

Sage

Max Sage

Prof. Joan Gross

May 10, 2016

**American Indian Boarding Schools:
A Legacy of Language Suppression or Identities with Language?**

According to Lyle Campbell, author of *American Indian Languages: The Historical Linguistics of Native America (Oxford Studies in Anthropological Linguistics)*, there were at between 400 and 1200 native languages spoken what is now the United States prior to European colonization (Campbell 2000, 4). These languages covered geographic areas small and large, some of them spoken by a few, some spoken by thousands, perhaps more. Ethnologue posits that there are 196 indigenous languages still recognized around the country, though many of them are spoken rarely, if at all. The estimates show that only 11 native languages are developing, 60 are in trouble, and 143 are dying (Ethnologue 2016, 1). The languages that are still most commonly used are Iroquois, Sioux, Inuit, Navajo, Tohono O'odham, Pima, and Apache. According to some estimates, only about 1/3 of native people in the United States still speak their native language (Utter 2001, 142).

To be sure, these are some startling and sobering statistics. But how did this come to be? Did native languages fall by the wayside in favor of European colonizer languages like English? What exactly does "native speaker" mean? What is the state of native languages today? How do we incorporate English into tribal cultures? The answers to these questions aren't easily found in research. Some of the reasons for this information conundrum can be found in the depths of United States Indian policy, specifically, the era of boarding schools. Boarding schools and their associated policies represent a fundamental shift in Indian country from traditional language and culture sets to a more westernized culture set. Many of the shifts occurrences that took place in Boarding school have had lasting effects on native communities to this day, however, it could be argued that not all of those changes were

detrimental. New languages, the ability to communicate universally with people who could not previously, and the subsequent works of linguists, authors, and poets have brought new meaning to the American Indian experience.

Boarding Schools

The purported intent of boarding schools was to civilize the Indian and make them viable citizens of what was becoming an American society at the time. The first overtures of educating the Indian came in 1776, (it is of note that these boarding school ideas were a continuation of schooling ideologies that had been part of British and native interaction prior to the United States existing) when the United States government provided funds for a minister, blacksmith, and two teachers to live among the Indians. For the next several decades a series of executive orders and treaty language continued to establish schools on or nearby reservations. At the same time, many mission schools were established by various religious groups, again, with the intent of educating and in the case of mission schools, Christianizing the Indian (Utter 2001, 308). It wasn't until 1860 that a concerted effort to educate American Indians began. That year the Bureau of Indian Affairs, (formerly attached to the Department of War) opened its first boarding school on the Yakima reservation. By 1900, the BIA was operating 147 schools across the country with the motto of the founder, Col. Richard Pratt being "Kill the Indian, save the man" (Utter 2001, 309).

For outside observers, today, the boarding school that was experienced by American Indians is hard to fathom. Even within the community, the stories shared by elders hold a pain that people of my generation thankfully, will never know. My Grandfather's experience is worth sharing. He was around 7 years old when he was sent to Flandreau Indian school, with his younger brothers. He remembered many children like him going to the school only they were from all different tribes. This was a common practice of the BIA at the time, to prevent children from being close enough to family to try running back home. Because of the location of Flandreau, South Dakota, relatively close to the Oneida reservation in Wisconsin, he tried several times to run away, back to his family on the reservation. In one such occurrence, he and his companions were caught in a spring storm, and one of his group, a boy a few years younger

than him, died from exposure during the attempted escape before they were found and sent back to school. He always carried the scar of this particular event with him, and he was never able to forgive himself, even in the sunset of his life. This behavior of running away got him moved to Haskell Indian School in Kansas, and at that point, he was separated from his brothers for the duration of his time in boarding school.

Upon his arrival at school, he had only spoke Oneida, one of the Iroquoian languages. Some of the other students spoke English, some not at all. He remembered, when he first got there and got off the train, one of the headmasters talking to him about something in English, of course, he couldn't understand what was being said. He responded in the only language he knew, and as soon as the words had left his mouth, he was hit across the face. One has to wonder at the caliber of man who does that to another human being, fully knowing that there is no right answer for the child to say, and your sole response is state sanctioned physical violence.

