

To whom it may concern:

I have attached my thesis ([also found here on ScholarWorks](#)), written in 2020, regarding the Greenville Indian Industrial School in California where 5 girls ran away from the school due to negligence on behalf of school officials in 1917 (2 of the 5 girls died as a result of the negligence of school/BIA officials).

After writing this thesis, the direct descendants of 1 of the 5 girls have been in contact with me because they were unaware of what happened to their ancestor until reading my thesis.

Please review and contact myself if you have any questions. I received the primary documents from the National Archives in San Bruno, CA. The documents also show that there might be a burial ground near the school with deceased students.

**Abstract:**

Indian boarding schools were created by the United States government in the nineteenth century in order to “civilize” and assimilate American Indians. In this research, I utilize public information regarding the missing and murdered Indigenous women (MMIW) crisis in the United States as well as primary documents from a report by Special Agent Lafayette Dorrington of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). Dorrington investigated the case of five American Indian girls who ran away from the Greenville Indian Industrial School in 1916.

I will refer to the documents as “The Greenville Investigation” instead of Dorrington’s title- “The Greenville Desertion” - because the term “desertion” was used by school officials to equate student runaways with disloyal military members and I find this woefully inaccurate. The documents are important within the scope of Indian boarding school history and general American Indian history because they show a narrative of resistance, ignorant paternalism, scapegoating, and victim-blaming in which young girls were failed by an institution that was in place to protect and help them. Historians have not yet written about these specific documents, nor have they written heavily about female runaways as a form of resistance, the aftermath of tragedies akin to this one, or analyzed the parallels between the Indian boarding school system and today’s MMIW crisis in the U.S.

The epidemic of unaccounted MMIW in the United States today has failed to gain the traction necessary to hold law enforcement agencies accountable in tracking and solving these cases. Many cases in the past and today have been simply closed with an innocuous statement of hypothermia as a cause of death, failing to acknowledge other factors. I will discuss the history of the Indian education system in the United States, analyze and write about the documents in “The Greenville Investigation,” and draw parallels between the failures of the boarding school system and today’s crisis of MMIW.

Sincerely,

Kate Mook, MA  
Lecturer  
CSU, San Bernardino

6-2020

## The Greenville Investigation: Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Boarding School Runaways

Kate Mook

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THE GREENVILLE INVESTIGATION: MISSING AND MURDERED  
INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND BOARDING SCHOOL RUNAWAYS

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A Thesis  
Presented to the  
Faculty of  
California State University,  
San Bernardino

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts  
in  
Interdisciplinary Studies

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by  
Kate Elizabeth Mook  
June 2020

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June 2020

Approved by:

Dr. Thomas Long, Committee Chair, History

Dr. Tiffany Jones, Committee Member, Department Chair, History

Dr. Carmen Jany, Committee Member, World Languages and Literatures

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## ABSTRACT

Indian boarding schools were created by the United States government in the nineteenth century in order to “civilize” and assimilate American Indians. In this research, I utilize public information regarding the missing and murdered Indigenous women (MMIW) crisis in the United States as well as primary documents from a report by Special Agent Lafayette Dorrington of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). Dorrington investigated the case of five American Indian girls who ran away from the Greenville Indian Industrial School in 1916.

I will refer to the documents as “The Greenville Investigation” instead of Dorrington’s title- “The Greenville Desertion” - because the term “desertion” was used by school officials to equate student runaways with disloyal military members and I find this woefully inaccurate. The documents are important within the scope of Indian boarding school history and general American Indian history because they show a narrative of resistance, ignorant paternalism, scapegoating, and victim-blaming in which young girls were failed by an institution that was in place to protect and help them. Historians have not yet written about these specific documents, nor have they written heavily about female runaways as a form of resistance, the aftermath of tragedies akin to this one, or analyzed the parallels between the Indian boarding school system and today’s MMIW crisis in the U.S.

The epidemic of unaccounted MMIW in the United States today has failed to gain the traction necessary to hold law enforcement agencies accountable in

tracking and solving these cases. Many cases in the past and today have been simply closed with an innocuous statement of hypothermia as a cause of death, failing to acknowledge other factors. I will discuss the history of the Indian education system in the United States, analyze and write about the documents in “The Greenville Investigation,” and draw parallels between the failures of the boarding school system and today’s crisis of MMIW.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research would not have been possible without the generosity of multiple people involved in my graduate program. I want to thank the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians for providing me with a scholarship that made my participation in this graduate program possible; without their funding, this thesis would not have come to fruition. I want to thank my advisor and committee member Dr. Thomas Long for giving me his time and guidance and for sharing his indispensable wealth of knowledge on the American Indian community. I am deeply appreciative to Dr. Tiffany Jones and Dr. Carmen Jany for their time and input throughout my higher-education career and their support of my research. Thank you, Gary and the Pechanga Band of Luiseño Indians, for providing me with essential research experience.

I want to thank the teachers who had a profound impact on my life, who undoubtedly inspired my writing and research in this thesis. Thank you Nanette Davis-Kirchhevel for introducing me to the Jacobys and the wonders of history. Thank you, Dr. Kate Liszka, Dr. Cherstin Lyon, Dr. Thomas Long, and Dr. Tiffany Jones for the profound impact you all have had on me during my time in the history department. You are all dedicated scholars and teachers; thank you for accepting nothing less than my full potential. Thank you, Pam Crosson, and the entire staff in the CSU, San Bernardino History Department.

My gratitude runs unendingly deep for my family and friends who have listened to me with open ears and hearts, supported my progress throughout this



research, and helped me to edit this thesis. I am grateful to my mother Julia for sitting with me and providing input while she completes her own dissertation. I am grateful to my father Chris for showing me how to persevere despite what life hands me. I thank both my parents for giving me a solid foundation on which to build my school career; they taught me to believe that I could accomplish anything I set my heart to and this research could not have happened without their support. Thank you, Christian and Haley, for your friendship and for pushing me to finish the things I start. Thank you, Maddie, Eric, and Bill for your support, love, and your deep understanding of me. Thank you, Goldie and George, for sharing your stories with me and inspiring my love of history. Thank you, Lark, David, and Athahn for supporting me throughout this program. Thank you, Susie, Shelly, Laurie, Paul Beach, Mary, Shelia, Lee, Rusty, Corrina, Sam, Paul Bergstrom, Lisa, Bethany, Paola, Corey, Shanelle, Matt, Kim, Kyle, Adam, Mari, Valerie, Justen, Hailie, Roberto, Mark, and my other Department of the Interior friends who supported me in this research while I was working. Thank you, Carolyn, John, Tom, Denise, Lyle, Lynne, Jerry, Kelli, Cathleen, Michelle, and Gina for your inspiration, laughs, concern, and care during this time and for the positive impact you have all had on my life.

Most importantly, I would like to thank Edith Buckskin, Katherine Dick, Rosa James, Elweza Stonecoal, Molly Lowry, and the families and friends of MMIW and men. Thank you, Edith, Katherine, Rosa, Elweza, and Molly for unknowingly sharing your story with me; I can only hope that you would have

believed that I did some justice to your stories. Thank you to the brave families of MMIW and men who participate in interviews and publicize their stories in order to raise awareness of the MMIW crisis, potentially risking their own safety to gain justice and help others.

I am indebted to all of you for your contributions to myself and my research; this would not have been possible without each and every one of you.

## DEDICATION

To one of my greatest friends, Park Ranger and Sergeant William Joseph Hubbard, who passed away as I was finishing this thesis. Rest in paradise. The trail provides!

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Described as the “heyday” of off-reservation boarding schools, the 1890s to the 1930s was a time of increased public and federal government support for the standardization of the Indian school system.<sup>1</sup> The Greenville Indian Boarding School opened in 1897 in Greenville, California, a small town in Plumas County in the northern Sierra Nevada mountain range. The Greenville school found itself in the midst of tragedy in December 1916 when five girls- Katherine Dick, Edith Buckskin, Rosa James, Elweza Stonecoal, and Molly Lowry- ran away from the school. Special Agent Dorrington was called upon to investigate culpability for the death of Lowry, who had died while she was away from the school. This case attests to the ignorance of bureaucratic paternalism in regard to Indian boarding schools and directly point to scapegoating, victim-blaming, negligence, and correlate to the current epidemic of stolen, missing, and murdered Indigenous women.<sup>2</sup> They also provide direct evidence of the woeful inadequacies of these

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1. K. Tsianina Lomawaima, *They Called it Prairie Light: The Story of Chilocco Indian School* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 6.

2. Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Vintage Books, 1976), 4-5. Genovese’s seminal work titled *Roll, Jordan, Roll* (1974) defines paternalism as a relationship which “grew out of the necessity to discipline and morally justify a system of exploitation” and insisted “upon mutual obligations- duties, responsibilities, and ultimately even rights- [which] implicitly recognized the slaves’ humanity.”



boarding schools and the resultant resistance practiced by Indian students within the boarding school as a means of survival.

The National Archives in San Francisco currently hold Dorrington's 145-page report on this incident which has not been widely reviewed by historians. These documents show a system of paternalism gone awry, rife with flaws and failing to serve the purpose of protecting American Indian children the schools were responsible for protecting. During the nineteenth-century, the United States federal government was a paternalistic force against American Indians and created reservations, education systems, and treaties in the name of "civilizing" the Indians and supposedly promoting their best interests. The federal government referred to itself as the "great father," as did the Indians, implying that the government was the parent of the American Indians and was responsible for them.<sup>3</sup> When the five Greenville School girls ran away, the lack of care was undoubtedly a catalyst to their resistance, during their resistance, and after.<sup>4</sup> Unsurprisingly, no one was held accountable for the deaths and injuries of the girls except Buckskin herself, who was used as the scapegoat to avoid further

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3. Francis Paul Prucha, *The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians* vol. 1 and 2 (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), xxviii. Prucha defines the Great Father as follows: "It was common for Indians to refer to the president (head and symbol of the United States government) as the Great Father, and the term was adopted by government officials as well. It was an appropriate usage for the paternalistic attitude of the federal government toward the Indians as dependent children."

4. David Wallace Adams, "Beyond Bleakness: The Brighter Side of Indian Boarding Schools, 1870-1940," in *Boarding School Blues: Revisiting American Indian Educational Experiences*, ed. Clifford Trafzer, Jeffrey Smith, and Lorene Sisquoc (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 57. Adams defines resistance as "ways of extracting joy, or at least satisfaction, in an institutional setting hegemonically oppressive in so many of its features."

investigation. Lowry's cause of death was ruled as freezing and exposure. Her death is sadly akin to many deceased American Indian women in the twenty-first century despite evidence of foul-play.

