old Man conducted the eagle whistle prayer, and the ribbon was ceremoniously cut. The elders smudged the new lodge with cedar to bring good fortune to the dorm. The dedication confirmed how the dorm, the celebration, and

<sup>374</sup> *We, the Northern Cheyenne People: our land, our history, our culture* (Lame Deer, Mont.: Chief Dull Knife College, 2008), 104.

<sup>375</sup> “St. Labre Indian School Continues 127-Year heritage of Service to Native American People of SE Montana,” 24 March 2011, <http://www.prweb.com/releases/2011/03/prweb5193204.htm>, accessed 9 June 2014.

St. Labre Indian School all infuse western, Native, and Catholic elements together. By blending these components, the students can claim the dorm, and St. Labre, as their own.<sup>376</sup>

In the aftermath of the Red Power and cultural revitalization movement, a spectrum of Native control characterizes all three schools: an all Indian board and administration directly oversees St. Stephens; a Native advisory board, along with faculty, staff, and administration, a portion of which are Native, work in conjunction with the Catholic diocese of Great Falls at St. Labre; the diocese, the Jesuits, and the Dominican sisters run St. Paul's Mission, but they are supported by the community of Hays. The crucial component remains local community involvement. All three schools continue to operate because parents choose to send their children. Students, alumni, families, and the larger Native community share a bond with these institutions because their presence has been felt generation after generation. Over time, the three schools, once foreign to the Native communities, became appropriated by each community.

### **Academic Achievements**

While they integrated Native culture and language and increased Native participation in the schools, St. Labre, St. Paul's, and St. Stephens never lost sight of their main task—providing students with the skills necessary for academic success. For students to succeed they need to feel supported and respected. The schools have implemented curricula that foster Native growth and provide programs/scholarships to encourage students to continue their education. According to the St. Labre Indian School website, students attending St. Labre are expected to master the critical subject areas in academia, understand and appreciate Native American identity, and receive a sound

<sup>376</sup> St. Labre Dorm Dedication September 23, 2011, dvd, Personal Collection.

moral foundation.<sup>377</sup> St. Labre Indian School could be mistaken for a small college campus. St. Labre has classrooms, dorms, a cafeteria, museum, church, sports facilities, and numerous other buildings. Besides the impressive campus layout, St. Labre also offers a large selection of courses. For instance, high school students can take the traditional classes (math, English, history, science), as well as art, shop class, welding, Cheyenne language, Cheyenne writing, Cheyenne beadwork, and Crow language. The school effectively provides opportunities for cultural growth for both Cheyenne and Crow students. St. Labre strives “to support the culture and history” of its students by offering Native American literature, history, tribal government, “Cheyenne and Crow Indian languages, Cheyenne history, and Native American drumming.” Some students choose both the Cheyenne and Crow courses, especially the students who are half Crow and half Cheyenne. Since 1986, after President Ronald Reagan issued a proclamation to recognize American Indian Week, St. Labre sponsors a Pow Wow during this commemorative week/month. Programs directed by St. Labre, such as the Beadwork Institute for middle and high school students, also promote cultural awareness. In 2010, a freshman at St. Labre High School who attended the Beadwork Institute “entered his beaded cradleboard in the highly competitive American Indian Student Art Show, held annually at the renowned Heard Museum’s American Indian Student Art Show and Sale in Phoenix, Arizona.” Competing against 5,000 contestants, the St. Labre student won first place for the beadwork division, the Judges Choice Award, and Best of Show. St.

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<sup>377</sup> <http://www.stlabreindianschool.org/domain/18>, accessed 5 June 2014.

Labre “combine[s] education, spirituality, and Native American culture to educate the whole child.”<sup>378</sup>

St. Labre maintains a strong enrollment; in 2010, 625 students earned an average attendance rate of 94 percent. Twenty-four seniors graduated from St. Labre High School in May 2010. For the first time, all of the graduates were accepted into college. Although some of the graduates postponed enrollment, 83 percent began taking college courses in the fall, which “was an even higher percentage than recent years: 74% in 2009; 53% in 2008; and 72% in 2007” and “significantly outpace[d] the national average of 17% of Native Americans continuing on to higher education after high school graduation, an acknowledgement of St. Labre students’ educational preparedness.” Drop-out rates for St. Labre High School (1.7 percent in 2009–2010 and 0 percent in 2008–2009) remain well below the average for Montana Native American students (10.6 percent and 8.8 percent) and are also lower than the average for all Montana students (4.3 percent and 3.6 percent). During the 2006–2007 school year, St Labre converted the middle school into an academy, and then extended the academy model to the primary grades and high

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<sup>378</sup>“St. Labre Indian School Continues 127-Year heritage of Service to Native American People of SE Montana,” 24 March 2011, <http://www.prweb.com/releases/2011/03/prweb5193204.htm>, accessed 9 June 2014; and <http://www.stlabre.org/discover/culture/culture.html#.U5DbjShIWaU>, accessed 5 June 2014. In 1990, Congress selected the month of November as “National American Indian Heritage Month.” For more information on the proclamations for Native American Week, see <http://www.loc.gov/law/help/commemorative-observations/american-indian.php>, accessed 18 February 2015.

school.<sup>379</sup> St. Labre also offers supplemental scholarships and has a mentoring program to help students with the transition from high school to college.<sup>380</sup>

The statistics for St. Labre are phenomenal, their complex is beautiful, and their fundraising initiative is extremely lucrative. While St. Labre success and stability is remarkable, its Catholic mission counterpart in Montana remains steadfast in its commitment to its students. St. Paul's Mission School, whose financial plight is troubling, still has a bright future ahead. It is not a artifact from the past. Instead, a new building has erected with state-of-the-art equipment; the primary school curriculum is first-rate; the administration and teachers provide a safe and friendly learning environment where Native culture and language is incorporated; and the mission continues to be an integral part of the community. Although the school has made progress and all are diligently working to improve reading levels and math scores, it can only prepare students for middle school (seventh and eighth grades) and high school and hope that they will find the drive, determination, and support to graduate from high school and pursue a college degree.

St. Stephens also seeks to improve reading and math proficiency; however, the school did meet the standards for Adequate Yearly Progress:

St. Stephens Indian School is pleased to announce the district has met Adequate Yearly Progress, (AYP) the educational standards set by the Federal Department of Education and the Bureau of Indian Education. AYP is part of the federal No Child Left Behind Act and holds schools

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<sup>379</sup> "St. Labre Indian School Continues 127-Year heritage of Service to Native American People of SE Montana," 24 March 2011, <http://www.prweb.com/releases/2011/03/prweb5193204.htm>, accessed 9 June 2014.

<sup>380</sup> <http://www.stlabre.org/discover/culture/culture.html#.U5DbjShIWaU>, accessed 5 June 2014.



accountable to students, parents, teachers, and the community. The purpose of AYP is to ensure that all students have reading and math skills that prepare them for the future. Overall, a school either meets AYP or it does not. Fortunately, there are many ways for schools to meet the criteria for AYP. St. Stephens Indian School was able to meet AYP performance through a provision called Safe Harbor, which is a measurement of test improvement. Safe Harbor is achieved when a subgroup has greatly improved since the previous year even though they have not met the state goal. This past year, St. Stephens Students showed great success in the area of reading. While we are excited that our students made great gains in reading ability, we understand there are many more gains to be made. St. Stephens Indian School is committed to using all our available resources to help our students achieve on grade level with all of our learning targets and show we can be competitive with any other school in the state.<sup>381</sup>

While working to improve math and reading scores, St. Stephens also offers a beautiful, top-notch facility (see Appendix, figure 15). The arrangement of the large science classroom in the high school, for example, has been ideally suited for STEM-based instruction, with half of the room equipped as a lab and the other half as a standard classroom. The lab had slate-topped lab tables, scientific charts, excellent lab equipment, and all of the necessary safety features. The entire school includes state-of-the-art technology. Each classroom, for instance, features wall-mounted projectors and smart boards. The school continues to employ Native teachers, administrators, and school board members; it seeks active parental involvement; and offers a curriculum that supports and reaffirms Arapaho identity. Course offerings include “Arapaho language, traditions, history, and crafts.” The school promotes class discussions on current issues affecting Native Americans, guest speakers from the community share Arapaho stories, students partake in sweat lodges and traditional events, and an ethos for community service reverberates throughout the school. The high school principal Dorene Cunningham also emphasizes the importance of “incorporating multiple intelligences

<sup>381</sup> <http://www.st-stephens.net/education/district/district.php?sectionid=1>, accessed May 2, 2014.

strategies to address cultural learning styles and giftedness.”<sup>382</sup> St. Stephens Indian School provides an environment that nurtures and strengthens the whole individual. Similar to St. Labre, in 1984, St. Stephens Indian School established a scholarship program to help high school senior graduates seeking to attend college. Initially, the scholarship program awarded two applicants each year and expected to finance eight students a year as they matriculated through college. However, about half of the awardees did not complete college, thus for twelve years (1984–1996) the program averaged only four students a year. For instance, in 1990 the scholarship program had six active recipients. In recent years, the program has grown. In 2005, for instance, St. Stephens Indian Mission’s scholarship program sponsored twenty college students pursuing four-year degrees. Seven students attended Central Wyoming College, four studied at the University of Wyoming, two enrolled at (Catholic) Creighton University, and another two were attending the University of Utah. Casper Community College, Chadron State College, the Academy of Arts in San Francisco, Fort Lewis College, and Northwestern Junior College each accepted a recipient as well. The school now offers the scholarship to seniors as well as nontraditional students who are now returning to academia after working or raising a family.<sup>383</sup> St. Stephens, St. Labre, and St. Paul’s are all focused on preparing students for the future, which means supporting and grounding them as Native Americans and helping to pave the way for a successful transition into college or a career.