It quickly became apparent to Grandpa, through progressively severe forms of punishment such as lashings and whippings, beating with sticks and boards, being forced to have blackboard erasers put into one's mouth, forced starvation, solitary confinement, and in some cases, being hung by wrists with rawhide for hours at a time, and though not officially state sanctioned, sexual abuse against the children from some of the headmasters that either silence or English was expected (Coleman 2007, 114). To be clear, not every native child was subjected to all of these punishments, but these were in fact used and documented at one time or another throughout the boarding school system. The children in the school did whisper and sometimes sign to one another because many of them spoke vastly different languages. Languages that have as much similarity as Mandarin does to German. The communication for many of the children fresh from their families was stifled because of this polyglot situation that only served to further alienate the children from one another, and deepen their longing for home. Eventually, for my grandpa and many others, a few English words took hold throughout the years and eventually, they learned to speak English. Interestingly, the students also learned truncated repertoires of other tribes as well. The overall effect of this physical and psychological trauma on my grandpa and many other students was either the child forgetting

their mother tongue, or as in the case of my grandpa, being so abused and scarred as to never speak his own language ever again. He was 17 years old when he went back home, for obvious reasons, an utterly changed man.

To be clear, my Grandfather in no way had a unique experience in boarding school, however not everyone shared the negative view of boarding schools after their experience. Bud Lane, Co-councilman and language school founder of the Siletz tribe of Indians related a story of his mother-in-law that was a very different experience from my grandfather. "She liked it there", said Lane of her experience. He reminded us that Boarding school might have been a more appealing situation than the reservation depending on how bad home life was, and more importantly, what relationship the tribe had with the local United States government military and political leaders. Lane is clear that all the Boarding schools were English only, and that aspect was detrimental to native language use, however, he said "there are some good things that came out of our histories, but there were also some very bad things" (Lane 2016, lecture). These stories of good and bad have been echoed and told by people of every indigenous nation in this land. What is unequivocally true of the boarding school era is that almost every native individual was affected by it in one way or another. From 1776 to the 1930s, scores of native children from all corners of the United States were forced into boarding schools. Over 100,000 native children attended mission boarding schools; a much smaller number of schools in relation to the larger federal school program. In the 25 larger off-reservation government schools, such as Carlisle, an estimated 20-30,000 children, or 10 percent of the native children were "educated" (Assimilation through Education 2016, 1). There were also on-reservation boarding schools, though it is important to note that the numbers of attendees for reservation boarding schools are dubious at best due to inadequate record keeping, the vast number of reservation schools, and the sheer number of deaths of children at the schools, sometimes several children in one day. The numbers presented to the reader are the best, official estimates the author could find.

At the start of boarding schools in the 18th century, the experience was deemed as good for the children by tribal members as a tool to allow the tribal people to understand new ways, and it was a good faith gesture of peace towards the new people who had come to this

land. Many of the headmen, clan mothers, and holy people often volunteered their children to go to boarding school.

Famous Mohawk war chief and politician Joseph Brandt, or “Thayendanegea” is a good example of this early interaction. Born prior to the American Revolutionary War, Brandt’s family was close to the English politicians and military leaders in upstate New York. Because of this friendly political and social exchange between the Mohawk and the English, Brant was sent to the local governor of the area, Sir William Johnson to oversee his education in British ways. “Impressed by his abilities, Johnson decided to send him to school. In the summer of 1761, Joseph was dispatched along with two other Mohawk boys to the Reverend Eleazar Wheelock in Lebanon (Columbia), Conn., to be enrolled in Moor’s Indian Charity School.” (Graymont 2003). Brandt’s native name “Thayendanegea” which means “two sticks bound together” shows the understanding that tribal people had in working with these new neighbors. The “two sticks bound together” are the Haudenosaunee Confederacy and the British empire working together through Brandt, using his education in the European ways, and his connection to the culture and traditions of the Mohawk, for the good of all. This example nor the beliefs were an uncommon belief or idea among tribal leaders in the early days of boarding schools.

Once BIA schools were put in place, mandatory attendance became the norm, and the true nature of boarding school education became evident, the total and complete erasure of another set of cultures, replacing them with just one (Coleman 2007, 43). The curriculum of all boarding schools included the use of English for activities and instruction. The military-like schedule had students up at 5:45am for Reveille, policing quarters getting ready for the day, eating breakfast, and going to industrial classes by 8am. Industrial activities would end for dinner at 5pm, then a short break and off to civic and language instruction until Taps was played at 9pm. Imagine the entire day, full of that activity, with a group of people with whom you can neither speak nor understand anything, and you are physically punished for doing things incorrectly, or simply speaking in the wrong language, it would be enough to make anyone feel crushed, alone, perhaps even go insane. It is little wonder why grandpa and so many others ran away.