The Greenville Investigation is an important narrative in the history of U.S. and American Indian history. Analysis of the documents suggests that the process of investigating missing and murdered Indigenous women (MMIW) has hardly changed- BIA and school officials' lack of care for missing American Indians in 1917 is comparable to the overall lack of care for missing American Indians today. This lack of attention has led to intergenerational trauma and grief that is widespread throughout American Indian communities. This research attempts to bring this comparison into further scholarly study in order to move toward solving the MMIW crisis.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

A plethora of historians have written books solely on the history of Indian education systems implemented by European-Americans in the latter nineteenth century and early twentieth century. Few, if any, however, have delved into the history of girls who have run away from these institutions and the legacy of these cases on MMIW today. Scholarly works discuss the history of Indian boarding schools, day schools, and mission schools, the various responses both students and parents had to these systems, including resistance, a general idea of what these institutions were like for the students, parents, and authorities, the discipline expended by authorities onto the students, and the outcome of the students when they finished their schooling. Though all scholars take an individual approach, all of their works attest that the purpose of Indian education was to assimilate American Indians into Euro-American society or to “systematically divest [them] of their lands and other bases of an independent life.”<sup>5</sup>

David Wallace Adams’s book *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928*, is a thorough explanation and history of boarding school education imposed on American Indians in the United

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5. K. Tsianina Lomawaima, “Domesticity in the Federal Indian Schools: The Power of Authority Over Mind and Body,” *American Ethnologist* 20, no. 2 (1993): 236, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/645643>.

States. Adams dedicates a comprehensive section of his work to “student resistance” and discusses student runaways. He provides ample evidence to show that running away occurred more often than not, it had a direct impact on school enrollment, and it was nearly impossible to prevent, as evidenced by examples from both on-reservation and off-reservation schools listed by Adams.<sup>6</sup> Female runaways are mentioned a handful of times in statistics and short narratives but are less represented than boys, due to the fact that girls ran away in lower numbers than their counterparts.<sup>7</sup> In relation to my thesis, Adams also discusses the repercussions of running away which occasionally ended in the death of the students, much like the Greenville Investigation. In one case, three Kiowa boys deserted during the winter and one of them perished from “cold and exhaustion.”<sup>8</sup> Adams provides a thorough background on the U.S. Indian Boarding School system and some information that is relevant to the Greenville Investigation.

*Boarding School Blues: Revisiting American Indian Educational Experiences* edited by Clifford E. Trafzer, Jean A. Keller, and Lorene Sisquoc takes a different approach than Adams by utilizing and compiling essays from other prominent scholars of Indian Boarding Schools, including Adams, himself.

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6. David Wallace Adams, *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1995), 224-225.

7. Adams, 224-229.

8. Adams, 228.

Some of the authors refer to runaway students and the disciplinary actions taken by the school authorities. In Clyde Ellis's essay, he refers to the Rainy Mountain school's statistics on runaways and asserts that the low numbers are more than likely underreported; schools did not want to report runaways and if the students came back relatively quickly, they were not considered a runaway.<sup>9</sup> He also refers to a girl from the Riverside school who wanted to run away simply because she just didn't want to "stay in school."<sup>10</sup> The punishment was more severe for male runaways compared to females but both were intentionally humiliated in order to impede the number of runaways. Jaqueline Fear-Segal and Scott Riney both refer to running away as a common problem within the boarding school system and that punishment was usually "harsh."<sup>11</sup> None of the essays in this book discuss female runaways in depth.

In Frederick Hoxie's *A Final Promise: The Campaign to Assimilate the Indians, 1880-1920*, Hoxie discusses the history of Indian boarding school and day school education in the United States. Hoxie refers to the disagreements between government and school officials and how the idea of Indian education developed in the early twentieth century; however, he does not refer to running away as a form of resistance used by students.<sup>12</sup>

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9. Clyde Ellis, *Boarding School Blues*, 76.

10. Ellis, 76.

11. Riney, *Boarding School Blues*, 132.

12. Frederick E. Hoxie, *A Final Promise: The Campaign to Assimilate the Indians, 1880-1920* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2001).

Ward Churchill's *Kill the Indian, Save the Man: The Genocidal Impact of American Indian Residential Schools* discusses Indian Boarding Schools as a direct contributor to the genocide of American Indians. Churchill refers to both Canada and the United States and compares the highly documented Canadian Indian runaways to the sparsely documented cases of American Indian runaways. Referring to multiple stories about runaways from residential schools and specifically, the punishment that occurred when the students came back (or did not). Churchill utilizes cases of students who ran away and were killed by the cold weather after school officials failed to look for them.<sup>13</sup> The instances discussed in this book relate closely to the Greenville Investigation.

In Brenda J. Child's book *Boarding School Seasons: American Indian Families, 1900-1940*, Child refers to runaway students from boarding schools in multiple chapters. As proof that the Greenville Investigation are not a unique narrative in the history of boarding schools, Child writes about one girl who ran away from the Flandreau school simply because she was "sick" of it; the reasons varied for students as to why they would run away, which has been a constant in all of the literature I have studied.<sup>14</sup> For the most part, the local Indian communities were understanding towards children who had deserted their schools, but fear was common for parents who were unaware of their children's

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13. Ward Churchill, *Kill the Indian, Save the Man: The Genocidal Impact of American Indian Residential Schools* (San Francisco: City Light Books, 2004), 57-60.

14. Brenda J. Child, *Boarding School Seasons: American Indian Families, 1900-1940* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 89.

whereabouts, especially during the winter.<sup>15</sup> According to Child, the decision to run away was not an easy decision for the children themselves and was frequently met with “ambivalence and regret.”<sup>16</sup> Child’s assertions parallel the reported experiences in the Greenville Investigation.

In the introduction to *The Indian School on Magnolia Avenue: Voices and Images from Sherman Institute*, Trafzer, Sisquoc, and Matthew Sakiestewa Gilbert briefly referenced students who ran away from their boarding schools, including Serrano and Cahuilla tribal elder Francis Morongo who ran away from Sherman to her home in the San Manuel Indian Reservation.<sup>17</sup> The authors attest to Child’s assertion that students took this effort when they “found their experience to be unsatisfactory.”<sup>18</sup> This book briefly describes Morongo, a female runaway, but does not intensively delve into the story or describe other instances in which females died when they ran away.

Jon Reyhner and Jeanne Eder’s book *American Indian Education: A History* reviews the history of the American Indian education system in the United States from the colonial era to the beginning of the twenty-first century. Reyhner and Eder’s work includes tables relevant to this research, one specifically listing

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15. Child, *Boarding School Seasons*, 89-90.

16. Child, *Boarding School Seasons*, 95.

17. Clifford Trafzer, Jeffrey Smith, and Lorene Sisquoc, *Shadows of Sherman Institute: A Photographic History of the Indian School on Magnolia Avenue* (Pechanga, California: Great Oak Press, 2017), 8.

18. Trafzer, Smith, and Sisquoc, *Shadows of Sherman Institute*, 7.

the Greenville Indian Boarding School's opening date, staffing, capacity, enrollment, and average attendance in 1905.<sup>19</sup> Similar to a few others, this book refers to Scott Riney's account of students who ran away from the Rapid City Indian School and "lost their lower legs to frostbite," just as Elweza Stonecoal did in the Greenville Investigation.<sup>20</sup> Reyhner and Eder also discusses the punishment of runaways when he refers to K. Tsianina Lomawaima's book on the Chilocco school, mentioned later in this review; he also talks about James McCarthy's experiences of discipline, which included whippings and time in the school jail.<sup>21</sup> This book mentions other scholars who discuss Indian school runaways and describes some instances of runaways from multiple boarding schools; however, there is no narrative that ties to MMIW nor is there an in-depth description of runaway girls who died of exposure.

K. Tsianina Lomawaima (Mvskoke/Creek Nation, descendent) is a professor of Justice and Social Inquiry, Social and Cultural Pedagogy, and Professor at the Center of Indian Education at Arizona State University in Tempe, Arizona. Lomawaima has completed a plethora of historical and anthropological research about American Indian education and the broader federal control of American Indian's way of life in the United States. Her seminal works include *To*

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19. Jon Reyhner and Jeanne Eder, *American Indian Education: A History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004), 150.

20. Reyhner and Eder, *American Indian Education*, 154.

21. Reyhner and Eder, *American Indian Education*, 185-187.



*Remain an Indian: Lessons in Democracy from a Century of Native American Education*, as well as *Away from Home: American Indian Boarding School Experiences, 1879-2000* and *They Called it Prairie Light: The Story of Chilocco Indian School*. In her research, Lomawaima delves deep into American Indian experiences in the United States school system and analyzes the impact of the schools on American Indian communities.

Lomawaima and Teresa L. McCarty's work *To Remain an Indian: Lessons in Democracy from a Century of Native American Education* debunks the myth that the education of Indians by themselves (as opposed to the U.S. government) was inadequate or non-existent.<sup>22</sup> Tribes in the United States educated their kin prior to European-American education systems (boarding schools, mission schools, and day schools) being put in place. The authors dive into their own research and that of others to look at U.S. government policies regarding education and discuss "dangerous cultural difference," meaning the dangerous space between white culture and the various cultures and norms of minorities as viewed by U.S. officials and educators.<sup>23</sup> Lomawaima and McCarty refer to these differences as a strength that could greatly be utilized in U.S. education systems and policies. They successfully argue that "Indigenous America's fight to protect

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22. Indian education is defined by Lomawaima and McCarty as "the culturally based education of Native children by their parents, relatives, and communities..." K. Tsianina Lomawaima and Teresa L. McCarty, *To Remain an Indian: Lessons in Democracy From a Century of Native American Education* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2006), 8.

23. Lomawaima and McCarty, *To Remain an Indian*, back cover.

and assert educational self-determination enriches national and international education debates,” utilizing both American Indian voices and historical evidence as well as analyzing the educational and social structures in the U.S.<sup>24</sup>

Lomawaima and McCarty use first-hand accounts from the Hopi, Pima, Navajo and other tribes and anthropological research to show the strengths and extent of Indian education. The concept that Indians are too ill-equipped to function in a western educational system is not only untrue but woefully underestimates the intelligence and capabilities of Indians. Educational instruction is woven into their names, songs, and stories; morals and valuable life-lessons are also taught but because their education is considered “informal” by U.S. officials because it does not take place in an institution, it is considered unequal to K-12 education which is considered formal.<sup>25</sup> This concept is a “one-dimensional strategy used to denigrate and marginalize Native education” that is commonly accepted and leaves little room for sovereignty or cultural independence.<sup>26</sup> Contrary to popular belief, the education provided to Indians by themselves were wisely devised and at minimum, provided the same benefit as western schools in educating children for their futures.

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24. Lomawaima and McCarty, *To Remain an Indian*, XXII.

25. Lomawaima and McCarty, *To Remain an Indian*, 27.

26. Lomawaima and McCarty, *To Remain an Indian*, 27.

Indian culture was forcefully domesticated in the early part of the twentieth century, when attendance at Indian boarding schools dramatically increased.<sup>27</sup> Lomawaima and McCarty discuss Indian schooling as a tactic to convince Indians to give up their lands, their goals for well-paying employment, their language, and even their songs.<sup>28</sup> The federal government also found great difficulty finding American Indian teachers deemed “safe” enough to teach Native arts; this task balanced the line between Indians who were knowledgeable of their culture while also “progressive enough to fit Indian Office employment requirements.”<sup>29</sup> The imposed restrictions on boarding school and day school education separated American Indian children from their culture and worked to assimilate them into Euro-American society.