## Conclusion

<sup>382</sup> <http://www.st-stephens.net/education/components/whatsnew/default.php?sectiondetailid=92&>, accessed May 2, 2014.

<sup>383</sup> *The Wind River Rendezvous*, January/February/March 1990, No. 1, p. 11; “Scholarship Program” *The Wind River Rendezvous* April/May/June 1996, No. 2, p. 3; and “Scholarship Program” *The Wind River Rendezvous* January/February/March 2005, No. 1, p. 10–11.

By providing the resources and support necessary for academic achievement, more Indian students are seeking education beyond the high school level. Tetona Dunlap, an enrolled member of the Eastern Shoshone tribe on the Wind River Reservation was a scholarship recipient from St. Stephens Indian School. She graduated from Creighton University with a Bachelor's degree in Journalism in 2004, photographed the Inauguration of President George W. Bush in January 2005 as an intern for the *Washington Post*, and received her master's degree in journalism from the University of Montana in 2011.<sup>384</sup> Dunlap works as a features reporter at the *Twin Falls (ID) Times-News* and devotes time to the Native American Journalists Association as the secretary for the board of directors. She has successfully balanced her career in mainstream society, while remaining true to her roots as a Shoshone woman. Likewise, St. Paul's, St. Labre, and St. Stephens strive to provide a western curriculum that meets national standards, while promoting Native languages, culture, participation, and oversight.

The Red Power movement of the 1960s, the restoration of terminated tribes in the 1970s, and the new emphasis on Indian self-determination and cultural revitalization impacted all three schools. Indian activism during the 1960s and 1970s paved the way for greater cultural sensitivity. In 1970, President Nixon announced the new direction in relations between the federal government and the tribes—self-determination. The passage of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975 solidified the new Indian policy.<sup>385</sup> Tribes across Indian Country began to assert greater sovereignty. As a school operated by the Arapaho and Shoshone Tribes for the benefit of its students, St. Stephens is a prime example of self-determination in action. St. Paul's

<sup>384</sup> "Scholarship Program" *The Wind River Rendezvous* January/February/March 2005, No. 1, p. 10–11; and <https://www.naja.com/students/college-students/>, accessed May 2, 2014.

<sup>385</sup> Wilkinson, *Blood Struggle*, 191–97.

and St. Labre, although not tribally-controlled, still incorporate programs to facilitate cultural revitalization. At St. Paul's Mission, the school strives to be competitive with public and private schools across the country. Yet, it remains linked to the Native community by employing Native teachers; integrating the Gros Ventre and Assiniboine language, traditions, and culture into the curriculum; and fostering solidarity with Native families who support the school generation after generation. St. Labre emphasizes academics, culture, and Catholic identity and stresses that "education is the essential element in building self-sufficiency."<sup>386</sup> Programs, like the Beadwork Institute, facilitate cultural resurgence. By the late twentieth century, these schools embraced the concept of being Native and in return these schools became incorporated into the communities it served.

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<sup>386</sup> "St. Labre Indian School Continues 127-Year heritage of Service to Native American People of SE Montana," 24 March 2011, <http://www.prweb.com/releases/2011/03/prweb5193204.htm>, accessed 9 June 2014.

## Chapter 6

### Contention at St. Paul's, St. Labre, and St. Stephens

In spring 2005, before the Yellowstone County District Court, the Northern Cheyenne Tribe filed a lawsuit against the Roman Catholic Church, “suing St. Labre for equitable distribution of the money raised in the tribe’s name, for trespass and for wrongful use of the tribe’s culture and symbols.” The lawsuit also chastised the Catholic school “for what they term[ed] is a history of ‘cultural genocide’ against the Northern Cheyenne people.” The lawsuit called into question the relationship between St. Labre and the Northern Cheyennes, the fundraising initiatives of the school, and the legacy of the mission.<sup>387</sup>

This ongoing lawsuit highlights the tensions that surround Catholic mission schools. Since first contact with Europeans, Indians have been subjected to colonization, removal, cultural genocide, and racism. On 8 September 2000, at the 175<sup>th</sup> commemoration of the BIA, Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Indian Affairs Kevin Gover, a member of the Pawnee tribe, offered a formal apology, acknowledging that, “we must first reconcile ourselves to the fact that the works of this agency” and its constituents “have at various times profoundly harmed the communities it was meant to serve.” Despite progress, Indian Country remains in anguish. “A Quiet Crisis: Federal Funding and Unmet Needs in Indian Country,” a report issued by the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights in 2003, warned that “Native Americans continue to rank at or near the bottom of nearly every social, health, and economic indicator.” At St. Labre, St. Paul’s,

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<sup>387</sup> Chelsea DeWeese, “Finding the Funds: St. Labre school has raised millions to help Northern Cheyenne youth. But at what cost to their culture?” *Perceptions*, 2005 Native News Project, accessed at <http://native.news.jour.umt.edu/2005/Inc.htm>. The University of Montana School of Journalism’s Native News Honors Project sponsored this article.

and St. Stephens, the student body comes from poverty-stricken reservations plagued with social problems. Physical and mental health problems abound: AIDS and HIV, diabetes that is “approaching epidemic proportions,” fetal alcohol syndrome, and teen suicides. Cancer-causing pollutants have infiltrated reservation lands, and harmed the health of its residents. Drug and alcohol abuse wreak havoc within Native families and the larger community.<sup>388</sup> For many students confronting these hardships, schools become beacons of hope; for others, schools serve as reminders of strained relationships, oppression, ineptitude, and heartache.

St. Labre, St. Stephens, and St. Paul’s confront the issues on the reservations on a daily basis. They encounter disapproval and scorn from the Indian community, which is highlighted in the Northern Cheyenne lawsuit against St. Labre. They witness tensions between tribes, and they express frustration toward the Bureau of Indian Education. As the schools deal with these contentious issues, they also encounter setbacks like the St. Paul’s Mission Grade School fire or high teacher turnover rates. In order to face these challenges properly, the schools need strong role models, particularly Indian teachers who can understand and motivate their students.

### **The Rez in the Early Twenty-First Century**

Although I have emphasized the positive changes that resulted from Indian self-determination; realistically speaking, St. Labre, St. Paul’s, and St. Stephens still have a long way to go. The statistics for the Northern Cheyennes are disheartening, “according to a 2000 census, unemployment fluctuated from 60-85%” and “nearly 40% of Northern Cheyenne families live under the poverty level.” Jobs, generally limited to seasonal employment, remain scarce on the remote reservation. The nearest urban center lies

<sup>388</sup> Calloway, *First Peoples*, 520–21, 555–56.

approximately a hundred miles away from the Northern Cheyenne homeland, and the increased cost of gas, rising to \$3.50-per-gallon in 2011, prohibits long commutes.<sup>389</sup> Likewise, in 2000, 30.5 percent of the Crow people lived below the poverty level, and in 2013, their unemployment rate was almost at 50 percent.<sup>390</sup> Crow and Northern Cheyenne students attending St. Labre “need help to deal with peer pressure regarding substance abuse, overcome poor preparation for the demands of high school, access to the academic resources needed to succeed, take care of family and financial needs, and see the relevance of high school graduation to their future opportunities.”<sup>391</sup> Recognizing the challenges facing these reservations, St. Labre offers counseling services for its students, employee assistance programs, and further resources, such as the Montana Teen Institute, a program “designed to enhance self-esteem through activities such as support groups for students who had drug and alcohol problems themselves or within their families.”<sup>392</sup>

The Gros Ventres and Assiniboines at Fort Belknap face similar economic and social obstacles. In May 2014, Mark I. Azure, president of the Fort Belknap Indian Community Council, admitted: “We have a 73% unemployment rate at Fort Belknap.”<sup>393</sup> Many Natives view education as an avenue to attain greater economic stability and as a means to revive their language and culture. Domestic abuse, alcoholism and substance abuse, and other challenges burden the children who attend St. Paul’s Mission. The school can be a safe haven for them. Discipline and structure at St. Paul’s are assets

<sup>389</sup> *We, the Northern Cheyenne People*, 101–2; and <http://www.energytrendsinsider.com/2012/03/14/charting-the-dramatic-gas-price-rise-of-the-last-decade/>, accessed 20 February 2015.