English Only

It was the belief of many Euro-American educators and citizen groups such as “The Friends of the Indian” at the time that the use of native language retarded the learning of civilized concepts and attitudes. “It was deemed to be in the very best interest of the Indian, both as an individual and as an embryo citizen to have the [English only] policy strictly enforced among the various schools on Indian reservations” (Prucha 1973, 201). What is perhaps more important to the concept of successful education in the boarding schools was the indoctrination and assimilation into another cultural system. As Benedict Anderson, in his book *Imagined Communities* points out, “regardless of actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each [country], the nation is always conceived as a deep horizontal comradeship. Ultimately, this fraternity makes it possible for so many millions of people, to not so much kill, as to willingly die for such limited imaginings” (Anderson 2006, 7). The suppression of polyglot native languages, to be replaced with monoglot English, in fact, the whole boarding school experience served as a few of the mechanisms used by Boarding schools to achieve the purported goal of universal comradeship.

J.D.C. Atkins, Commissioner of Indian affairs from 1885 to 1888 wrote extensively on the subject of English-only in boarding schools. With a series of decrees starting in 1886 he forbids the use of any other language than English in instruction. Furthering this policy, he communicated with headmasters around the country stating that the rule of English only will be applied to both government and mission schools, and in 1887 as referenced by Prucha in his book *Americanizing the American Indians* wrote;

“The instruction of Indians in the vernacular is not only of no use to them, but it is detrimental to the cause of their education and civilization, and will not be permitted in any Indian school over which the Government has any control, or in which it has any interest whatever. You will see that this regulation is rigidly enforced in the schools under your direction where Indians are placed under your control” (Prucha 1973, 202).

The beliefs of J.D.C Atkins gained wide acclaim among the headmasters and missionaries in the various schools around the country. Overall there was a belief that,

“This language which is good enough for a white man and a black man, ought to be good enough for the red man. It is believed that teaching the youth in his own barbarous dialect is a detriment to him. The first step to be taken towards civilization, toward teaching the Indians the mischief and folly of continuing their barbarous practices, is to teach them the English language” (Prucha 1973, 203).

In Atkin’s writings, the concept of universal comradeship explained by Anderson is utterly clear. The idea of taking steps toward civilization and helping natives to understand their barbarous practices is clearly a desire and in fact the goal of boarding schools to break traditional cultural and familial systems to indoctrinate natives into the larger national community.

This English-only policy quickly became one of the foundational tenets of boarding school education, and the emphasis on English only in boarding schools went so far that religious schools in Alaska established for Aleut, taught in native language , not in any way attached to federal funding, were forcibly closed by education officials that opposed the use of native languages in schools (Utter 2001, 142). This fervor lasted until 1933 when drastic changes in Indian policy effectively ended the boarding school experience that most up until then had.

One of the greatest ironies of the language suppression policies of the 18th and 19th centuries was the sudden use of code talkers in World War I and II. “Code Talkers” were native men who were soldiers of the Signal Corps, the communications branch of the military. They were tasked to use their native languages to send messages between field units in combat. Usually, two men of the same tribe were placed within units that would be working together in combat so the messages between those units could be encoded through native language. An estimated 35 tribal nations had code talkers in the various conflicts, using their native languages to send and receive messages among the American units engaged in combat both in the European and later, Pacific theaters. The allied forces relied heavily on these native men and their languages in the war effort. None of those codes were ever broken, and those actions of the native men in the signal corps saved thousands of lives and were integral to the success of the Allied operations (Gansworth 2007, Forward).

After Effects

The lasting effects of language suppression and the overall boarding school experience among the indigenous nations of the United States cannot be overstated. The historical trauma is having real and lasting effects to this day. Current research suggests that groups who have histories of trauma are more vulnerable to diminished psychological and physical health in later generations. Recent work in the field of historic trauma has found that in countries with the history of forced boarding school attendance and the;

“removal from one’s family and community is associated with a number of subsequent behavioral health challenges in later generations including increased exposure to sexual violence, increased involvement in child welfare systems, injection drug use, current depressive symptoms an increased exposure to trauma and suicidal thoughts and attempts...the frequency of thinking about losses associated with historic trauma is associated with distressed feelings...over and above proximate stressors” (Mohatt et al. 2014, 129).