For the remainder of their work, Lomawaima and McCarty chronologically dive into power struggles, bilingual education, and the consequences of the current mode of standards testing in the U.S. education system. They do not discuss Indian runaways from boarding schools nor do they discuss the MMIW crisis in the United States.

Lomawaima’s work titled *They Called it Prairie Light* is the story of the Chilocco Indian School in Oklahoma and gives this narrative back to the people who attended and experienced this school. As a daughter of a student of this

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27. Lomawaima and McCarty, *To Remain an Indian*, 47.

28. Lomawaima and McCarty, *To Remain an Indian*, 43-55.

29. Lomawaima and McCarty, *To Remain an Indian*, 62.

school, Lomawaima's take is personal and shares the history of boarding schools with those who were most directly impacted by them. She chose to focus on the life within the school, breaking the pattern of many scholars who examined these schools from a less-personal, historical vantage point. Lomawaima utilizes transcribed oral histories as her main source of information and goes on to use statistics and other scholarly work to support her work. She briefly touches on running away as a form of resistance within the Chilocco school as she analyzes the ways in which Indian students fought against different "federal disciplinary practice[s]."30

Lomawaima provides invaluable insight to the experiences and resistance of Indian girls at the Chilocco school. According to Lomawaima, a majority of running away occurred when students first arrived at the school, citing a female Cherokee/Pawnee student who ran away due to homesickness.<sup>31</sup> In fact, running away was "the most overt resistance," which caused a multitude of issues for school authorities who had to track attendance records for funding purposes.<sup>32</sup> As part of her evidence, Lomawaima displays a table titled "Enrollment Variability at Chilocco School, 1925," which includes the statistics of attendance and includes categories such as "deserters" and "deserters returned."<sup>33</sup>

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30. Lomawaima, *They Called it Prairie Light*, XIV.

31. Lomawaima, *They Called it Prairie Light*, 41.

32. Lomawaima, *They Called it Prairie Light*, 120.

33. Lomawaima, *They Called it Prairie Light*, 121.

Administrators would overcrowd the schools in order to maintain attendance when students would inevitably runaway because the escape rates would lower attendance numbers.<sup>34</sup> Girls also ran away at a considerably lower rate than boys which can partially explain why female runaway narratives have not been equally represented.<sup>35</sup> Lomawaima found that women “do not recount the same degree of overt resistance... as men...” but this does not imply that women were excluded from running away.<sup>36</sup> This work provides a small base for running away as a form of female resistance in Indian Boarding schools but does not go in depth into any single narrative directly related to this topic.

Taking a different approach from her other work, Lomawaima’s book *Away From Home*, edited by Margaret L. Archuleta and Brenda J. Child, is a shorter yet largely impactful book about Indian boarding school experiences in which the authors utilize photos, quotes, and a depiction of day-to-day life of the student experience in these schools, reminiscent of a small textbook. In short instances, this book specifically refers to runaways, including a brief mention of Molly Lowry, one of the five runaway girls in the Greenville Investigation that I will be referring to in my research.<sup>37</sup>

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34. Lomawaima, *They Called it Prairie Light*, 121.

35. Lomawaima, *They Called it Prairie Light*, 121.

36. Lomawaima, *They Called it Prairie Light*, 134.

37. Brenda J. Child and K. Tsianina Lomawaima, “A Uniform Course of Study: Life at School” in *Away From Home: American Indian Boarding School Experiences, 1879-2000*, ed. Margaret L. Archuleta, Brenda J. Child, and K. Tsianina Lomawaima (Phoenix: Heard Museum, 2000), 43.

The first few weeks of boarding school created strong feelings of homesickness and loneliness, according to Archuleta, Child, and Lomawaima. The number of runaways also increased greatly during this time frame.<sup>38</sup> Many students reached the point at which they could no longer handle the “friction or homesickness” within their schools that they saw no other choice but to run away, often failing to think of the hazards of freezing weather and other issues that might occur outside the school.<sup>39</sup> Artist Judith Lowry’s painting *Going Home*, (1992) is displayed in this book because it was inspired by her great niece, Molly Lowry, who’s runaway story is briefly mentioned.<sup>40</sup> Louise Erdrich’s (Chippewa) poem *Indian Boarding School: The Runaways* is fully presented in this book. She writes of the troubles of boarding school students in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and poeticizes the pain of their collective experiences.<sup>41</sup> Though this book mentions runaway students fairly briefly, it is one of the few books I have found that mentions any of the girls involved in the Greenville Investigation.

Scott Riney’s *The Rapid City Indian School: 1898-1933* recounts multiple narratives from the Rapid City Indian Boarding School utilizing archival documents and personal oral histories. Riney dedicated a partial chapter to student runaways with stories similar to the Greenville Investigation; this is the

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38. Child and Lomawaima, “Life at School,” 28.

39. Child and Lomawaima, “Life at School,” 47.

40. Child and Lomawaima, “Life at School,” 43.

41. Child and Lomawaima, “Life at School,” 49.

most comparable study of this form of resistance than any other literature I have reviewed. Riney discusses “desertion” as a term used by the BIA in the boarding schools to equate runaways with the disgrace of leaving one’s post in the military.<sup>42</sup> Similar to other scholarly work, he examined the various forms of discipline used on runaways upon their return to the school; he compared the school’s usage of shackles, a ball and chain, and a school jail to military punishment.<sup>43</sup> Furthermore, Riney referred to the tragedies that inevitably occurred when students ran away, one of which ended in two boys losing their legs to amputation after suffering severe frostbite. When four boys ran away from the Rapid City school in December 1909, Paul Loves War and Henry Bull were found with frostbitten legs that ended in amputation; the boys returned to school and were given artificial limbs which were paid for by the school.<sup>44</sup> Less than one year later in October 1910, six boys ran away from the same school and two of them slept the night on the railroad tracks; Mark Sherman was killed by the train and James Means succumbed to the injuries he sustained.<sup>45</sup> Riney’s book is relevant background for my research; however, he did not include any detailed

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42. Scott Riney, *The Rapid City Indian School, 1898-1933* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999), 149.

43. Riney, *The Rapid City Indian School*, 159.

44. Riney, *The Rapid City Indian School*, 151.

45. Riney, *The Rapid City Indian School*, 151-152.

narratives of runaway female students nor did he relate the MMIW crisis to the issues that occurred at the various Indian boarding schools.

I found a handful of scholarly journal articles that mentioned resistance within Indian boarding schools, though none discussed any in-depth runaway narratives. Professor Denise Low discusses her personal experiences with ghost stories and runaways on the Haskell Indian Nations University campus in Kansas.<sup>46</sup> Low mentions the harsh reality of boarding schools and that ghost stories help “memorialize individual lives, their hardships, and... identity.”<sup>47</sup> Art and stories provide descendants a way to process the trauma their ancestors experienced in the boarding school system, so it is unsurprising that Judith Lowry’s painting, *Going Home*, was inspired by Molly.<sup>48</sup> Sarah Surface-Evans talks about resistance at the Mount Pleasant Indian Industrial boarding school in Michigan; her most relevant finding to my thesis is that boys ran away far more often than girls, which explains both the lack of research and the lack of narratives published on female Indian runaways.<sup>49</sup> An important article that will

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46. Denise Low, “Boarding School Resistance Narratives: Haskell Runaway and Ghost Stories,” *Studies in American Indian Literatures, Series 2* 15, no. 2 (2003): 106-118, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20737205>.

47. Low, “Haskell Runaway and Ghost Stories” 117.

48. Dobkins, Rebecca J., Carey T. Caldwell, and Frank R. LaPena, *Memory and Imagination: The Legacy of Maidu Indian Artist Frank Day* (Oakland: Oakland Museum of California, 1997), 91.

49. Sarah L. Surface-Evans, “A Landscape of Assimilation and Resistance: The Mount Pleasant Indian Industrial Boarding School,” *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* 20 (2016): 585, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10761-016-0362-5>.



be relevant to my findings is Stephen Colmant, Lahoma Schultz, Rockey Robbins, Peter Ciali, Julie Derton, and Yvette Rivera-Colmant's article that "investigate[s] the complex meaning of the Indian boarding school experience."<sup>50</sup> Through theoretical sampling, Colmant et. al found that the younger the student was, the lonelier they tended to be in the boarding schools and the coping mechanism for this loneliness was different forms of resistance, including running away.<sup>51</sup> They also found that former students would use "denial and minimization" when retelling their experiences, similar to the Greenville students I am studying.<sup>52</sup> None of the articles analyze any one particular narrative in-depth; however, they provide relevant information for my research.

Lomawaima published two articles which refer to resistance and runaways in the Indian boarding school system. She described how Estelle Reel shaped the education and the lives of American Indian children as the superintendent of Indian schools at the turn of the twentieth century.<sup>53</sup> Reel's long-lasting impact on boarding schools and the students within them is yet another example of the boarding school's remaining impact on Indians today. Though Lomawaima did

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50. Stephen Colmant, Lahoma Schultz, Rockey Robbins, Peter Ciali, Julie Derton, and Yvette Rivera-Colmant, "Constructing Meaning to the Indian Boarding School Experience," *Journal of American Indian Education* 43, no. 3 (2004): 22-40, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24398535>.

51. Colmant, Schultz, Robbins, Ciali, Derton, Rivera-Colmant, "Constructing Meaning," 32-34.

52. Colmant, Schultz, Robbins, Ciali, Derton, Rivera-Colmant, "Constructing Meaning," 35.

53. Lomawaima, "Estelle Reel: Superintendent of Indian Schools," 5-31.

not discuss runaway students, she argued that the impact of these schools lasts for decades- well after the students have left and the schools have been torn down.<sup>54</sup> This directly relates to the findings in my research that the impact of the boarding schools, especially students who ran away, are still felt today among descendants of students. In another article, Lomawaima argued that boarding schools did not attempt to assimilate Indians, as was their stated purpose; rather, Indian education was meant to strip Indians of their autonomy and force them into subservience as a “marginal class.”<sup>55</sup> Again, she did not discuss runaway students but she discusses the specific impact these schools had on female students who were pushed into “subservience and submission to authority.”<sup>56</sup> Similar to the other article authors, Lomawaima provides important information for my research but she does not discuss a particular narrative of runaways at length.

Multiple scholars and former students of Indian boarding schools, mission schools, and day schools have written about their personal experiences and the personal experiences of others within the Indian education systems. In *They Called It Prairie Light*, Lomawaima wrote about her father’s experience in the Chilocco Indian School. Denise K. Lajimodiere spent years conducting interviews, collecting, and transcribing oral histories from American Indians who

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54. Lomawaima, “Estelle Reel: Superintendent of Indian Schools,” 15.