<sup>390</sup> “Crow Reservation,” <http://www.montana.edu/extensionecon/countydata/Crow.pdf>, accessed 17 December 2014.

<sup>391</sup> *We, the Northern Cheyenne People*, 101–2.

<sup>392</sup> Ward, *Native Americans in the School System*, 86.

<sup>393</sup> <http://www.indian.senate.gov/sites/default/files/upload/files/5.27.14%20SCIA%20Testimony%20-%20Mark%20Azure%20-%20Ft.%20Belknap.pdf>, accessed 14 January 2015.

because they provide students with a productive work environment where caring teachers offer motivation alongside instruction. St. Paul's also serves free breakfast and lunch, which alleviates another problem on the reservation—the USDA found that “20.9 percent of Montana’s children struggle with hunger.”<sup>394</sup>

The Northern Arapaho and Eastern Shoshone at Wind River are also plagued by high unemployment and poverty. The high suicide rates, especially among the Northern Arapaho, are unsettling. In September 1985, *The New York Times* reported, “In less than two months, eight young Indians have hanged themselves on the Wind River Reservation. . . . Since the beginning of the year, there have been at least 48 reported suicide attempts.” Contributing factors on the Wind River Reservation include lack of recreational centers, scarce job opportunities, and alcohol and drug addiction, but the suicides portend larger societal problems. Northern Arapahos experience child abuse, teenage pregnancy, domestic violence, but the most alarming issue is the extremely high crime rate. In 2012, *The New York Times* stated, “Wind River has a crime rate five to seven times the national average and a long history of ghastly homicides.”<sup>395</sup>

According to the 2010 U.S. Census, approximately 22 percent of the 5.2 million Native Americans live on tribal lands. In 2008, 28.2 percent of all Indians, living on and off the reservation, encounter poverty; however, “the disparity for American Indians living below poverty on the reservations is even greater, reaching 38% to 68%.” Indians living on the reservations also have substandard housing and inadequate health services.

<sup>394</sup> No Kid Hungry, <http://mt.nokidhungry.org/sites/all/themes/states/img/library/files/mt-nkh-community-assessment.pdf>, accessed 14 January 2015.

<sup>395</sup> “On One Reservation, A Suicide Crisis,” *The New York Times*, 30 September 1985: B.9; and Timothy Williams, “Brutal Crimes Grip an Indian Reservation,” *The New York Times*, 2 February 2012, [http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/03/us/wind-river-indian-reservation-where-brutality-is-banal.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/03/us/wind-river-indian-reservation-where-brutality-is-banal.html?_r=0), accessed 17 December 2014.



The statistics for all Native Americans remain bleak: “The shortest life expectancy of any ethnic group in the country; the highest rates of teen pregnancy and infant mortality; disastrous rates of family dysfunction and teen suicide; epidemics of diabetes and substance abuse; dismal scholastic achievement.” For example, “33 Montana schools failed in 2006 to meet No Child Left Behind objectives and every one of those schools serves primarily an Indian student body.”<sup>396</sup> According to the 2009–2010 Montana Criterion Reference Test (CRT), white fifth graders scored 90 percent in reading and 76 percent in math, while American Indian fifth graders scored 63 percent in reading and 41 percent in math. During the 2010–2011 school year, third graders in Wyoming took the student academic achievement test in mathematics: white students scored 90.5 percent at or above proficiency level, while Indian students scored 69.1 percent. When these same third graders were tested on their proficiency in reading/language arts as well, white students scored 69.7 percent and Indian students scored 36 percent. In 2007, the statewide graduation rate for high school students was 75.2 percent in Montana and 72.6 percent in Wyoming, while the rate for Indian students was 48.6 percent in Montana and 29.9 percent in Wyoming.<sup>397</sup> In comparison to their peers, Indian students are falling behind in school. According to the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL)’s report “Striving to Achieve: Helping Native Americans Students Succeed,” “The state of education in our nation’s K-12 schools for Native students is distressing. Native students perform two to three grade levels below their white peers in reading and mathematics.

<sup>396</sup> [http://www.nrcprograms.org/site/PageServer?pagename=naa\\_livingconditions](http://www.nrcprograms.org/site/PageServer?pagename=naa_livingconditions), accessed 20 February 2015; and Bill Yellowtail, “The Dignity of Indian Self-sufficiency,” *Montana’s Agenda*, Autumn 2008, Vol. 6, No. 2, p. 2.

<sup>397</sup> Indian Education in Montana—Closing the Achievement Gap & Implementing Indian Education for All, Montana Office of Public Instruction, <http://opi.mt.gov/pdf/IndianEd/ISA/11AprMSUBozeman.pdf>, accessed 7 January 2015; and Consolidated State Performance Report: Parts I and II . . . School Year 2010–11 Wyoming, [http://edu.wyoming.gov/downloads/data/wy\\_cspr-part-1-final-report.pdf](http://edu.wyoming.gov/downloads/data/wy_cspr-part-1-final-report.pdf), accessed 7 January 2015.

They are 237 percent more likely to drop out of school and 207 percent more likely to be expelled than white students. For every 100 American Indian/Alaska Native kindergartners, only seven will earn a bachelor's degree, compared to 34 of every 100 white kindergartners. These statistics represent a snapshot of the current problem facing Native students."<sup>398</sup>

Indian youth living on reservations encounter numerous obstacles in their personal lives and for some children, school becomes a place that instills hope. However, the schools themselves are not always harmonious, worry-free environments. All three of these schools have endured many setbacks, generally revolving around financial issues, and they have also struggled to maintain a positive role in the community. Yet responses remain mixed. The schools garner affection as well as aversion, and a careful look at St. Labre, St. Stephens, and St. Paul's reveals some of the contentious issues.

### **Strained Relationships**

In 1965 St. Labre began offering its services to the Crow Indian Reservation, which lies directly to the west of the Northern Cheyenne Reservation. Throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, Crow children comprised between a third and a half of the student population. This ratio has persisted. In 2005, over 90 percent of the students were tribal members and 62 percent of them were Northern Cheyenne."<sup>399</sup> St. Labre houses students who choose to stay at the dormitories due to preference or to avoid the long distance commute every day. Although Crow students remain the overall minority at the school,

<sup>398</sup> National Caucus of Native American State Legislators, *Striving to Achieve: Helping Native American Students to Succeed*, <http://www.ncsl.org/Portals/1/documents/statetribe/strivingtoachieve.pdf>.

<sup>399</sup> St. Labre website, <http://www.stlabre.org/discover/culture/culture.html#.U5tXPYhIWaU>, accessed 13 June 2014; and *We, the Northern Cheyenne People*, 104.

they comprise the majority of dormitory students.<sup>400</sup> Unlike the Northern Cheyenne, Crow students who reside at the dorms spend less time engaging with members of their reservation community. Sociologist Carol J. Ward acknowledges, “Crow and Cheyenne students form somewhat distinctive social groups around which tensions and conflicts develop. Such tensions erupt from time to time, producing some negative experiences for the students involved, particularly the Crow students, who are in the minority.” These conflicts are reminiscent of tribal rivalries from the past, although they have lessened, “as evidenced by intertribal dating and some marriages.”<sup>401</sup> Disputes between students, however, appear minor compared to the ongoing court case between the Northern Cheyenne tribe and St. Labre Indian School.

### **Northern Cheyenne Questions Legality of St. Labre’s Enrichment**

In 1884 St. Labre appeared destined to fail and found itself on the brink of financial collapse, but today it has emerged as a well-known, thriving institution buoyed by a large endowment built from private donations collected from the school’s lucrative national mailing campaign.<sup>402</sup> By advertising the “plight and poverty” of the Northern Cheyenne Tribe, in 2004, the fundraising drive accrued “\$27 million in contributions . . . and its assets from investments, buildings, and land amounted to \$89.4 million.”<sup>403</sup> Native American Studies professor Jeffrey Sanders at Montana State University Billings acknowledges, “There is often friction on reservations between mission and boarding schools and some tribal members. Although some mission schools are remembered for positive contributions, many tribal members have been left with bad feelings over abuse,

<sup>400</sup> Ward, *Native Americans in the School System*, 86–87.

<sup>401</sup> *Ibid.*, 131–33.

<sup>402</sup> *We, the Northern Cheyenne People*, 104.