Henrietta Man, native scholar, cited by Greymorning, sums up this experience best. “It is a monumental tribute to the spirit of Indigenous peoples in the United States that they survived the assaults on cultural identity in off-reservation boarding schools” (Greymorning 2004, 51). The policies of language suppression and the associated cultural upheaval play a major role in these cultural assaults.

Ironically, not all of the Boarding school experiential outcomes were ever intended by the various headmasters around the country so vehemently supporting the English-only policy in the schools. One of the lasting effects of teaching indigenous children from around the country a monoglot language was to provide a lingua franca, one language for one shared experience. The ability to share collectively in the schools and more importantly still communicate among new found friends from different tribes upon returning home, allowed some who chose to be activists, poets, writers and scholars to start the collective voice of resistance, using a shared knowledge of the colonizer language, that becomes stronger by the day with my generation.

Another happening occurred at many boarding schools that were not so well documented. Because of the rigid authoritarian structure and summary physical and psychological abuses, many of the children learned to be very cunning in regard to using native languages. Many of them taught words and phrases to one another in different languages those few times when they weren't being watched. This allowed the students familiarity with one another through the use of truncated repertoires as described by Blommaert in *The Sociolinguistics of Globalization* (Blommaert 2010, 103).

Returning to my Grandfather's experience, he related one story to highlight this occurrence. In his time at the first boarding school he attended, Flandreau, he met many Lakota and Hunkpapa children who all spoke dialects of the Siouan language group. In making friends with those children, he was taught a truncated repertoire of Lakota. He learned enough from those students that he was able to navigate situations in the school that might have been more difficult if not for his limited knowledge of Lakota. Much later, while attending a powwow in South Dakota with my mother, he saw some of those youth from Flandreau. He was still able to communicate with them, and upon finishing his conversation he joked with my mom that he "understood Lakota better than Oneida".

Additionally, some of the developed pidgin, Creole and "New" English languages out of native and English dialects so they could communicate with one another right under the noses of those very oppressors that strove to stop all of these non-standard communications. In his work entitled *American Indian English*, William Leap clearly establishes the unique aspects of the interaction of Native languages and English. "American Indian English is an aggregate of English varieties, which differ as a group and individually, from standard English (as expressed through the language of the metropolis) from the varieties of English spoken by non-Indians in American society" (Leap 1993, 282). Leap suggests that Indian English is so different because of its use of traditional language syntax, code, and rules of grammar. Leap reminds us that "While English has a long history in Indian country, and individual members of Indian speech communities may have been speaking English for quite some time, communitywide English fluency is a relatively recent phenomenon for many tribes" (Leap 1993, 283). Given that the end of the boarding school era was in the 1930's, while not specifically stated by Leap, it is

easily inferred that this unique Indian English, with its aggregation of multiple sources, was in part due to the boarding school experience.

This argument is also supported by works of people like Mesthrie et al. who have spent time looking at pidgins, Creoles, and “New” varieties of English. They assert that there are some criteria for “New” varieties of English that must be present to be viable. Referencing work by Platt et al. in 1984, they posit that these types of English must be developed in areas where English was not traditionally the primary language, and the vast majority of the population have not had previous experience with English. This learning of English has been through the mechanisms of western education systems. The “New” English must be used continuously and in a variety of situations beyond formal settings. Lastly, it must have been “indigenized” meaning that local cultural words and systems have been built into this new form of English, making it locally culturally viable (Mesthrie et al. 2000, 306). A topical investigation of Leap’s assertions in *American Indian English* show us that Indian English fits all of these criteria, and boarding school language policy specifically fits the educational criteria proposed by Platt in Mesthrie et al.’s work.

Finding Ourselves

In a semblance of recognition of the profound effects of language suppression in American Indian communities, the Native American Languages Act (NALA), was signed on October 30,1990. It declares that “to preserve, protect, and promote the rights and freedoms of Native Americans to use, practice, and develop Native American languages”. This act effectively reversed language suppression policies focused on natives for over two centuries (Utter 2001, 143) This concept of cultural identity and the meaning and the scope of NALA is not lost on those who seek to bring our languages home to the people.