55. Lomawaima, “Domesticity in the Federal Indian Schools,” 236.

56. Lomawaima, “Domesticity in the Federal Indian Schools,” 229.

attended schools in the Northern Plains for her book *Stringing Rosaries*. Activist Adam Fortunate Eagle, widely known for his activism in the takeover of Alcatraz Island, wrote his autobiography titled *Pipestone* in which he extensively described his time in Pipestone Indian Boarding School in Minnesota. Polingaysi Qoyawayma detailed her time at the Sherman Institute in *No Turning Back*, where she narrates her life walking the line between her Hopi culture and “the world of the white man.”<sup>57</sup> The educational experiences of these American Indians and others within these institutions were neither good nor bad across the board- to conclude this would overly simplify a complicated system. No single student had the same experience as another, nor did every child recount their time in the school as wholly bad, with some referring to their time as pleasant. However, loneliness was shared by most students who were away from their homes and placed in schools and this loneliness led many students to run away. I did not find any descriptive narratives of girls running away in the personal accounts that I read, though it was briefly mentioned in some stories.

When writing about Chilocco, Lomawaima discussed various forms of resistance practiced by the Indian students, even a story recounting female runaways. This story does not include much detail as it is briefly described in one paragraph. Resistance was a method for students to challenge the authorities at their school, both Indian and white. Running away most commonly occurred in

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57. Polingaysi Qoyawayma, Introduction to *No Turning Back: A True Account of a Hopi Indian Girl's Struggle to Bridge the Gap Between the World of Her People and the World of the White Man* as told to Vada F. Carlson, (New Mexico: University of New Mexico Press, 1964).

the fall when students arrived at school and were struck by loneliness from being away from their families and homes.<sup>58</sup> Lomawaima described running away (going AWOL) as “the most overt resistance” taken by students which led to both discipline upon the student and a loss of funding for the schools.<sup>59</sup> While she does not include any lengthy narratives from female students who ran away from Chilocco, Lomawaima provides a basis for my research into resistance, boarding schools, and stolen Indigenous women.

Though the topic of school runaways is absent from Qoyawayma’s narrative, she recounts an instance of the stealing of Hopi children from her village Oraibi and she recollects her time in the Sherman Institute in Riverside, California. A young Qoyawayma watched children, including her sister, be stolen in Oraibi by the Navajos and authorities to take them to the local school.<sup>60</sup> Her curiosity about this school and the white man would set the stage for her complicated life as both Hopi and assimilated into European-American culture. She asked to attend the Sherman Institute and remembers her time there as enjoyable, despite the initial loneliness she experienced.<sup>61</sup>

Along similar lines, Adam Fortunate Eagle wrote a memoir of his time in Pipestone Indian Boarding School in Minnesota, recounting the “education and

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58. Lomawaima, *They Called in Prairie Light*, 41.

59. Lomawaima, *They Called in Prairie Light*, 120.

60. Qoyawayma, *No Turning Back*, 23.

61. Qoyawayma, *No Turning Back*, 67.

care we received... [to be] an integral part of our success in life."<sup>62</sup> Eagle attended school beginning in 1935 which was at the same time that John Collier had been elected as the Commissioner of the BIA.<sup>63</sup> According to Eagle, Collier's policies were less drastic than Richard Henry Pratt's and were truthfully carried out at Pipestone while he was in attendance, making for a better experience than students prior.<sup>64</sup> Eagle witnessed many similar experiences to other boarding school students, including discipline, death, and runaways. Joe Bebeau, a student with Eagle, ran away during the winter amidst a spell of loneliness and homesickness; he traveled by train and was consequently injured after being runover by this train.<sup>65</sup> The discussion of discipline for this event goes unmentioned in the book. As far as discipline at this school, students were rarely rebuked for speaking their own language, according to Eagle, nor was discipline as harsh as it was in the past.<sup>66</sup> Though he asserts that Indians have continuously been treated as a people less-than in the United States, his experience at Pipestone made a good impact on his life.<sup>67</sup>

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62. Adam Fortunate Eagle, *Pipestone: My Life in an Indian Boarding School* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2010), 161.

63. Eagle, *Pipestone*, xvi.

64. Eagle, *Pipestone*, xvii.

65. Eagle, *Pipestone*, 144.

66. Eagle, *Pipestone*, 48.

67. Eagle, *Pipestone*, cover.

The experiences of others were not so pleasant, as Lajimodiere attests in her book titled *Stringing Rosaries*. Out of sixteen personal stories from students in the Indian education system, virtually all include some instance of sexual abuse at the hands of adults or other students. Many of the oral histories in this book were the first time these former students ever revealed the abuse and trauma they survived within the schools they attended. Some of the interviewees referred to this interview as a sort of therapy because they could release memories they had held onto for so long.

For readers to view the process of these interviews, Lajimodiere lists the interview question suggestions that were developed by the Boarding School Healing Project and revised by herself in the appendix.<sup>68</sup> She asked the interviewees, “Did you ever run away from the BS [Boarding School] or think about running away?” to which multiple former students gave their personal accounts of student runaways. Many students were too fearful to run away as the punishment was too threatening or severe to risk it. Josephine, who attended St. Joseph’s Indian Boarding School in Chamberlain, South Dakota, recalls runaway students having their heads shaved and being forced to wear overalls.<sup>69</sup> Roger White Owl, who also attended St. Joseph’s Indian Boarding School, recalls

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68. Denise K. Lajimodiere, *Stringing Rosaries: The History, the Unforgiveable, and the Healing of Northern Plains American Indian Boarding School Survivors* (Fargo: North Dakota State University Press, 2019), appendix.

69. Lajimodiere, *Stringing Rosaries*, 26.

isolation and a shaved head being the punishment for running away.<sup>70</sup> Running away was a common occurrence throughout this book but was never discussed in great detail. Mary, who attended Wahpeton Indian Boarding School in North Dakota, states that she never witnessed abuse at her school but claims that loneliness encouraged many students, both boys and girls, to run away.<sup>71</sup> Tommy Davis, Turtle Mountain Pembina Chippewa, ran away from the Pierre Indian Boarding School in South Dakota out of a general anger at the school; the last time he ran away, his friend was killed and Davis never ran away again.<sup>72</sup> Though my thesis will not include an interview with any of the female students I refer to, as Lajimodiere has done, my in-depth narrative about runaway girls from an Indian boarding school has been missing from published scholarly work.

Michael Coleman's *American Indian Children at School, 1850-1930* studies the personal stories of American Indian students who attended Indian boarding schools. Coleman refers to the well-known Sioux physician Charles Eastman who ran away on his first day of school after being ridiculed for his looks.<sup>73</sup> Students ran away for many reasons, including returning to their homes to participate in various ceremonies, like scalp dances and buffalo hunts;

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70. Lajimodiere, *Stringing Rosaries*, 46.

71. Lajimodiere, *Stringing Rosaries*, 91, 96.

72. Lajimodiere, *Stringing Rosaries*, 222.

73. Michael C. Coleman, *American Indian Children at School, 1850-1930* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1993), 84.

Coleman asserts that these students planned to return to school.<sup>74</sup> Similar to the Greenville Investigation, Coleman mentions Max Henley (Navajo) who stated that students who chose to run away from schools during the winter “amount[ed] to near suicide.”<sup>75</sup> Coleman also corroborates other scholars’ assertions that runaways created big problems for attendance, which continued throughout the history of this Indian education system.<sup>76</sup>

An immense amount of scholarly research has been done on the history and impact of the Indian education system in the U.S. from colonization to present day; however, not one scholar has published an extensive narrative about specific female runaway students who ultimately perished due to the negligence of school officials and federal authorities. Nor has any scholar published on the similarities between today’s MMIW crisis and the Indian boarding school system of the early twentieth century. This lack of research can be explained by institutionalized racism within the U.S. government and educational systems as well as a systemic indifference to the lived experiences of American Indian women. The U.S. has a long history of silencing American Indians, specifically American Indian women, and without acknowledging this history, we will never be able to fully grapple with the crisis of MMIW that pervades today.

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74. Coleman, *American Indian Children at School*, 153.

75. Coleman, *American Indian Children at School*, 164.

76. Coleman, *American Indian Children at School*, 167.



## CHAPTER THREE: HISTORICAL CONTEXT

### History of the Indian Boarding School System

The Indian boarding school system was in the works far before the nineteenth and twentieth century Indian boarding schools we think of today. Originating in 1568 during the colonial period, the Spanish created a boarding school in Cuba for Indians because of the common notion that Indians were “savages” and uneducated; this information was formed by the claims of religious leaders who wanted to colonize the Indians.<sup>77</sup> This belief in “European superiority and American Indian inferiority” began the basis for the Indian boarding school system that has altered the lives of most American Indians, who were wrongly believed to have no education system of their own.<sup>78</sup> The imposition of a colonial education system was overtly paternalistic and the attempt was to kill the Indian and save the man in order to save Indians from themselves.<sup>79</sup> Due to the European’s lack of regard for the organized systems American Indians

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77. Clifford E. Trafzer, Jean A. Keller and Lorene Sisquoc, *Boarding School Blues*, 4.

78. Trafzer, Keller, and Sisquoc, *Boarding School Blues*, 4.

79. *Official Report of the Nineteenth Annual Conference of Charities and Correction* (1892), 46–59. Reprinted in Richard H. Pratt, “The Advantages of Mingling Indians with Whites,” *Americanizing the American Indians: Writings by the “Friends of the Indian” 1880–1900* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), 260–271. Richard H. Pratt was the founder of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School. He is infamously known for his strict and brutal educational and assimilation tactics to figuratively “kill the Indian” in order to “save the man” inside of him. Pratt believed Indians were so inferior that they should be removed from existence.

maintained prior to European contact, Europeans wrongfully saw American Indians as a people who needed to be taken care of and taught how to behave. It was not until the mid-nineteenth century that Indian boarding schools began to take the form that we are more familiar with today.

In the 1700s and 1800s, the Cherokees, Choctaws, Chicksaws, Muskogees, and Seminoles established schools to educate their children.<sup>80</sup> This move enabled some autonomy for these tribes in a vital time when their land and culture was being dismissed on a national level. When anti-Indian sentiment was building at the behest of Manifest Destiny, these American Indian schools were building their own “political and economic sovereignty” which bore the foundation of how future tribal schools would be run.<sup>81</sup> As these tribes began to flourish within their own tribal education system, the U.S. government began to take a more specific interest in American Indian education and pushed for the Indian Civilization Act in 1819.<sup>82</sup> This act commissioned people to teach agriculture to American Indians with an indirect intent to Christianize them. By 1824, there were twenty-one Indian boarding schools in the United States, though they were mostly under the control of Christians, not the federal government.<sup>83</sup>

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80. Trafzer, Keller, and Sisquoc, *Boarding School Blues*, 9.