<sup>403</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

the dismissal of Native cultures, or other problems. For many Indians, mission schools or boarding schools represent the symbol of majority culture trying to forcefully assimilate a Native people.”<sup>404</sup>

Stories of Northern Cheyennes struggling to survive have evoked compassion and generated substantial donations to St. Labre. “The direct-mail campaign, which began in the 1950s, is so large that it has its own ZIP code in this remote town of 450 people.”<sup>405</sup>

St. Labre’s campaign has been so successful it has “a waiting list for enrollment and facilities that rival schools anywhere in Montana.” The financial success has also enabled the school to disperse funds to social programs, employment opportunities, college scholarships, and even St. Paul’s Mission in Hays, Montana.<sup>406</sup> “Sick of being what they call ‘the gimmick,’” the Northern Cheyenne Tribe sued St. Labre in March 2005.<sup>407</sup> The lawsuit, filed in Yellowstone County District Court, “claims St. Labre has not fulfilled financial promises to the Northern Cheyenne.” In their defense, St. Labre officials stated that they never made an agreement to share their money with the tribe. The school is focused on educating Native Americans and “sixty-two percent of [its] students are Northern Cheyenne.” In addition to the instruction itself, St. Labre also pays for counseling services, drug and alcohol programs, youth group homes, and other community programs. The twelve-page lawsuit, however, paints a very different picture, citing St. Labre for physical and sexual abuse, denigration of Northern Cheyenne culture,

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<sup>404</sup> Ibid., 105.

<sup>405</sup> Mike Stark, “Giving and Getting at St. Labre School: Northern Cheyenne Sue for Share of Mission School’s Wealth,” *Billings Gazette*, 9 April 2005, accessed at [http://billingsgazette.com/news/state-and-regional/montana/giving-and-getting-at-st-labre-school-northern-cheyenne-sue/article\\_63bedc6d-d54d-569d-a48f-12ff87868331.html?print=true&cid=print](http://billingsgazette.com/news/state-and-regional/montana/giving-and-getting-at-st-labre-school-northern-cheyenne-sue/article_63bedc6d-d54d-569d-a48f-12ff87868331.html?print=true&cid=print).

<sup>406</sup> Stark, “Giving and Getting at St. Labre School,” [http://billingsgazette.com/news/state-and-regional/montana/giving-and-getting-at-st-labre-school-northern-cheyenne-sue/article\\_63bedc6d-d54d-569d-a48f-12ff87868331.html?print=true&cid=print](http://billingsgazette.com/news/state-and-regional/montana/giving-and-getting-at-st-labre-school-northern-cheyenne-sue/article_63bedc6d-d54d-569d-a48f-12ff87868331.html?print=true&cid=print).

<sup>407</sup> DeWeese, “Finding the Funds,” <http://native news.jour.umt.edu/2005/Inc.htm>.

and use of the Northern Cheyenne's land. In 1926, St. Labre acquired land from the Northern Cheyenne reservation, and tribal president Eugene Little Coyote (2004–2007) expressed his opinion that the “land had been established ‘for the sole benefit’ of the Northern Cheyenne people,” which gives the tribe legal support “to ask for a portion of St. Labre’s revenues.” Besides the issues of legality, the lawsuit challenges the Catholic mission school’s presence, depicting it as an institution of assimilation that is “at odds with their tribe’s traditional concepts of spirituality.” The lawsuit seeks “to break an existing cycle of dependency” because, as Little Coyote points out, “Their paternalism blocks our self-determination.”<sup>408</sup>

Not everyone, however, approves of the lawsuit. Recognizing the important role St. Labre has played in educating their children—free of cost—employing tribal members, and providing services for those in need, some Northern Cheyenne disagree with the claims made by the lawsuit. Rebecca Speiser, a cafeteria employee stated, “This place has been a blessing to a lot of families. . . . Otherwise, they might have had to leave the reservation.” St. Labre provides an abundance of amenities for its students and their families: healthy meals, a good education, a thrift store, and financial assistance to elders and tribal leaders. Curtis Yarlott, a Crow Indian and St. Labre’s executive director, explained that “the money the Northern Cheyenne Tribe seeks in the lawsuit will put a fresh coat of paint on the reservation, but it will not solve the underlying societal issues at play that are compounding the tribe’s existing economic difficulties.” For Yarlott,

<sup>408</sup> Stark, “Giving and Getting at St. Labre School,” [http://billingsgazette.com/news/state-and-regional/montana/giving-and-getting-at-st-labre-school-northern-cheyenne-sue/article\\_63bedc6d-d54d-569d-a48f-12ff87868331.html?print=true&cid=print](http://billingsgazette.com/news/state-and-regional/montana/giving-and-getting-at-st-labre-school-northern-cheyenne-sue/article_63bedc6d-d54d-569d-a48f-12ff87868331.html?print=true&cid=print); and DeWeese, “Finding the Funds,” <http://native.news.jour.umt.edu/2005/Inc.htm>.

“education is the only way to effect long-changing good on the reservations.”<sup>409</sup> The money raised by the school also supports Crow Indians, “the Cheyenne’s neighbors and historic enemies . . . nearly a quarter of the students are members of the Crow tribe. Their stories are also included in fund-raising letters.”<sup>410</sup>

In 2009, District Judge Susan Watters of Billings ruled in favor of the school and church, arguing that the Northern Cheyenne Tribe failed to demonstrate how St. Labre was at fault. In 2013, however, the Montana Supreme Court decided that “the tribe did not have to establish that the school had done anything wrong to prove that St. Labre had been unjustly enriched.” Although the school and the tribe did not negotiate a formal contract, the Supreme Court ruled that a “constructive trust” existed between the two parties. On the other hand, the Supreme Court did support Watters’ decision that Northern Cheyenne “allegations of breach of contract, negligent misrepresentation, fraud and wrongful conversion” were unfounded; it also supported her “decision to throw out claims that St. Labre’s actions constituted cultural genocide.” Since the ruling was partially overturned, the case was resubmitted to the Yellowstone County District Court. As of this writing, no decision has been rendered.<sup>411</sup>

### **St. Stephens Deals with Federal Ineptitude**

Although money remains the key factor in the St. Labre court case, the need to maintain financial security continues to be a concern at St. Stephens as well. Although

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<sup>409</sup> Ibid.

<sup>410</sup> Kathy Witkowsky, “MT Indian School, Catholic Charity Clash over Funds,” VoA News, <http://imdiversity.com/villages/native-american/mt-indian-school-catholic-charity-clash-over-funds/>, accessed 15 October 2008.

<sup>411</sup> Lorna Thackery, “Parts of St. Labre Ruling Overturned: Suit Alleging ‘Unjust Enrichment’ Heads Back to Billings Judge,” *Billings Gazette*, 6 February 2013, [http://billingsgazette.com/news/state-and-regional/montana/parts-of-st-labre-ruling-overturned/article\\_17f127-642a-54dd-8bfb-e2f425a87a9a.html](http://billingsgazette.com/news/state-and-regional/montana/parts-of-st-labre-ruling-overturned/article_17f127-642a-54dd-8bfb-e2f425a87a9a.html), accessed 9 June 2014; and *Northern Cheyenne Tribe v. Roman Catholic Church*, [http://indianlaw.mt.gov/content/fed\\_state/court\\_decisions/n\\_chey\\_v\\_roman\\_cath\\_church.pdf](http://indianlaw.mt.gov/content/fed_state/court_decisions/n_chey_v_roman_cath_church.pdf), accessed 24 June 2014.

St. Stephens Indian School has become a contract school controlled by the two Wind River tribes, it remains at the mercy of federal government largesse. Massive budget cuts across the country have hurt schools: private, public, and charter. However, these cuts have been especially debilitating for inner city schools and other impoverished communities. In 2014, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, based in Washington, D.C., released the report “Most States Funding Schools Less Than Before the Recession.” The report informed the public that Wyoming and Montana were two of the fifteen states that cut per-student spending for the 2013–2014 school year. The budget cuts following the 2007–2009 recession have eliminated afterschool programs; restricted music, art, and special education programs; cut support staff and full-time professionals; and undermined reform initiatives. Title I, a federal education aid program, supports school districts with predominantly low-income families. In 2010, the federal government spent \$17 billion in Title I funding, but in 2013 it spent only \$15 billion. Unfortunately, the school budget and quality education have long been intertwined; as one shrivels, so does the other.<sup>412</sup>

For St. Stephens, like numerous schools across the country, federal and state funding have remained in short supply, and even more disheartening, the schools have been unable to gain access to information regarding the status of their funding. Once the 2012–2013 fiscal year began on 1 October 2012, the Bureau of Indian Education stopped transferring money to St. Stephens; further the BIE “failed to respond to funding requests for five months.” In February 2013, U.S. Senator Mike Enzi from Wyoming visited Riverton, Wyoming, to hear constituents’ concerns regarding the federal government.