While many people today play integral roles in language revitalization, few have had a more profound effect than Darrell Kipp, honored language keeper of the Blackfeet Nation. Kipp was the co-founder of the Piegan Institute of the Blackfeet Nation and was recognized nationally for his innovative beliefs and pride in re-engaging with native languages. “We are all re-learners,” wrote Kipp, “My mom was a Catholic mission school kid, and my dad went in the

third grade to government schools...the truth is that they didn't teach us the language because they didn't want us to be abused like they were in school" (Kipp 2000, 5). Kipp helps us know that we are all related in this way, and a journey back to our languages will be a journey home. He reminds us that language is key, that there is nothing else but language. In it, we will find our answers to our questions and cultures. Kipp writes "never ask permission, never beg to save a language, show, don't tell, and use language as a curriculum-botany, geography, political science, philosophy, history are all embedded in the language" (Kipp 2000, Summary).

Another language warrior Neyooxet (Steven) Greymorning, professor of Anthropology and Native Studies at the University of Montana speaks and writes about the coming of Euro-Americans and the language suppression, metaphorically describing the ordeal of language revitalization as keeping Trickster at bay. "Trickster tales," he writes, "have been used to illustrate improper behavior in such a way as to teach Native communities proper behavior...whenever trickster sees something he likes, he is sure to conjure up some new trick to obtain what he desires as his own" (Greymorning 2004, 4). Using this trickster metaphor, Greymorning reminds us that our ancestors were products of the language and associated culture that was spoken to them, and in turn, we today are products of that language as well. Trickster, (Euro-American settler colonialist people and policy together) forced this language upon us. Greymorning makes clear the connection to language and living in the proper way. Though speaking of the Arapaho, the statement is true of language revitalization in general "If you stay true to traditional Arapaho ways, they will take care of you (Greymorning 2004, 13). To combat this cycle of the language forced upon us, Greymorning and others work tirelessly to empower us all to meet this language challenge, while we still have those few elders, the custodians of the language still here as resources for the people (Greymorning 2004, 15).

Mohatt et al. shows in their work on historic trauma that "Strong cultural identity may be emblematic of public resilience in the face of historic trauma...research has shown that clarity in one's cultural identity predicts personal well-being and that clarity in one's self-concept mediates this relationship across diverse cultures" (Mohatt et al. 2014, 131). In other words, communities that have survived this historic trauma in many cases, come together and reassert cultural and linguistic identity. Not only does reclaiming our language revitalize the

culture, but we are literally healthier and physiologically stable the more interactive we are with our own traditional ways. The work of Kipp and Greymorning are great examples of stemming historical trauma through working toward language revitalization among tribal people of the United States.

Kipp's and Greymorning's attitudes, beliefs and most importantly teachings are reverberating across the country and real efforts toward language revitalization are occurring among the Blackfeet, Salish, and Kootenai, Shoshone, Arapaho, and other people in the west. My own tribe of Oneidas, our older brothers, the Mohawk, and our fire keepers, the Onondaga, also actively seek to reclaim our birthright of the Iroquoian language. More and more immersion schools are popping up on other reservations, college campuses, and community centers by the day.

While these recent language schools are starting to take off, in some cases, we may be too late. Even among my own people, the Oneida, current estimates suggest that there are only 2 primary language speakers left, and while these numbers are starting to increase, the secondary language speakers of Oneida that are considered truly competent, number less than 300, out of a tribe of nearly 16,000 members (Metoxen 2014, interview). To be clear, the measure of competency is subjective. One must understand that Blommaert's concept of truncated repertoire is the reality of any language user. For some tribal people, praying and daily interaction is a reasonable measure of competency whereas for people like myself, the ability to correctly welcome and address an elder might be more than enough language ability for certain purposes. Clearly, both these examples are of truncated repertoires, but both serve the intended need of the user, and as Blommaert reminds us, language is a resource available to any user to fit the intended needs of that user (Blommaert 2010, 43).