81. Trafzer, Keller, and Sisquoc, *Boarding School Blues*, 9.

82. Trafzer, Keller, and Sisquoc, *Boarding School Blues*, 10.

83. Trafzer, Keller, and Sisquoc, *Boarding School Blues*, 10.

Mission schools, day schools, and boarding schools became the basis for the U.S. government to assimilate American Indians. In 1870, after calls for heavy federal government involvement in American Indian education, Congress allotted the first yearly sum of money for Indian education; this sum paid for both day schools on the reservations as well as boarding schools off the reservations until the idea of boarding schools became more popular to American citizens.<sup>84</sup> This funding consisted of money directly from treaties between American Indian tribes and the U.S. government as well as the purchase of resources from American Indian land.<sup>85</sup> Edward P. Smith, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, decided that boarding schools were a more viable option because the American Indians would have less time to maintain their own culture and more time of forcible assimilation. Smith believed that the “constant care” of Indians by school officials would more effectively transition American Indian children into “civilized” members of society.<sup>86</sup>

Captain Richard Henry Pratt was instrumental in the function of forced assimilation by means of the Indian boarding schools. Pratt aimed to enroll American Indian children into the boarding schools, isolate them from their families, and civilize them so they could learn the American (white) way of life.<sup>87</sup>

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84. Trafzer, Keller, and Sisquoc, *Boarding School Blues*, 12.

85. Trafzer, Keller, and Sisquoc, *Boarding School Blues*, 10.

86. Trafzer, Keller, and Sisquoc, *Boarding School Blues*, 12.

87. Trafzer, Keller, and Sisquoc, *Boarding School Blues*, 14.

Pratt believed that schools needed to be in civilized areas off-reservation in order to have a significant impact in assimilating American Indian students, and his idea took fruition at the Carlisle Indian Industrial School- the first off-reservation boarding school for American Indians in Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania in 1879.<sup>88</sup> Based on U.S. military ideals, students wore uniforms, marched, and were disciplined while adhering to the “industrial-vocational” curriculum at the school.<sup>89</sup> Subsequently established boarding schools were based on this same Carlisle model and school officials worked diligently to remove students from their native languages and cultures well into the 1930s and 1940s.<sup>90</sup> These schools had profound positive and negative impacts on students and their families; not all American Indians favored or opposed these schools and each situation is unique to the people involved. Nevertheless, the impact remains to this day throughout every tribe in America.

Upon the creation of the Indian boarding schools in the nineteenth century, the federal government and public opinion called for a more organized system to create rules, regulations, and standards for the schools. School attendance was rising dramatically and the guidelines regarding enrollment, attendance, and other logistical pieces were lacking.<sup>91</sup> Thomas J. Morgan, the

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88. Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 52; Clifford E. Trafzer, *As Long as the Grass Shall Grow and Rivers Flow: A History of Native Americans* (Harcourt College Publishers, 2000), 288.

89. Trafzer, *As Long as the Grass Shall Grow*, 288.

90. Trafzer, *As Long as the Grass Shall Grow*, 291.

91. Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 60

commissioner of Indian Affairs from 1889 to 1893, was instrumental in the structural changes that took place to create the BIA.<sup>92</sup> Morgan attempted to place American Indian children in the same schools as white children; racism rendered this impossible, though Morgan was successful in other endeavors.<sup>93</sup> He sought to standardize the curriculum within the schools and to make student attendance obligatory, both of which he would eventually succeed in, especially in 1891 with the passage of federal laws that gave legal authority to the BIA.<sup>94</sup>

In order to create more authority, the BIA initiated the Indian inspection system, which enlisted inspectors to investigate the integrity of the schools and report back to the Secretary of the Interior.<sup>95</sup> The BIA also created a position for Special Agents who reported to the Commission of Indian Affairs and performed tasks akin to the inspectors but were sought mostly when a specific school experienced a catastrophe or controversy.<sup>96</sup> Rules and standards were put in place in the late nineteenth century, along with special positions within this new bureaucracy that would monitor the schools and seek to control and raise American Indian students.

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92. Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 61-62.

93. Hoxie, *A Final Promise*, 190-191.

94. Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 63-64.

95. Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 69.

96. Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 69.

The BIA created a book of standard operating procedures, titled *Rules for Indian School Service*, as a way of organizing the schools for the purpose of giving some sort of guidance to school staff and agents within this new bureaucratic system. Beyond this book of regulations, the BIA created the Superintendent of Indian Schools and sought to give more power to this position in order to continue the ever-growing organizational pattern of the boarding schools; however, this position only maintained authority to “standardize administrative practice and supervise school operations.”<sup>97</sup>

According to Adams, “a ‘true’ system of education was emerging’ in the 1890s as the BIA became more bureaucratic and organized (see Figure 1). The BIA became “more centralized,” giving more power to the commissioner, less power to the Special Indian Agents, and providing more supervision at the field level.<sup>98</sup> Despite the focus on field level supervision, community members and parents are blatantly absent from this “more centralized” organization. This was an obvious tactic the BIA utilized to eliminate American Indians from having input in their own education.

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97. Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 69.

98. Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 71.

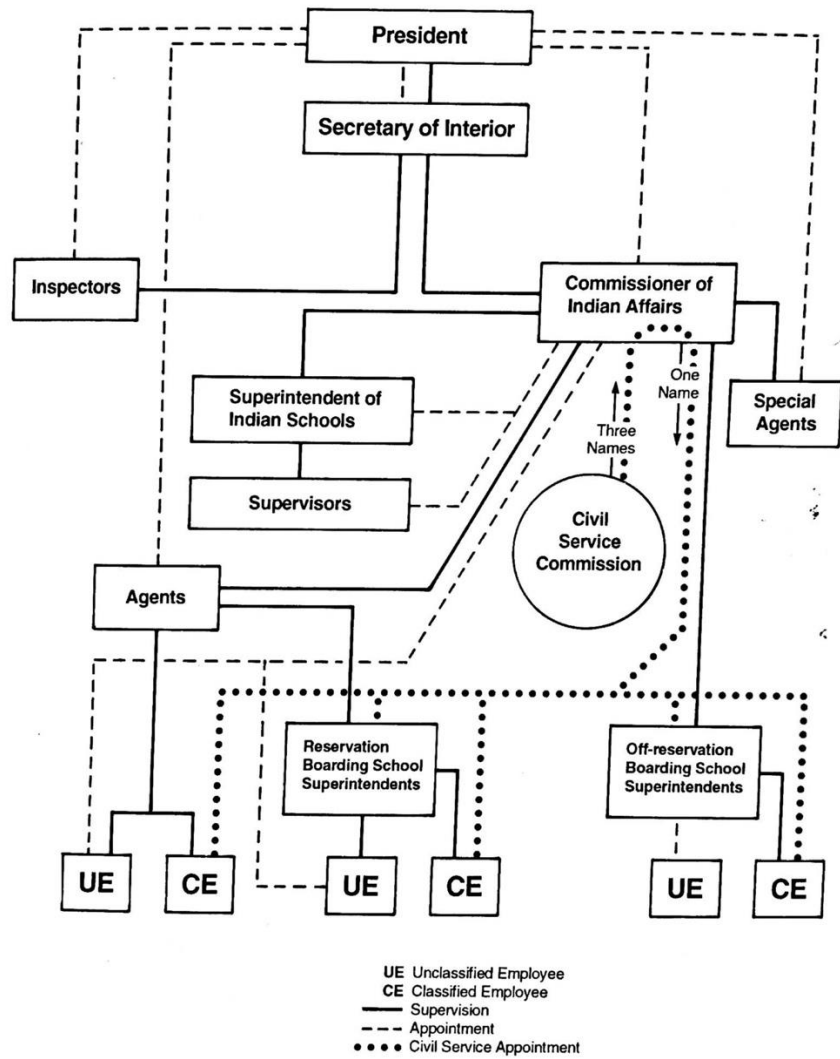


Figure 1. Organization of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, 1892.<sup>99</sup>

In 1898, William Hailman was replaced by Estelle Reel as superintendent of education who asserted her beliefs that American Indians could not be educated in the same ways as white students due to her belief of the Indian's

99. Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 71.

inferiority.<sup>100</sup> In 1901, despite limited authority, Reel greatly expanded the boarding school system and most significantly established new curriculum that Frederick E. Hoxie refers to as “low expectations and practical lessons.”<sup>101</sup> Reel’s ideas came up against harsh criticism from Morgan due to her push for Indians to retain their own language alongside learning English.<sup>102</sup> Her intention, according to Lomawaima, did not view American Indians in a kind light, rather she believed them to be too inept to fully learn English so she allowed them to retain their native languages.<sup>103</sup>

Indian boarding schools were intended as an institution that removed Indian children from their own culture, history, and families. The schools were surrounded by controversy for most of their existence and the impact left by them still rings in those that attended and the generations thereafter to this day.

### History of the Bureau of Indian Affairs

The BIA was responsible for the Indian education system from 1824 through the investigation of the Greenville runaway students. I will examine the time frame of boarding schools from their establishment up to the 1920s in order to maintain clarity and context.

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100. Hoxie, *A Final Promise*, 195.

101. Hoxie, *A Final Promise*, 196.

102. Reyhner and Eder, *American Indian Education*, 98-99.

103. Lomawaima, “Estelle Reel: Superintendent of Indian Schools,” 6.



The BIA has existed, be it by other names, since 1824 when it was established by John C. Calhoun.<sup>104</sup> The history of official U.S. government management of Indians spans for some years before that. In 1789, piggybacking off the British position of superintendent, the U.S. Congress appropriated money for the governor of the Northwest Territory to carry on superintendent duties for Indian affairs; this was continued in the southern United States, as well.<sup>105</sup> Both agents and subagents were appointed by the president to aid in the mission of civilizing Indians in the 1790s; they reported through their local superintendents who then reported to the War Department.<sup>106</sup> Between the 1770s and 1824, the War Department dealt with Indian affairs until Calhoun singularly created an office under the War Department, the BIA.<sup>107</sup>

For my purposes, I will refer to the Office of Indian Affairs, Indian Office, and Bureau of Indian Affairs as BIA. This was the original name, as it is referred to today; however, Calhoun's friend Thomas L. McKenney, who was placed in charge of this office, referred to it as the Office of Indian Affairs.<sup>108</sup> McKenney's duties were to monitor and make any decisions based on Indian affairs within the country, though all of the decision power still rested in the hands of the secretary

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104. "Bureau of Indian Affairs," Bureau of Indian Affairs, U.S. Department of the Interior-Indian Affairs, accessed October 10, 2019, <https://www.bia.gov/bia>.

105. Prucha, *The Great Father*, 160.

106. Prucha, *The Great Father*, 161-162.

107. Prucha, *The Great Father*, 164.

108. Prucha, *The Great Father*, 164.

of war.<sup>109</sup> Consequently, two separate bills were proposed in 1826 and 1829 advocating for a commissioner of Indian affairs; the second bill passed in 1832 which gave “statutory authority” to the BIA.<sup>110</sup> The BIA was then transferred from the War Department to the Department of Interior in 1849.<sup>111</sup>

The policy of the BIA began in complete opposition to assimilation- Hoxie asserts that the United States “imagine[d] that Indians and whites could remain permanently separate from one another.<sup>112</sup> This later developed into an attempt to just keep the peace between Indians and Euro-Americans, beginning in the Reconstruction era. In 1880, the BIA was under immense national scrutiny due to corruption and controversy involving their dealing with reservation land; public resentment grew and led to a national outcry for the assimilation of the Indians.<sup>113</sup> Hoxie claims that the policy of the BIA changed at the request of the American people and it also mirrored American society: pre-Civil War, people were generally isolated from each other and post-Civil War, society was becoming more commercialized and connected, forcing an assimilation policy.<sup>114</sup>

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109. Prucha, *The Great Father*, 164.