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<sup>412</sup> Christina Hoag, “Budget cuts more painful at inner-city LA schools,” 28 June 2010, [http://www.boston.com/news/nation/articles/2010/06/28/budget\\_cuts\\_more\\_painful\\_at\\_inner\\_city\\_la\\_schools/](http://www.boston.com/news/nation/articles/2010/06/28/budget_cuts_more_painful_at_inner_city_la_schools/), accessed 15 January 2015; Michael Leachman and Chris Mai, “Most States Funding Schools Less Than Before the Recession,” Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, revised 20 May 2014, <http://www.cbpp.org/cms/?fa=view&id=4011>, accessed 15 January 2015.

Mike Hejtmanek, St. Stephens Indian School superintendent, explained to Senator Enzi that the school had not received any money from the BIA since September of 2012. The school had been operating off its reserves and Hejtmanek stated, “We have e-mails, we have phone calls documented, and things just aren’t happening, and money just isn’t being distributed to the BIA contract schools.” After Senator Enzi intervened, BIA funding resumed on 28 February 2013.

Three months later, in May 2013, St. Stephens faced another monetary crisis. Once again, school directors waited for assistance from the federal government, and “even when the money comes, there is less of it than in previous years. The school’s funding was cut 5.96 percent from 2011–12 levels when the sequester began in March 2013. This year [2014], the school is budgeting for an additional eight percent cut.” The cuts are unfortunate, but can be dealt with. The budget cuts, however, become problematic when St. Stephens learns about the cuts in October, after it has finalized the annual budget and started the school year. The gravest problem, however, is rooted in the timing of the funding. Chairman of the St. Stephens school board Dominic Littlefield lamented, “They don’t send the money when they are supposed to. And that is really scary.” The federal neglect forced St. Stephens to eliminate jobs—a custodian and six teaching assistants—and cut salaries. All the employees “took a seven to eight percent cut in pay to help keep the school open,” while “raising deductibles and premiums on the school health insurance plan” diminished the salaries further. A limited budget places constraints upon a school, but with a committed staff, the school continues to forge ahead.<sup>413</sup>

<sup>413</sup> Ron Feemster, “St. Stephens Indian School cuts jobs and salaries during sequester.” 18 July 2013, [http://wyofile.com/ron\\_feemster/st-stephens-indiand-school-cuts-jobs](http://wyofile.com/ron_feemster/st-stephens-indiand-school-cuts-jobs) . . . , accessed 24 June 2014; and Eric



On 13 June 2014, Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell signed an order initiating an overhaul of the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) in hopes that it could remodel itself after the current U.S. Department of Education. As the news reached Wyoming, Elma Brown, a former principal and forthcoming superintendent at St. Stephens Indian School, expressed hope that these proposed changes would “result in less money being log-jammed in a bureaucratic system.” For St. Stephens the lack of funding has been a dire concern but it remains only one issue. The “Findings and Recommendations Prepared by the Bureau of Indian Education Study Group Submitted to the Secretaries of the Departments of the Interior and Education” listed further difficulties plaguing BIE-funded schools—“high teacher turnover, chronic academic failure and lack of consistent leadership.” Elma Brown acknowledged that “In some ways, St. Stephens is an exception to the grim picture painted by the report.” Unlike more remote BIE-funded schools, St. Stephens has been able to hire and retain quality teachers due to its proximity to the towns of Riverton and Lander. In 2013, St. Stephens’s graduation rate was 75 percent, a figure that surpassed the nationwide rate for BIE students. Also, it has been one of the few BIE-funded schools that supplements its income with state revenue. The state has raised the “low BIE teacher salaries to levels that allow St. Stephens to recruit against neighboring districts.” The restricted and scarce federal funding, a component of the federal government’s treaty responsibility to Indian nations, remains a stumbling block for the growth of St. Stephens. Superintendent Hejtmanek, who retired in the summer of 2014, states, “Funding from the BIE is divided into specific categories: operations, maintenance and special education, for instance. That gives schools less

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Bloo, “Enzi Hears Residents Voice Concerns,” *The Ranger*, 26 February 2013, [http://www.dailyranger.com/story.php?story\\_id=6075&headline=Enzi-hears-residents-voice-concerns](http://www.dailyranger.com/story.php?story_id=6075&headline=Enzi-hears-residents-voice-concerns), accessed 9 June 2014.

flexibility than under Wyoming's current block grant funding system." For instance, if there is a surplus in the federal money earmarked for transportation, these funds cannot be used to cover the deficit in funding for teacher salaries. Hopefully, restructuring the Bureau of Indian Education, which has had thirty-three directors since 1979, will be beneficial for St. Stephens Indian School.<sup>414</sup>

In the end, finances have caused friction between the federal government and the school or, in the case of St. Labre, between the tribe and the school. St. Stephens experienced stress over the distribution of funds and St. Labre felt betrayal as the Northern Cheyenne filed a lawsuit against them. St. Paul's also encountered misfortune when its school, supplies, and resources went up in smoke.

### **St. Paul's Mission Confronts Tragedy**

At 7 pm on Sunday 15 June 2008, St. Paul's Mission Grade School burned to the ground. Two fifteen-year-old boys broke into the library, committed theft and arson, and fled the scene as the fire moved quickly from room to room, destroying everything in its path. Luckily, no one was hurt. The school's second grade teacher said, "The sight was unbelievable and is still hard to accept. The school is beyond repair and will be torn down. We are trying to salvage what we can from the wreckage, but of the things that did not burn, many have smoke and/or water damage."

During the 2007–2008 school year, eighty-six students attended classes ranging from kindergarten to sixth grade. After the fire, approximately eighty to ninety students had to enroll elsewhere. With the mission in ruins, parents faced the option of sending

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<sup>414</sup> Ibid.; and "Bureau of Indian Education study group says overhaul needed: Changes will Impact St. Stephens," <http://trib.com/news/local/education/bureau-of-indian-education>, accessed 24 June 2014. "Graduation rates for BIE students nationwide was 61 percent in 2011," according to "Bureau of Indian Education study group says overhaul needed."

their children to a public elementary school eleven miles away in Lodge Pole, but this scenario was not necessarily the best solution. Readers of the *Great Falls Tribune* voiced their opinions following the reports on the fire. The “In Your Voice” section of the newspaper provided a venue for people to post their comments and reactions. One reader congratulated the arsonist(s), called the nuns evil, and asked, “shall we celebrate? lol.” This comment sparked a backlash led by supporters of the mission who spoke out in defense of the school. One mother wrote, “I have a son that attended Kindergarten at the Mission School and he cried/sobbed for an hour when he saw his school burning down. . . . I think that the Mission school is the Best school here in Hays and our children that go to that school are well mannered and behaved. Not like the kids at the Public school. . . . Anyway, I know that there is a petition started by the Mission School 6<sup>th</sup> graders that is going around for signature, for their school to be rebuilt at the Mission. All the Children that attended that school do not want to go to public schools. There were a lot of sad/crying children on that night when someone burnt it!”<sup>415</sup> The fire brought mixed-feelings to the surface: some expressed joy to see an institution that represented the harsh environment of assimilation burn to the ground, while others felt sorrow since the school they had cherished lay in ruin.

Since 2008, a new chapter of the mission’s history has sprung from the ashes. Faced with the realization that the school’s insurance policy was inadequate and aware of the challenges that lay ahead, the mission proceeded with the 2008–2009 school year. The students and staff received an outpouring of emotional support from alumni,

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<sup>415</sup> Margaret Matt, St. Paul’s Mission Grade School Relief Fund email, in author’s possession; Kim Skornogski, “St. Paul’s Mission School in Hays Burns,” *Great Falls Tribune*, 17 June 2008, [http://www.greatfallstribune.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080 . . .](http://www.greatfallstribune.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080...), accessed 17 June 2008. On 20 June 2008, the Fort Belknap tribal court charged two teenage boys with arson, burglary, and theft. “Two Teens Accused of Burning School” *Indian Country News*, 28 June 2008.

parishioners, former faculty, parents, and the community at large. The Fort Belknap tribal government offered the John Capture Tribal Community Center as a temporary facility for the eighty-six students and thirteen staff members. Further, the commitment of Sister Helen Durso, Sister Chris Ferrar, and Sister Nora McCarthy—”the anchors of the school”—made the academic year possible. Without their leadership, the mission itself would have disintegrated with the ashes. Donors provided supplies and monetary gifts, the bishop of the Diocese of Great Falls offered his support, and St. Paul’s wealthy neighbor to the south—St. Labre Indian School—delivered the financial boost necessary to make a new school a reality. With the additional help of the community of Hays itself, a state-of-the art school arose, signaling the beginning of a new chapter in the history of St. Paul’s Mission. In the end, those who were highly critical of the mission’s initial legacy—as a strict bastion for assimilation—expressed disappointment as builders laid a new school foundation. Yet, other tribal members who had shared a deep connection to the mission were overjoyed to celebrate the completion of the mission school building and looked forward to its future.<sup>416</sup>

### **Role Models, Ethnicity, and Teacher Turnover at the Schools**

Teachers have a profound impact on their students. Unfortunately, high teacher turnover rates have long been equated with instability within schools. The instability of non-Native teachers has added to the mistrust between Indians and whites. For some white teachers, the reservation schools have served as mere stepping stones to further professional careers. Others have not been able to acclimate to life on the reservation.