Siletz Case Study

The current state of some native languages does not stop people like Bud Lane from working towards language revitalization in places like the Siletz reservation in Oregon. Bud saw the issues of language loss early, he remembered watching the old men converse among one another and he related that "when one of those old speakers dies, there is no one new to

replace them” (Lane 2016, lecture). Lane and others have established a charter language school in Siletz to combat the language loss within his tribe. During his lecture to our Language in Global Context class, Lane related that only 1, perhaps 2 Siletz primary language speakers are left on the reservation, giving even more importance to the success of the language school. One of the successes of the program is teaching the language to the youth through counting and number songs. He believes this to be one of the strengths of his program, (Lane 2016, lecture). Lane also points to the establishment of a comprehensive dictionary as another aspect of a success language program. In addition to the dictionary, Lane believes that written material in the form of stories or prayers allows the language student to contextualize the material in a culturally relevant way. He also advocates the use of modern technologies such as the internet and language application programs for learners who are not close enough to the reservation to access the immersion schools. Lane suggests that a key aspect of the work beyond written material is the use of a “living tongue” dictionary. This recording of the language allows user’s a much more nuanced and complete learning of the language. Understanding tone and tenor, verbal grammatical structure, and the proper semantics are all part of the “living tongue” style of teaching that are not necessarily through the use of written text alone (Lane 2016, lecture).

Lastly, Lane understands the interaction between learning the traditional language in a modern society. He suggests working with the young people in the program currently to become certified teachers, that way they can become a crucial asset later in certifying immersion schools that teach the modern curriculum, such as math and science in traditional language. (Lane 2017, lecture). There is little doubt that with leaders like Bud Lane teaching language to the Siletz tribe, that language is on track to be a successful part of that community in the future. One can assert that these “best practices” described by Lane provide one useable blueprint for success that other tribes in the infancy of language revitalization could implement with little groundwork.

Using “Tricksters” Voice for the Human Beings

Natives also seek to regain themselves through the colonizer language of English. In the last 30 years, scores of Native writers from Deloria Jr. to Brown, and Alexie have used the English language to give voice to a native perspective. One that is uniquely Indian, as described by Leap. Our concepts and culture conveyed to us all in another tongue. Words that while English are uniquely meaningful to a native person.

One book by Vine Deloria Jr. called *Custer Died for your Sins* evokes emotion simply in the title. This Indian manifesto title is speaking both to the native and settler colonialist alike. The leader of the 1876 doomed military campaign in southwest Montana died at the hands of tribes fighting to protect their homelands from settler colonialist expansion. The response of the military was swift and uncompromising. Within a few years, those tribes had been defeated and were subjugated to reservations where many remain to this day. The title of the book speaks simultaneously to both meanings. To the native, Custer died at our hands trying to civilize the Indian and “help” us turn away from our sinner beliefs. To the modern American, Custer died because of the sins that took place among settler colonialists in taking the land and resources, without any right, and killing the original people of the land to get those resources. Custer was a player in that genocide, therefore, the sins of America killed him. Such a powerful dual meaning all encapsulated in one title.

Another book title by Dee Brown has similar deep emotional and cultural meaning for native people. *Bury my Heart at Wounded Knee*. Referencing the 1890 massacre of the last free Lakota, the title and text evoke the tragic loss of freedom to be the people that we are. The book, not written solely for the Lakota, is a study into the interactions between the Settler colonialists of the United States, and the tribal nations swept aside in the name of Manifest Destiny. Using Indian English throughout the book, the aim is a native audience, yet is accessible to those outside of the native lifeway.

A more contemporary example of these dual meaning writings is Sherman Alexie’s, *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven*. This well-known and highly bigoted television series of the 1950’s has one reality in dominant society and quite another for natives. In the era when westerns were popular, many native children pretended to be the heroic cowboy, killing the

savage Indian. Only later did many realize to their embarrassment and chagrin that they were ostensibly killing themselves. The title pokes fun at not only the series but also the cultural machinations of dominant society. Simply put, the title was meant to make natives laugh.

Those forerunners of the written word have opened the doors for new writing all of the time, Indians talking to Indians about Sovereignty, culture, language, and community. One such book *Sovereign Bones* is aimed solely at a native audience. This anthology of native work gives voice to the modern teaching of the people. Using phrases like “Repatriating Ourselves”, “Speaking through Our Nations’ Teeth” and “Rolling Those Sovereign Bones” to describe the sections of the anthology, the book uses language that is and always will be powerful in Indian country. These words are saying that we are regaining our own ground, in our own ways, re-learning our own languages and that we are authentically native even using the colonizer language to describe these beliefs. One could assert that through these works, American Indians are bringing history full circle. We are reconnecting to our own lifeways from the remnants of what was left of us.