110. “Bureau of Indian Affairs,” <https://www.bia.gov/bia>.

111. “Bureau of Indian Affairs,” <https://www.bia.gov/bia>.

112. Hoxie, *A Final Promise*, 2.

113. Hoxie, *A Final Promise*, 7, 11.

114. Hoxie, *A Final Promise*, 13.

This call for assimilation created the groundwork for the government education of Indians in order to solve “the Indian problem.”<sup>115</sup> The turn of the century brought with it a mass amount of funding for American Indian education and federal schools.<sup>116</sup> But just as quickly as the national policy for Indians had shifted from separation to assimilation, it shifted again into uncertainty about whether assimilation was wanted or possible.<sup>117</sup>

The early twentieth century saw yet another reevaluation of the Indian question which carried into the BIA’s management of Indian education- if Indians could not be assimilated, even after American Indian cultural eradication, what success would these school systems have in assimilating Indians? This shift in the Indian question led to lacking public and political support for Indian education, creating school environments that were overwhelmingly racist, unhealthy, and detrimental to the students. According to Francis Prucha, “the policies and programs carried out or recommended by the Indian Office and its supporters continued to rest upon a belief that the Indians were fully capable of adopting civilized ways.”<sup>118</sup> This belief would carry into the early twentieth century, yet with a stark change in how the BIA was run.

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115. Miles, Nelson A. “The Indian Problem.” *North American Review* 128, no. 268 (1879): 304-314. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25100734>.

116. Hoxie, *A Final Promise*, 53-54.

117. Hoxie, *A Final Promise*, 112.

118. Prucha, *The Great Father*, 596.

The underlying belief of civilizing the Indians held that once the civilization of Indians occurred, the need for the BIA would cease to exist and the office could slowly disappear. Issues like corruption led to an outcry for civil service reform within the government with President Theodore Roosevelt taking action to overhaul the BIA in the midst of the Progressive Era.<sup>119</sup> Instead of losing the need for the BIA, the need for this office increased exponentially from 1900 to 1920 when the goal of individualization of the Indians was combined with the goal of civilization of the Indians (see Table 1).<sup>120</sup>

Table 1. Work and Employees in the Office of Indian Affairs.<sup>121</sup>

Year	Communications Received	Total Employees in Indian Office
1900	62,691	115
1905	98,322	149
1910	194,241	203
1915	298,240	260
1920	261,486	262

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119. Prucha, *The Great Father*, 736.

120. Prucha, *The Great Father*, 781.

121 Prucha, *The Great Father*, 781 from CIA Report, 1920, serial 7820, p. 63

More money and administrative work was required to support Indians in the way the government deemed fit, despite not considering any input from the Indians themselves. Thus, the BIA continued but under immense criticism for the years to come after multiple attempts at reorganization. Calls for terminating the BIA were a constant during the 1910s, when the Greenville Investigation occurred and during Dorrington's time employed by the BIA.<sup>122</sup> Dorrington worked for the BIA and reported the Greenville Investigation during this particular time period when the government and the public had little interest in the success or care of the Indians. This overarching view has lasted the test of time and resonates strongly today, as evidenced by the MMIW crisis- it became acceptable to ignore the long-lasting detrimental impact of removing Indians from their land and their culture. Instead of creating further solutions or mending mistakes, the BIA and the public left the Indian problem (a problem created by the exact people who aimed to solve it) to the Indians themselves.

### Special Indian Agent History

Special Indian Agents (not to be confused with Indian Agents) have been intrinsic to dealing with Indian affairs since the 1790s. In 1792, four Special Agents were appointed for "special diplomatic missions" to monitor warring tribes and to ensure the tribes' activity was in the best interest of the United States.<sup>123</sup>

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122. Hoxie, *A Final Promise*, 179.

123. Prucha, *The Great Father*, 160

Indian Agents were appointed “to civilize the Indians by means of agriculture and domestic arts;” though this position was intended to be temporary, it took a permanent place within US-Indian affairs.<sup>124</sup> In 1873, congress approved BIA Inspectors who would be in charge of inspecting records and other positions within the BIA; the addition of this position ended with the removal of some superintendents who were seen as unnecessary.<sup>125</sup> Congress approved more Special Agents in 1878 and 1882 to “strengthen the inspection service.”<sup>126</sup> Special Agents and Inspectors reported to the commissioner of Indian affairs until the inspectors were directed to report to secretary of the Interior Carl Schurz.<sup>127</sup> According to Special Indian Agent Eugene E. White in 1893, “The duty of the Special Agents and Inspectors is to visit and inspect the agencies from time to time, and investigate all complaints concerning the Indians or affairs on reservations. Special Agents are also often detailed to serve as agents for indefinite terms.”<sup>128</sup> Special Indian Agents reported to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs while the Inspectors reported to the Secretary of the Interior.<sup>129</sup>

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124. Prucha, *The Great Father*, 161.

125. Prucha, *The Great Father*, 590-591.

126. Prucha, *The Great Father*, 592.

127. Prucha, *The Great Father*, 592.

128. Eugene E. White, *Service on the Indian Reservations: Being the Experiences of a Special Indian Agent While Inspecting Agencies and Serving as Agent for Various Tribes* (Little Rock: Diploma Press, 1893), 1.

129. White, *Service on the Indian Reservations*, 1.

Dorrington served as a Special Indian Agent in the early twentieth century, a time when poor organization and constant changes within the BIA birthed relentless criticism and civil service reform. Dorrington proves to be an example of the flaws of the BIA during this time and both his actions and the BIA's actions have caused trauma within American Indian communities that are clearly remembered today.

### Lafayette Dorrington

The eldest of three children, Dorrington was born in Nebraska in February 1863 to Fred Dorrington and Maria Dorrington.<sup>130</sup> In the 1880s, Dorrington married Augusta Cordelia Gussie Minor and had their daughter, Helen, in 1888.<sup>131</sup> In 1898 at the opening of the Spanish War, Lafayette enlisted as a volunteer 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant in Company L and then a 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant in Company H.<sup>132</sup> He remained in the Nebraska Volunteer Infantry in Company H, 2<sup>nd</sup> regiment in 1899 and 1900 until the Philippine-American War where he was a 1<sup>st</sup>

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130. Nebraska State Historical Society, "*Nebraska State Census: 1876*," (Cass County, Plattsmouth Township), Series/Record Group: RG220, 62, accessed October 10, 2019, <https://www.ancestry.com>.

131. 1900 U.S. Census Federal Census, "Twelfth Census of the United States," (Alliance, Box Butte, Nebraska), Roll 917, Page 13A, Enumeration District 0006, FHL Microfilm 1240917, <https://www.ancestry.com>.

132. General Index to Compiled Service Records of Volunteer Soldiers who Served During the War with Spain "U.S., Spanish American War Volunteers Index to Compiled Military Service Records, 1898," NARA, (Washington, D.C.), Microfilm publication M871, 126 rolls, ARC ID: 654543, Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1780s–1917, Record Group 94, <https://www.ancestry.com>.; National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), (Washington, D.C.), "Returns from U.S. Military Posts, 1800-1916," Microfilm Serial M617, Microfilm Roll 741, <https://www.ancestry.com>.

Lieutenant, Provost Guard in Manila, Philippines under post commander George Davies.<sup>133</sup> During this war, Dorrington “served with distinction” and held his own company through the war.<sup>134</sup> In the early twentieth century, Dorrington and his family moved to Reno, Nevada which is when he began his time with the Department of Interior under the BIA.<sup>135</sup> He served as a Special Agent under the “Investigating Force, Field Service” branch of the BIA from approximately 1915 to 1919 and served as the Inspector in the same branch beginning in 1921.<sup>136</sup> Around this time, Dorrington and his family made their home in Sacramento, California where he was employed as the superintendent of Indian affairs for the Sacramento Agency.<sup>137</sup> He died on October 8, 1934.<sup>138</sup> Dorrington’s reputation among the Indians he impacted is mostly unfavorable; in fact, the impact is still felt to this day.

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133. National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), “Returns from U.S. Military Posts, 1800-1916,” (Washington, D.C.), Microfilm Serial *M617*, Microfilm Roll *741*, <https://www.ancestry.com>.

134. “Death of Old Time Resident of State in West,” *The Plattsmouth Journal* (Plattsmouth, Nebraska), October 15, 1934.

135. 1920 United States Federal Census, “Fourteenth Census of the United States-1920,” (Reno, Washoe, Nevada), Roll T625\_1005, Page 2B, Enumeration District 45, Image 97, <https://www.ancestry.com>.

136. Department of Commerce and Labor, Bureau of the Census, “Official Register of the United States, Containing a List of the Officers and Employees in the Civil, Military, and Naval Service,” Digitized books (77 volumes), (Oregon State Library, Salem, Oregon), <https://www.ancestry.com>.

137. *U.S. City Directories, 1822-1995*, “Sacramento City Directory, 1928,” (Sacramento, California), 1928, <https://www.ancestry.com>.

138. “Death of Old Time Resident of State in West,” *The Plattsmouth Journal* (Plattsmouth, Nebraska), October 15, 1934.



In 1927, as part of his position as Superintendent of the Sacramento Agency, Dorrington was tasked with evaluating the land needs of the Indians around the Sacramento area.<sup>139</sup> E.B. Meritt, the Assistant Commissioner of Indian Affairs, wrote to Dorrington to gather information on how many “homeless California Indians” needed land from the United States government.<sup>140</sup> Dorrington failed to respond to the first letter from Meritt, inciting another letter approximately five months later, after the requested deadline. When Dorrington responded, his report “determined that a number of Indian ‘tribes and bands,’ though possessing no land, had no need for land to establish their home sites,” effectively terminating the land of one-hundred-thirty-five California Indian tribes.<sup>141</sup> A careless move, most notably after writing in his report that “it has not been physically possible to comply literally with Office instructions... little data covering the question at hand was found in the files of Agencies... it is impossible to have as close a personal touch with the individual as on a closed reservation.”<sup>142</sup> With

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139. Philip Blair Laverty, “Recognizing Indians: Place, Identity, History, and the Federal Acknowledgement of the Ohlone/Costanoan-Esselen Nation,” (2010): 217, [https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/anth\\_etds/41](https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/anth_etds/41).

140. E.B. Merritt to Special Agent Lafayette Dorrington, January 8, 1927 from Laverty, Philip Blair. “Recognizing Indians: Place, Identity, History, and the Federal Acknowledgement of the Ohlone/Costanoan-Esselen Nation.” 2010. [https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/anth\\_etds/41](https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/anth_etds/41); Laverty, “Recognizing Indians,” 217.