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<sup>416</sup> The initial insurance policy of 1976 had not been updated, which meant the insurance agency could only offer \$1.5 million, however, the cost to rebuild was \$5 million due to inflation over the previous forty years. “The New St. Paul Mission School is Awesome!” St. Labre Indian School website, <http://www.stlabre.org/discover/publications/publications-archive>, accessed 24 June 2014; and “Lending a Hand to a Friend in Need,” *The Morning Star*, vol. 47, no. 1 (winter 2009): 1, 4–5.

Some teachers have felt unwelcome because they have not become part of the community or they have struggled to adjust to rural isolation. Other teachers truly enjoyed working at the mission schools, but life simply took them in a different direction. Family obligations, more secure financial stability, or other reasons may have persuaded those teachers who love their students, coworkers, and the larger local community to leave their jobs.

Although a revolving door of new teachers remains problematic, St. Paul's Mission must rely on Jesuit Volunteers to staff the school. Unable to afford full-time teachers, the mission employs volunteers. Since 1969, Jesuit Volunteers have comprised half of the teaching staff at St. Paul's Mission. The Jesuit Volunteer Corp continues to be a one-year (possibly two to three year) commitment, and therefore, the staff constantly changes. Not all JVs who served at the mission possessed degrees in education. As a result, they struggled with culture shock, as well as honing their skills in the classroom. Lack of preparation as a teacher or lack of familiarity with Native culture has proved detrimental for these students. Most teachers want to do well. Generally, the JVs have worked extremely hard because they have cared deeply for their students and have wanted to see them succeed, however, they have not always been the most qualified or adept teachers. Looking back over the years, Ann Wombeke, a former JV (1992–1994), acknowledges that she may not have made much of an impact on her first grade students, but the children, the community, and the JVC experience certainly made an impact on her. Still, she questions whether she possessed the skills to be a quality teacher at the age of twenty-two. For instance, her fellow JV, Mike Evans, struggled in his efforts to teach fourth grade. Wombeke also acknowledged that after bonding with the students, JVs

often worry if the incoming group will be adequate teachers. The JVs who have taught at St. Paul's truly want the best for the children and find it very hard to leave them. In addition, the turnover of the teachers often upsets the children. Still, each new JV group has brought different gifts and talents to rejuvenate St. Paul's Mission.<sup>417</sup>

Although St. Paul's Mission staff relies on volunteers, all three schools still employ a significantly white staff, although they serve a student body that is predominately Native. The ethnic profile of the staff creates another disadvantage: "when students see teachers who share their racial or ethnic backgrounds, they often view school as a more welcoming place."<sup>418</sup> Although white teachers may possess the best intentions for educating children from different cultural background, Native teachers remain crucial because they fully understand the cultural obligations, family ties, and troubles that Indian youth face on a daily basis. These students need role models, particularly Native teachers to be an example for them.

## Conclusion

Solid role models—Native teachers—that students can trust, provide stability for children raised within the reservation environment. The climate on the reservations is wrought with challenges. Poverty, racism, substance abuse, cultural denigration, and lack of opportunities are conduits for failure. Students work hard to overcome these obstacles, and the schools strive to meet the needs of their students. St. Paul's, for example, started an after school program this 2014–2015 school year. St. Labre, St. Paul's, and St.

<sup>417</sup> St. Paul's Grade School, Personal Collection.

<sup>418</sup> Leah Todd, "More than a Mentor," *Casper Star Tribune*, 30 September 2014, [http://trib.com/news/local/education/native-american-teachers-few-and-far-between-in-wyoming-s/article\\_b4f39825-77b2-5170-b43c-18ce759adc1a.html](http://trib.com/news/local/education/native-american-teachers-few-and-far-between-in-wyoming-s/article_b4f39825-77b2-5170-b43c-18ce759adc1a.html), accessed 7 January 2015; and Tom Lutey, "Native Americans struggle to bring teachers to Reservation Schools," *Billings Gazette*, 8 July 2014, <http://www.tulalipnews.com/wp/2014/07/08/native-americans-struggle-to-bring-teachers-to-reservation-schools/>, accessed 14 January 2015.

Stephens face additional difficulties—poor academic achievement scores, the legacy of harsh assimilation policies, inadequate and unreliable funding, high teacher turnover, and a shortage of qualified Native teachers. St. Labre continues to dispute the Northern Cheyenne’s allegations, St. Stephens finds itself frustrated over the distribution of funding, and St. Paul’s just rebuilt after arsonists left the school in ashes. Despite these hurdles, the three rez schools in Montana and Wyoming continue to serve the Native community.

As Birdena Realbird, Crow public-school educator, asserts, “It is not Indian to fail!” She advises, “We ought to view ourselves as fortified by our heritage and therefore better equipped than most other folks to prevail over whatever challenge arises.”<sup>419</sup> Bill Yellowtail, a Native American Studies professor at Montana State University, reaffirms his friend’s statement: “American Indians have to stop identifying themselves by their tragedies and begin identifying themselves by their hopes, expectations and successes.” Yellowtail’s article, “The Dignity of Indian Self-Sufficiency,” calls Indians to move beyond victimhood and tribal sovereignty to Indian sovereignty, which Yellowtail defines as “the role of the individual Indian . . . the need to re-equip Indian people with the dignity of self-sufficiency. We need to shift from tribal-think to Indian-think.”<sup>420</sup>

Likewise, as these three schools have begun to employ more Native teachers and infuse culturally-relevant material into the curricula, they are becoming places to cultivate Indian self-sufficiency. With good role models leading the way, the students can face the challenges ahead of them. At St. Labre, the students learn the values of

<sup>419</sup> Alvin M. Josephy Jr., ed. *Lewis and Clark Through Indian Eyes: Nine Indian Writers on the Legacy of the Expedition* (New York: Random House, 2006), 78.

<sup>420</sup> Yellowtail, “The Dignity of Indian Self-sufficiency,” [http://opi.mt.gov/pdf/indianed/data/Dignity\\_SelfSufficiency.pdf](http://opi.mt.gov/pdf/indianed/data/Dignity_SelfSufficiency.pdf), accessed 14 January 2015.

respect, excellence, justice, stewardship, integrity, and spirituality. Banners throughout St. Labre's halls push students to believe in themselves. These signs read: "Step up. No excuses." The students can and should take the initiative. Ultimately, they can succeed and excuses will only slow them down.<sup>421</sup>

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<sup>421</sup> "St. Labre Academy is off and running!" *The Morning Star*, Vol. 44, No. 4, Fall 2006, p. 5, <http://www.stlabre.org/discover/publications/fall-2006.pdf>, accessed 15 January 2014.



## Conclusion

### Making a Difference

In June 2009, when St. Labre celebrated its 125th birthday, the festivities included a powwow, a play recounting the school's history, and even fireworks. On Saturday 21 June, Bishop Michael Warfel of the Great Falls-Billings diocese celebrated Mass. Honorees at the celebration reflected on its history. They included retired Catholic priest Emmett Hoffmann, "the 78-year-old Ashland resident Louis Pavek, the oldest living graduate of St. Labre High School, and Mary Wolf Tooth Underwood, 91, of Lame Deer, the oldest living former student." The commemoration bore witness to how many generations have called St. Labre home. With pride, Charlene Robinson explained that five generations of her family went to St. Labre Indian School, "Her grandfather, Edward Foote, Sr., her mother Sylvia Foote Brady, herself, her three children, and now two grandchildren have all attended St. Labre." St. Labre, St. Stephens, and St. Paul's, have all reached the 125-year milestone. These schools celebrated their rocky legacy founded on assimilation and Catholicism; their efforts at cultural revitalization after Vatican Council II and Indian self-determination legislation; and their commitment to serving Indians on the challenging, and sometimes volatile, reservations. Looking toward the future, St. Labre, St. Stephens, and St. Paul's continue to employ Indian teachers and support Native traditions, languages, and culture. These three schools have intertwined themselves into the fabric of each generation.<sup>422</sup>

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<sup>422</sup> Susan Olp, "St. Labre School Celebrates 125 Years of History," *Billings Gazette*, 21 June 2009, [http://missoulian.com/news/state-and-regional/st-labre-school-celebrates-years-of-historyposted-on-june/article\\_433c1b4c-e01b-5b90-bf64-a0b274cb8b75.html](http://missoulian.com/news/state-and-regional/st-labre-school-celebrates-years-of-historyposted-on-june/article_433c1b4c-e01b-5b90-bf64-a0b274cb8b75.html), accessed 25 January 2015; and *St. Labre Indian School—A Bright Future Built on a Solid Past, 1884–2009*, 26.