Without a doubt, the boarding school experience of native peoples will be a permanent part of our collective reality. The actual policies and the way they were used to attack native society can never be forgotten. We are an utterly changed people, not by our choice, but by force. This cultural assault was just one of the mechanisms meant to erase us and our cultures from history. My Grandfather and others were forever changed by this experience, and consequently, people of my generation are still picking up the pieces of our shattered past. That being said, it is important to remember that this experience was not homogenous, nor totally destructive. We learned about new people and new ways of being from people and tribes we would not have otherwise ever been in contact with. Even my grandfather gained lifelong friends, new language skills and experiences that were positive. Native peoples learned to communicate with one another, formed new languages and were successful in systems that were never meant for us.

Another positive aspect of the aftermath of boarding schools is a concerted effort to revitalize our languages, and in turn, our very cultures. More and more tribes by the day are

working to repatriate themselves by “speaking through their own nation’s teeth” (Gansworth 2007, introduction). Individuals such as myself seek to “Think Indian” again by learning our own languages. Revitalization programs, for the first time, are allowing that to happen.

Using Indian English, we are also gaining perspective on our own authenticity and putting meaning to words that will always reverberate in Indian country differently than in dominant society. Sovereignty, repatriation, Wounded Knee, Trickster, Indian country. These words are all in English, accessible to the reader of this work. Yet, one could posit that these words will always have a different meaning to a native versus a non-native. With the shared experience of boarding school among the many tribes, these words have similar gravity irrespective of former language, religions, lifeways, and geography. One can assert, that without the boarding school experience this culture and language revolution could not have happened in the same way. In the process of doing this research, my own perspectives have changed. At one time, I saw nothing redeemable in what my people and family had been subjected to. Now I see that the boarding school experience, while indelible, and in many cases brutal, has benefitted tribes, and tribal people in some most unusual ways.

Works Cited

Assimilation Through Education: Indian Boarding Schools in the Pacific Northwest. :: American Indians of the Pacific Northwest Collection :: Accessed June 06, 2016.

<http://content.lib.washington.edu/aipnw/marr.html>.

Alexie, Sherman. *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven*. New York: Grove Press, 2005.

Brown, Dee. *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee: An Indian History of the American West*.

Campbell, Lyle. *American Indian Languages: The Historical Linguistics of Native America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Coleman, Michael C. *American Indians, the Irish, and Government Schooling: A Comparative Study*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska, 2007. Print.

Deloria, Vine. *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto*. New York, NY: Macmillan Company, 1969.

"Ethnologue." *Ethnologue*. Accessed June 05, 2016. <http://www.ethnologue.com/>.

Gansworth, Eric L. *Sovereign Bones: New Native American Writing, Volume II*. New York: Nation, 2007. Print.

Graymont, Barbara. *Biography – THAYENDANE GEA – Volume V (1801-1820) – Dictionary of Canadian Biography*. *Biography – THAYENDANE GEA – Volume V (1801-1820) – Dictionary of Canadian Biography*. Accessed June 06, 2016.

http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/thayendanegea_5E.html.

Sage

Green, Wendy M. "Indigenous Language Revitalization: Encouragement, Guidance and Lessons Learned - Edited by Jon Reyhner and Louise Lockard." *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* 41.3 (2010): 319-21. Web.

Greymorning, Stephen. *A Will to Survive: Indigenous Essays on the Politics of Culture, Language, and Identity*. Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2004. Print.

Lane, Bud. "Siletz Language Revitalization." Lecture, Oregon State University, Corvallis, Oregon, May 25, 2016.

Leap, William. *American Indian English*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1993.

Mesthrie, Rajend. *Introducing Sociolinguistics*. Philadelphia: J. Benjamins, 2000.

Mohatt, Nathaniel Vincent, Azure B. Thompson, Nghi D. Thai, and Jacob Kraemer Tebes. "Historical Trauma as Public Narrative: A Conceptual Review of How History Impacts Present-day Health." *Social Science & Medicine* 106 (2014): 128-36. Web.

Prucha, Francis Paul. *Americanizing the American Indians*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1973. Print.

Utter, Jack. *American Indians: Answers to Today's Questions*. Lake Ann, MI: National Woodlands Pub., 2001. Print.