141. Laverty, “Recognizing Indians,” 218.

142. Lafayette Dorrington, Report to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Washington, D. C. L-A 1668-27. United States Department of the Interior, Indian Field Service, June 23, 1927 from Laverty, Philip Blair. “Recognizing Indians: Place, Identity, History, and the Federal Acknowledgement of the Ohlone/Costanoan-Esselen Nation.” 2010. [https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/anth\\_etds/41](https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/anth_etds/41).

such casual statements, one would not be surprised to find that Dorrington single-handedly created massive problems for tribes in and around the Sacramento area who are attempting to gain federal recognition today, such as the Muwekma Ohlone and the Ohlone Costonoan Esselen Nation who call Dorrington “derelict in his duties” and his assessment “completely fraudulent.”<sup>143</sup>

In 1929, Oscar H. Lipps, the new Superintendent of the Sacramento Agency after Dorrington, spoke at a hearing for the subcommittee of the Committee of Indian Affairs and stated that, upon witnessing the conditions in which many California Indians were living,

The conditions on some of these rancherias are simply deplorable. No one can view many of them and observe the conditions under which the Indians are trying to exist without the feeling that someone is guilty of gross neglect or inefficiency and that a cruel injustice has been meted out to a helpless people under the name of beneficent kindness... Now it seems to me that the thing for us to do is to look the facts in the face and admit that in the past the Government has been woefully negligent and inefficient, and then start out with the determination, as far as possible, to rectify our past mistakes. It is difficult to locate the blame, but somewhere along the line there appears to have been gross negligence or crass indifference.<sup>144</sup>

Dorrington was the Superintendent of the area Lipps referred to for multiple years in the 1920s and witnessed said conditions; however, he took no

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143. “Ohlone/Costonoan-Esselen Indians of the Greater Monterey Bay Area,” *Ohlone Costonoan Esselen Nation* Official Tribal Website, accessed October 10, 2019, <https://www.ohlonecostonoanesselenation.org>; Gilroy Dispatch Staff, “Tribal Heritage,” *Gilroy Dispatch* online, March 4, 2005, <https://gilroydispatch.com/tribal-heritage/>.

144. “Survey of Conditions of the Indians in the United States: Hearing Before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Indian Affairs United States Senate Seventy-Second Congress,” Part 28, Nevada, (United States Government Printing Office, Washington, 1934), 15452-15453.

responsibility and single-handedly revoked the ability for the tribes in the Sacramento Agency to obtain land from the federal government. Lipps does not place any blame but it is apparent that the “gross negligence or crass indifference” can be, at a minimum, partially placed on Dorrington, who failed to advocate for the Indians in this area in his report to Meritt.

Dorrington was not shy to proclaim his belief that the Indians in the United States were incompetent. He spoke at the Women’s Improvement Club in April, 1930 and claimed that of the 350,000 Indians residing in the United States at the time, just 125,000 “are capable of handling their own affairs.”<sup>145</sup> Dorrington not only believed but also touted that little more than one-third of the Indian population in the country could take care of themselves; meanwhile, he had failed to provide any government support to the tribes within his agency. Perhaps he included his own agency in the number of those that could handle “their own affairs;” however, based on the evidence Lipps provided from one year prior, the California Indians in the Sacramento Agency were living in dire conditions. Just as Dorrington’s actions prove contradictory in his Greenville Investigation (Buckskin, an Indian student, was held responsible despite the commonly held belief at this time that Indians were incompetent), he claimed that a fraction of the population of American Indians can “handle their own affairs” while he failed to advocate for the Indians he was directly responsible for. According to Alan

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145. “Indian Talk Interests at W. I. C. Meeting,” *The Press-Tribune* (Roseville, California), April 9, 1930.

Leventhal, ethnohistorian for the Muwekma Ohlone, Dorrington “completely neglected his duties” in the 1920s, as shown by his contradictory actions and statements.<sup>146</sup>

Dorrington’s time as a civil servant was long and full of professional accolades but his negative impact on individual tribes and American Indians has lasted the test of time. His name is still mentioned in multiple news articles in the twenty-first century as the reason tribes are unable to gain federal recognition. He is not reflected as a positive force in any literature or media that I could find. I will discuss Dorrington’s negligence at the Greenville Indian Industrial School in my Greenville Investigation analysis.

#### Indian Citizenship Legislation History

From 1884 to 1924, multiple Supreme Court cases were decided and laws passed based on the rights of American Indians in the United States. These cases and laws provide context for the events that occurred at the Greenville boarding school and demonstrate that the goal of assimilation was not as plain as BIA officials made it seem. The astounding lack of rights for American Indians during this time are in almost complete opposition to assimilation.

In Supreme Court case *Elk v. Wilkins* (1884), John Elk attempted to register to vote in Omaha, Nebraska and was refused on the basis that he was

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146. Gilroy Dispatch Staff, “Tribal Heritage,” *Gilroy Dispatch* online, March 4, 2005, <https://gilroydispatch.com/tribal-heritage/>.

not a citizen of the United States. The Supreme Court decided, based on the fourteenth amendment, that Elk was not a citizen of the U.S. because he was born within a tribe and despite leaving the tribe and living among white people, he was not naturalized as a citizen and therefore could not vote. Despite the nation-wide advocacy of assimilation of the Indians at the time of this case, this Supreme Court opinion proved that assimilation was not the goal; rather, the United States did not want Indians to have a place in “civilized” society. Giving Indians citizenship and the right to vote would give them equal power under the law.<sup>147</sup>

In 1887, the United States Congress passed the Dawes Act which allowed tribal land to be broken up into allotments. The intention of this was to further assimilate Indians by giving them unsuitable land for farming and agriculture if they gave up their rights to their reservation land. The American Indians would be offered U.S. citizenship if they relinquished their land. The U.S. government ultimately forced their hand. If they did not accept the allotments, therefore maintaining their reservation land, they would be refused citizenship. The Indians who agreed to the allotment sold much of their land and the remaining land was taken over by whites moving West. This resulted in catastrophe for American Indian culture and livelihood. Those who remained on reservation land were not

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147. Elk v. Wilkins, 112 U.S. 94 (1884).

eligible for citizenship and those who were given allotments realized the land was useless or it was pulled out from under them by the whites.<sup>148</sup>

The Indian Naturalization Act of 1890 granted citizenship to American Indians who applied for citizenship through an application process.<sup>149</sup> Congress later passed the Indian Citizenship Act of 1919 which granted U.S. citizenship to American Indians who served in the military in WWI; this was not done automatically, rather, veterans had to physically apply for citizenship after they served.<sup>150</sup> White women were given the right to vote upon the passage of the nineteenth amendment in 1920.<sup>151</sup> It was not until the Indian Citizenship Act of 1924 that the U.S. granted citizenship to American Indians, therefore giving them the right to vote.<sup>152</sup> American Indian women had virtually no rights as U.S. citizens up until 1924 so it is unsurprising that American Indian children, especially American Indian girls, were treated poorly in the boarding school system.

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148. An Act to Provide for the Allotment of Lands in Severalty to Indians on the Various Reservations (General Allotment Act or Dawes Act), Statutes at Large 24, 388-91, NADP Document A1887, February 8, 1887.

149. An Act to Provide a Temporary Government for the Territory of Oklahoma, to Enlarge the Jurisdiction of the United States Court in the Indian Territory, and for Other Purposes, Statutes at Large 26, May 2, 1890.

150. An Act Granting Citizenship to Certain Indians, H.R. 5007, September 27, 1919.

151. Joint Resolution of Congress proposing a constitutional amendment extending the right of suffrage to women, approved June 4, 1919; Ratified Amendments, 1795-1992; General Records of the United States Government; Record Group 11; National Archives.

152. Act of June 2, 1924, Public Law 68-175, 43 STAT 253, Enrolled Acts and Resolutions of Congress, 1789-1996, General Records of the U.S. Government, Record Group 11, National Archives.

## History of the Greenville Indian Industrial School



Figure 2. Greenville Indian Industrial School, 1898.<sup>153</sup>

The Greenville Indian Industrial School was opened near the town of Greenville in Plumas County, California. The U.S. government, through the efforts of Superintendent A.R. Bidwell and Indian Agent Edward N. Ament, built the Greenville school from a smaller, privately owned school that was originally

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<sup>153</sup> "The Greenville School- A Commodious Establishment Located in a Plumas Valley. The National Government's Care for its Aboriginal Wards," *San Francisco Chronicle* (San Francisco, California), August 14, 1898.

overseen by the Women's National Indian Association to temporarily educate Indian children.<sup>154</sup> The boarding school enrolled Indian students aged five to sixteen during a school year lasting from September 1<sup>st</sup> to July 1<sup>st</sup> in which half of their instructional time was spent learning "some industrial occupation" and the other half in the schoolroom.<sup>155</sup> A local newspaper article refers to the Indians in the area as "generally superior in intelligence to the average aborigine..." and that the education at this school made students both "self-reliant and self-supporting" which is the racist sentiment the BIA intended when establishing these boarding schools.<sup>156</sup> This school enrolled students from Southern Oregon to Central California and graduated most of their class to the Sherman Institute in Riverside, California.<sup>157</sup>

The school had a history of runaway female students according to multiple newspaper articles. In April 1909, three girls (unnamed) ran away and were found three days later approximately fifty miles from the school.<sup>158</sup> In October 1913, Grace Dicks and Effie Walker ran away with the Greenville School

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154. "The Greenville School- A Commodious Establishment Located in a Plumas Valley. The National Government's Care for its Aboriginal Wards," *San Francisco Chronicle* (San Francisco, California), August 14, 1898.

155. "The Greenville School," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 1898.

156. "The Greenville School," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 1898.

157. "Greenville Indian School Graduates Seventeen Pupils," *Feather River Bulletin* (Quincy, California), June 17, 1920.

158. "Indian Girls Who Escaped From Greenville School Take Daring Walk," *San Francisco Chronicle* (San Francisco, California), April 24, 1909.



superintendent's daughter June Hull; the article only mentions that Hull was found approximately fifteen miles from the school in Longville, California.<sup>159</sup> I was unable to find articles about boys who ran away from this school despite finding multiple articles about runaway girls. I am unsure if girls ran away at a higher rate from this particular school, especially because it enrolled more girls than boys, or if female runaways were such a rarity that the newspapers took advantage of the media attention they could reap off of these Indian girls.<sup>160</sup>

In 1917, the Greenville school seemed to be inadequate for the needs of the students. Evidence of overcrowding, the need for a new building, a problematic septic system, problematic staff, and lack of money were all problems during the Greenville Investigation according to multiple letters in the Greenville Investigation file written by the school Superintendent Edgar K. Miller, which I analyze in my research. The school was closed in 1921 or 1922 due to a fire that rendered the building unusable.<sup>161</sup> In 1922, according to newspaper reports, a farmer from the local area stated that the school "should have been condemned several years ago...because it was considered unsafe..."<sup>162</sup> Despite

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159. "Missing Indian Girls Located in Caribou," *The Sacramento Bee* (Sacramento, California), October 28, 1913.