The story of St. Paul's Mission is a story of Native strength. Students persevered through the boarding school experience from 1887 to 1935; classmates achieved state awards, honors, and recognition from 1936 to 1974, when St. Paul's transitioned into a day school and expanded into a top-notch, fully accredited grade school and high school; today the school continues to make improvements after 125 years. The initial boarding school, which was a foreign experience to the Native community, eventually remolded itself into a day school that was appropriated by the community. Throughout this trajectory of progress, the families who have continued to send their children to St. Paul's have ensured that the school—treasured by the community—survives for future generations.

St. Labre, which faced the threat of closure on numerous occasions, became the most affluent mission school in Montana. Opening in a one-room log cabin in 1884, St. Labre remained a boarding school until 1942, when it began to provide students with the option of returning home at the end of the school day. St. Labre's achievements include: opening the first high school located on reservation lands in 1932, expanding to include a kindergarten in 1957, extending its services to the youth of the Crow Nation in 1965, implementing an all-Indian school board in 1978, and even dedicating a newly constructed dormitory in 2011. The school is now an accredited academy that maintains a high enrollment, strong graduation rates, and the means necessary to prepare students for college. Some Native community members eagerly support St. Labre as alumni, employees, or active parents; others "continue to see St. Labre as an agent of assimilation that, at crucial times in the past, exercised strict, if not harsh, policies toward its

students.”<sup>423</sup> St. Labre garners positive and negative feedback and the 125 Year Celebration acknowledged the school’s shortcomings, while commemorating its achievements.

St. Stephen’s also encountered a troubling start; it opened in 1888 only to close the following year. Under the direction of Father Feusi the mission achieved stability and growth, operating as a boarding school until 1939. The day school added a high school in 1957. Although its secondary education program ceased in 1967, St. Stephens survived by becoming an Indian-controlled school in 1976. Today, St. Stephens Indian School includes an elementary school, middle school, and high school. In 1984, St. Stephens established a scholarship program to promote college enrollment and matriculation. Like its compatriots St. Labre and St. Paul’s, St. Stephens is focused on preparing its students for the future. Hopefully, these three schools will continue to grow, enhance the education of their students, encourage students to dream big, and effectively provide future generations with the necessary skills to attain their goals.

### **Assimilation, Catholicism, Cultural Revitalization**

Since the founding of these missions, American ideology and the Catholic faith have remained prevalent concepts in the schools’ curricula. During the late nineteenth century, reformers of American Indian affairs advocated for federal boarding schools as a key component in their agenda for assimilation. The split curriculum that focused on education and manual labor, highlighted in chapter 3, ostensibly led children on the reformers’ envisioned path for civilization. Federal Indian boarding schools evoke painful memories from the past; however, in the ensuing decades St. Paul’s, St. Labre, and St. Stephens have evolved dramatically from the boarding school era. Following the

<sup>423</sup> Ward, *Native Americans in the School System*, 131.

Great Depression, these institutions transitioned into day schools; however, in the post World War II decades, they continued to enforce a Euroamerican curriculum and extracurricular sports and activities to ensure Native students' conformity to American society's standards.

Eventually, St. Labre, St. Stephens, and St. Paul's began to focus on cultural revitalization. Vatican Council II, cultural revitalization and the Red Power movement, and Indian self-determination legislation influenced these schools. Vatican Council II changed the direction of the Roman Catholic Church, whereby the church fully embraced the modern world. In the process, the church demonstrated a deeper appreciation for other cultures and beliefs. The mission schools incorporated Native songs, artwork, and traditions into the Mass and ensured that the students' religious experience was more culturally relevant. The Red Power movement, in tandem with cultural revitalization, advocated for Indian rights and the Indian Self-Determination and Education Act of 1975 brought these objectives to fruition. In response, Indians exerted greater control over their schools, implemented Native curriculum, and supported Native pride.

Currently the objective of these schools is to introduce educational skills and instill qualities that prepare students for life. St. Stephens High School principal Dorene Cunningham believes "Our goal is to develop leaders who are equipped to make a positive difference in their tribes and in the world." St. Paul's Mission Grade School and St. Labre Indian School, however, continue as Catholic schools. St. Labre Indian School's mission statement states, "Our Mission is to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ according to Catholic Tradition by providing quality education which celebrates our Catholic faith and embraces Native American cultures, primarily the Northern Cheyenne

and Crow Tribes, so that Native American individuals and communities of Southeastern Montana are empowered to attain self-sufficiency.” These schools help shape the students’ multiple identities so that they can succeed in mainstream society, appreciate their Native heritage, and possess the moral values to guide them through adulthood.<sup>424</sup>

### **Commitment to the Reservations**

As these schools strive to meet national education standards and impart the Catholic faith, they encounter the poverty and injustices facing reservation communities. Chief Plenty Coups once advised his people, “Education is your greatest weapon.”<sup>425</sup> St. Labre, St. Stephens, and St. Paul’s empower their students, propelling them toward a successful path. Currently, all three schools operate with a hard-working and caring staff; they offer programs created to facilitate success in the classrooms and beyond; and they provide a safe, nurturing environment. These schools have become places for camaraderie, learning, and, importantly, nutritious meals. They provide opportunities for students dealing with poverty, physical abuse, alcohol and drug addiction, a lack of family stability, depression, racism, and other obstacles common to the reservations. For some students, these opportunities may not be available at home. Educators, tribal leaders, and elders struggle to combat endemic social problems. Their efforts in the twenty-first century should be celebrated and remembered.

### **As Conduits for Native Traditions**

Catholic Indian missions are not a relic of the past, but a part of the evolution and current story of Indian education. St. Labre, St. Stephens, and St. Paul’s have learned to

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<sup>424</sup> St. Stephens Indian High School website, <http://www.st-stephens.net/education/components/whatsnew/default.php?sectiondetailid=92&>, accessed 25 January 2015; and St. Labre Indian School homepage, <http://www.stlabreindianschool.org/site/default.aspx?PageID=1>, accessed 25 January 2015.

<sup>425</sup> *St. Labre Indian School—A Bright Future Built on a Solid Past, 1884–2009*, 57.

incorporate Native traditions, languages, and culture into their curriculum. More importantly, the Native teachers, board members, advisors, student council representatives, and classmates are all influencing these three schools to ensure that the schools' purpose remains centered on supporting the needs of the student body.

Despite the schools' intentions to encourage cultural appreciation, policies dictating appropriate behavior and disciplinary measures still harken back to "the legacy of the rather harsh Catholic boarding school atmosphere." Even as these schools attempt "to accommodate the cultural heritages of the[ir] students," they continue to deal with "problems of cultural conflict among students, parents, and school personnel."<sup>426</sup> The 2005 lawsuit between the Northern Cheyenne and St. Labre Indian School, in particular, demonstrates the animosity that still lingers between some tribal members and the mission school. The dispute, however, should not detract from the exceptional education offered by St. Labre Indian School; it probably ranks as one of the most successful Catholic Indian schools in the United States. St. Labre's graduates can attest to the benefits of the academy program in preparing them for the future.

### **As a Family Tradition**

As each new generation earns an education garnered from their parents', grandparents', and great-grandparents' alma mater, these three schools attain greater strength in their communities. These communities have appropriated their schools and made them an integral part of their history. Alumni, faculty, students, and families share a sense of pride in their schools because they have become a part of their identity.

The concept of identity formation undergirds this study. The schools have sought to assimilate and convert their students, a process that has had repercussions on how

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<sup>426</sup> Ward, *Native Americans in the School System*, 87–88.

students formed their identity. I chose schools on or nearby reservations that serve two different tribes because this dynamic helped discern if students acquired a pan-Indian identity or affirmation of their own tribe throughout their education. As noted in chapter 1, a history of warfare and lingering contention exists between the Northern Cheyennes and Crows, Eastern Shoshones and Northern Arapahos, and Gros Ventres and Assiniboines. These inequities and divisions continue to linger, periodically resurfacing at a school fight or even a basketball game as two tribes compete against each other. Just as the schools endure, animosity persists. For the most part, however, the schools, the reservations, and the communities encourage a climate of goodwill. The school traditions and the community events unite the student body; however, the students never forget who they are and where they come from.

St. Paul's, St. Labre, and St. Stephens have undergone major changes and some improvements; however, one aspect remains constant—their viability. The schools' have acquired 125 years of memories. More significantly, these schools—their staff, students, families—are continuing to forge new memories. Instead of being dying embers slowly extinguishing after 125 years of service, these schools are beacons shimmering forth. American writer James Truslow Adams said, "There are obviously two types of education. One should teach us how to make a living and the other how to live."<sup>427</sup> St. Labre, St. Stephens, and St. Paul's educate "children so they know how to 'live' in the best sense of the word."<sup>428</sup>

<sup>427</sup>James Truslow Adams, "To 'Be' or to 'Do': A Note on American Education, *Forum*, June 1929.

<sup>428</sup>*St. Labre Indian School—A Bright Future Built on a Solid Past, 1884–2009*, 19.



## Appendix



Figure 1. Detailed section from “Map of the Indian tribes of North America, about 1600 A.D. along the Atlantic, & about 1800 A.D. westwardly” by Albert Gallatin, 1836. Map courtesy Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division, catalog no. 2002622260.



Figure 2. Map of the Upper Great Plains and Rocky Mountains Regions by Pierre-Jean De Smet, 1851. Map courtesy Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division, catalog no. 2005630226.



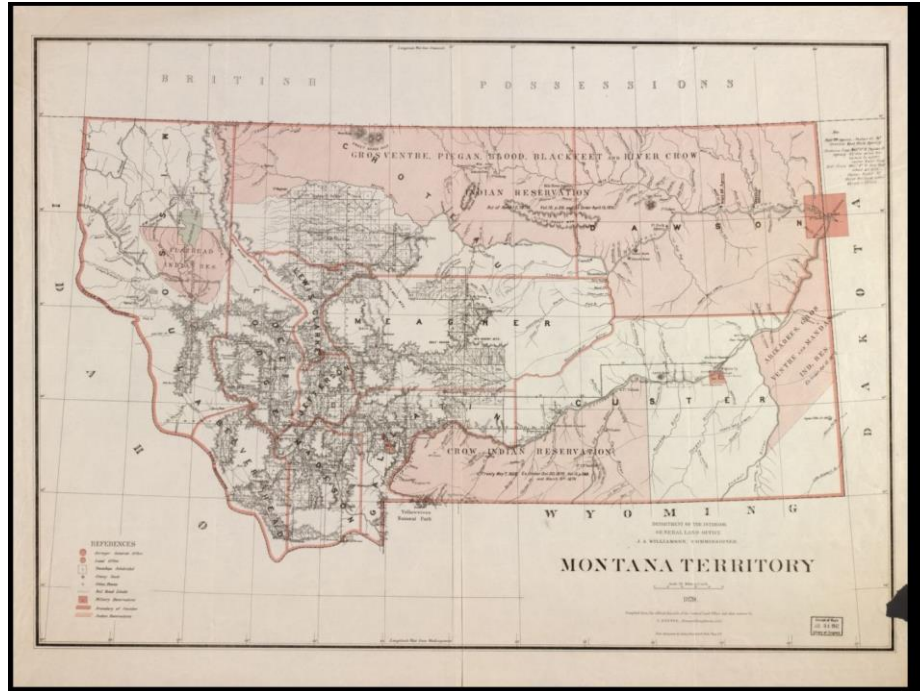


Figure 3. Map of Montana Territory by Charles Roeser, 1879. Map courtesy Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division, catalog no. 2007627959.

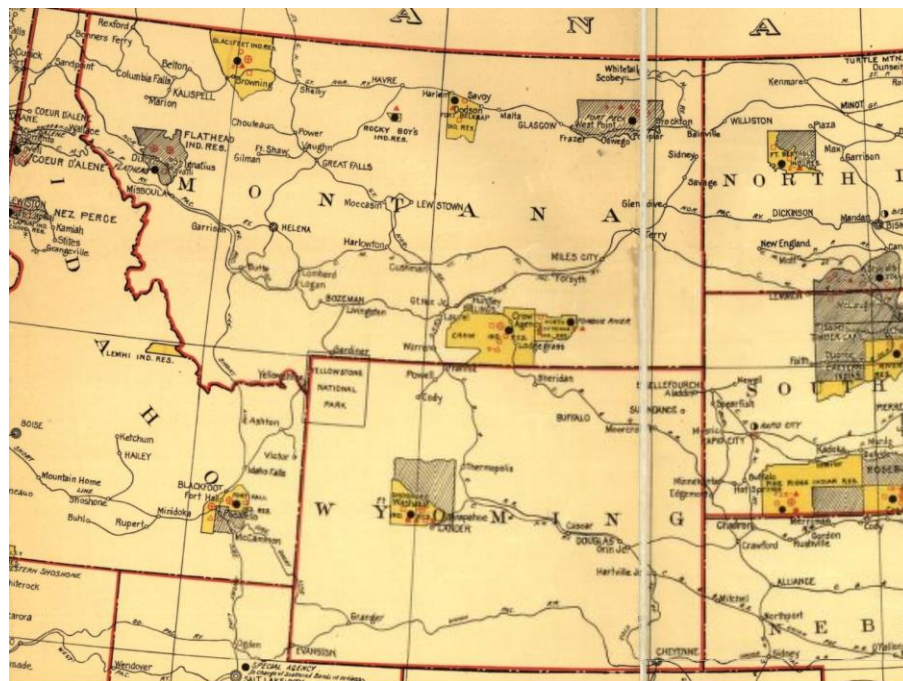


Figure 4. Detailed section from map of "Indian Reservations of West of the Mississippi River" by the Office of Indian Affairs, 1923. Map courtesy Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division, catalog no. 99446198.



Figure 5. Replica of the first mission building at St. Labre. Photograph courtesy author.



Figure 6. Photograph of a painting by Clarence Cuts the Rope depicting St. Paul's Mission before the 1973 fire. Mission High School is the building on the left. Photograph courtesy author.



Figure 7. *Left*, the old boy's dormitory and classrooms built in 1928 now serves as a museum, gift shop, post office, and community center in St. Stephens, Wyoming. *Right*, view of the mission complex, 2013. Photograph courtesy author.



Figure 8. St. Labre Church, 2013. Photograph courtesy author.



Figure 9. Exterior and interior of St. Stephens Church, 2013. Photograph courtesy author.





Figure 10. St. Stephens's Altar, 2013. Photograph courtesy author.



Figure 11. Joan Racine and Vivian Webb took charge of the Mission Grade School booth at the Mid-Winter Pow-Wow in 2006, which won first place. Photograph courtesy author.



Figure 12. Aftermath of the 2008 fire. Photographs courtesy Adam Peterson.

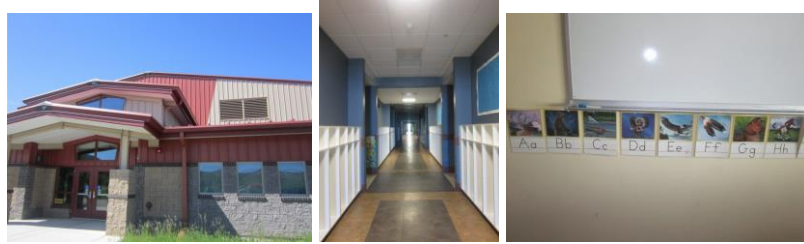


Figure 13. Newly-constructed Mission Grade School, 2013. Photograph courtesy author.



Figure 14. *Right*, newly-constructed dorm dedicated on 23 September 2011. *Left*, entrance to St. Labre Indian School complex, 2013. Photograph courtesy author.

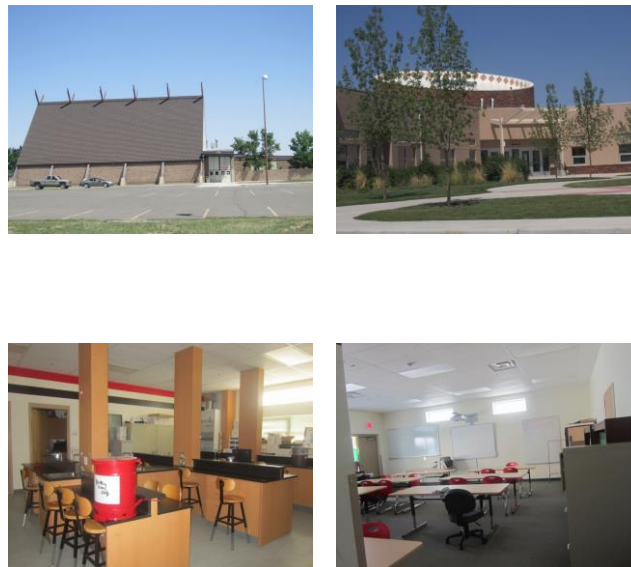


Figure 15. *Top left*, St. Stephens Indian Elementary School; *top right*, St. Stephens Indian High School; *bottom*, high school science lab, 2013. Photograph courtesy author.

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