"Miss Hull WA Found at Longville Hotel: Report That Runaway Girl had Been Located in Washington was Incorrect," *Feather River Bulletin* (Quincy, California), November 6, 1913.

160. Surface-Evans, "A Landscape of Assimilation and Resistance," 585.

161. "Contemplated Abandonment Indian School Big Mistake," *Feather River Bulletin* (Quincy, California), February 2, 1922

162. "Contemplated Abandonment Indian School Big Mistake," *Feather River Bulletin* (Quincy, California), February 2, 1922.

apparent staunch local commitment to restoring the school, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs decided not to rebuild after the fire.<sup>163</sup>

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163. "Greenville Indian School a Need," *Feather River Bulletin* (Quincy, California), February 23, 1922.

## CHAPTER FOUR: THE GREENVILLE INVESTIGATION

### Summary and Analysis of the Greenville Investigation

The Greenville Investigation documents are housed in the National Archives in San Bruno, California. The documents consist of Dorrington's one-hundred forty-five page report on five American Indian girls who ran away from the Greenville Indian Industrial School on December 5, 1916. I describe all of the documents and analyze them using scholarly research on Indian resistance within the boarding school system and my own interpretation. I find the parallels between circumstances surrounding runaways from Indian boarding schools and today's MMIW epidemic to show that this crisis is nothing new and needs to be treated as a systemic issue. I show the unacceptable similarities between how the cases of missing American Indian girls were handled in 1917 and how they continue to be handled today, especially when hypothermia or exposure is established as the cause of death. Most importantly, I provide a new voice for this nearly forgotten story by analyzing it from a different point of view than that of Dorrington or the BIA.

The first set of documents contain school programs from the Greenville School in 1916 and 1917 in which the American Indian students participated in a Thanksgiving program and meal, the 1917 commencement, Flag Day exercises, George Washington's birthday, a patriotic play, and a Valentine party. The

programs provide us with context in regard to some of the methods utilized to assimilate the students. Thanksgiving, currently remembered by American Indians as one of the first times the American Indians were colonized by whites, was celebrated from a colonial perspective at the Greenville School. The students participated in a Mother Goose play and a flag drill after they listened to their administrator's recitation of "Thanksgiving Turkey."<sup>164</sup> The following document is a Thanksgiving menu that lists common Thanksgiving food.<sup>165</sup> For George Washington's birthday, students listened to their administrators perform songs and recite poems, one of which is titled "Long Live America."<sup>166</sup> Even for Valentine's Day, after participating in heart puzzles and guessing contests, the students had to perform a song titled "Long Live Jerusalem."<sup>167</sup> Prior to commencement, the students participated in Flag Day exercises prayer and various recitations of American patriotic poems and songs.<sup>168</sup> Commencement continued along similar lines with more songs dedicated to American patriotism.<sup>169</sup> Katherine Dick, one of the five girls who ran away from this school, was part of this graduating class. The songs, plays, and celebrations were

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164. "United States Indian School, Greenville Calif.: Thanksgiving Programme," November 29, 1916.

165. "Greenville Indian School, Cal.: Thanksgiving Students' Menu," November 30, 1916.

166. "Greenville Indian School Program: Washington's [sic] Birthday," February 22, 1917.

167. "Greenville Indian School Valentine Party," 1917.

168. "Program Greenville Flag-Day Exercises," June 10, 1917.

169. "Programme: Greenville Indian School's Graduation Exercises," June 14, 1917

generated directly from the push to assimilate American Indian children to American life and to Christianize them. The following pages consist of Superintendent Miller's report and Dorrington's findings.

BIA Commissioner Cato Sells sent a telegram to Dorrington on January 4, 1917 demanding his presence at the Greenville School to investigate the death of Molly (Mollie) Lowry. Sells directed Dorrington to "carefully find out if culpability attaches to anyone for her death."<sup>170</sup> Dorrington received the telegram on January 5, 1917, arrived at the Greenville school in the late afternoon on January 7, 1917 and sent his finalized report to Sells on January 22, 1917 after departing Greenville on January 11, 1917, just 3 days after he began his investigation.<sup>171</sup> Dorrington asserts that he heard of the death of Molly Lowry through the press (there was at least one article published about the runaway girls in the *Reno-Gazette Journal* on December 11, 1916) and was later informed of it by Superintendent Miller on December 22, 1916.<sup>172</sup> Dorrington appealed to Sells that he had intended to visit the school soon after hearing about this case and described his issues with getting transportation and being "detained at Pyramid [school] longer than expected;" however, his actions show that he waited until he

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170. Cato Sells to Lafayette Dorrington, January 4, 1917.

171. *Investigation- Greenville Indian School- Desertion of Katherine Dick, Edith Buckskin, Rosa James, Elweza Stonecoal, Mollie Lowry*, Report by Special Agent Lafayette Dorrington, Reno Agency Records, National Archives (San Bruno, California), 1917.

172. "Two Indian Girls Lost; May Have Perished," *Reno Gazette-Journal* (Reno, Nevada), December 11, 1916.

was required to investigate Molly's death.<sup>173</sup> This is the first example of Dorrington's negligence within this investigation. From the first publication of the *Reno-Gazette* article on December 11, Dorrington had just over three weeks to make arrangements to visit the school. He coincidentally was able to make immediate arrangements upon being summoned by Sells and arrived at the school within four days.

Dorrington's investigation contains a summary of what he discovered upon arrival at the school. He includes his findings, the investigatory work completed by Superintendent Miller, and testimony from Superintendent Miller, matron Miss Hancock, Katherine Dick, Elweza Stonecoal, and Rosa James. In order to better analyze Dorrington's actions, I will describe the events within Dorrington's investigation in chronological order, beginning on the day the students ran away. Some of the documentation differs from the testimony of the girls, including name spelling, age, and details of events. In staying consistent with my goal to return this history to the victims of this tragedy, I will list both the girls' recount of events along with Dorrington's, noting when this discrepancy occurs.

At 6:30 PM on Tuesday, December 5, 1916, Molly Lowry (11), Elweza Stonecoal (13), Edith Buckskin (14, listed as 15 by Dorrington), Rosa James (15), and Katherine Dick (15, listed as 16 by Dorrington) left the Greenville Indian

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173. Lafayette Dorrington to Cato Sells, January 22, 1917.

Industrial School.<sup>174</sup> The events that led up to the girl's departure from the school are as follows:

On Tuesday, December 5, 1916, Edith Buckskin and Katherine Dick were strapped by matron Miss Hancock. Buckskin claimed that Hancock was "always mean to" her and that they had gotten out of bed and been strapped but were not informed as to why and Dick stated that Hancock punished them because they had not gotten out of bed on time.<sup>175</sup> Hancock asserted that they were punished for "refusing to get up in the morning in time to make a proper toilet for breakfast;" students were woken up with a rising bell and had ten minutes to get dressed and line up for breakfast.<sup>176</sup> Hancock states that Buckskin and Dick were in the midst of getting dressed at the ten minute mark when she found them; she proceeded to hit them three times across their shoulders with a leather paddle that measured 12" by 2 ½', claiming she "struck them only lightly."<sup>177</sup> Hancock contradicts herself in this statement by stating that she punished girls who had returned back to bed after the bell or did not get dressed; both Buckskin and Dick were in the midst of getting dressed at the time they were punished.

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174. "Report to the Commissioner," *Investigation- Greenville Indian School*, 3. Molly's name is spelled as "Mollie" within the documents but Judith Lowry spells her name as "Molly." I will maintain her spelling as "Molly."

175. "The Case of the Death of Molly Lowry," *Coroner's Inquest*, Deposition of Edith Buckskin by Mr. Philbrook (Coroner), 1916.

176. Testimony from Edith Hancock (Matron), December 18, 1916.

177. Testimony from Edith Hancock (Matron), December 18, 1916.

When asked by Miller “if there was any trouble with the girls,” Hancock’s testimony changed to asserting that she found Buckskin and Dick in their beds.<sup>178</sup> This directly contradicts her other statement. According to Miller, she then goes on to say she “had a little cord in my hand” that she “struck” the girls with; again, contradicting her prior statement that she had used a paddle.<sup>179</sup> Miller’s testimony reiterating what Hancock relayed to him contains multiple discrepancies as opposed to both Dick and Buckskin’s testimony which remains fairly consistent in their description of their punishment. Miller was noticeably attempting to avoid using the word “strap” when describing the punishment Hancock inflicted on the girls because the Greenville School had strict rules against corporal punishment. Miller stated “...there are strong rules and orders... from me... that there is to be NO corporal punishment” at the school but he goes on to imply that a paddle would be different than a strap, therefore more acceptable.<sup>180</sup>

Dorrington also included in his investigation that “the superintendent insists that the punishment was light, that the rules of the school prohibits corporal punishment, that he is strongly opposed to same and had issued and published orders against its practice...” and further claims that Hancock is “wholly physically unable to do so and that such action would be entirely contrary

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178. “The Case of the Death of Molly Lowry,” Coroner’s Inquest, 1916, 4.

179. “The Case of the Death of Molly Lowry,” Coroner’s Inquest, 1916, 4.

180. Letter/Report from Edgar K. Miller to Lafayette Dorrington, December 19, 1916, 2.



to her methods in handling girls.”<sup>181</sup> Hancock had ample motive to be untruthful about her actions because strapping a student was against the protocol at the school and could put her job at risk; she was likely keenly aware that she might have also been held responsible for driving the girls to run away. It is apparent that corporal punishment, if done with a paddle instead of a strap, would be acceptable despite the “strong rules” against corporal punishment. The documents progress from describing Hancock’s actions as first using a paddle to using a little cord to not committing corporal punishment at all because her version of corporal punishment was not considered severe enough, despite the explicit rule against any corporal punishment at all.

Soon after the girls were punished by Hancock, Buckskin made plans to run away from the school.<sup>182</sup> Buckskin claims that she did not ask anyone to run away with her; rather, they wanted to go and when she told Stonecoal not to join, Stonecoal insisted.<sup>183</sup> Dick’s testimony stated that Buckskin claimed she did not want to get whipped again so she was going to run away and asked Dick to join her; Dick said that she would join.<sup>184</sup> Buckskin had also asked Stonecoal to join and Dick asked James to join; Lowry overheard the conversation between Dick

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181. “Report to Commissioner,” *Investigation- Greenville Indian School*, 8.

182. “Evidence of Katherine Dick,” *Investigation- Greenville Indian School*, 3-4.

183. “The Case of the Death of Molly Lowry,” *Coroner’s Inquest*, Deposition of Edith Buckskin by Mr. Philbrook (Coroner), 1916.

184. “Evidence of Katherine Dick,” *Investigation- Greenville Indian School*, 3.

and James and said she would also run away with the other girls.<sup>185</sup> The runaway-plan was not kept secret from the other female students at the school; Dick states that multiple girls knew they were going to run away.<sup>186</sup> Lowry, Dick's cousin, had a history of running away from the school and returning and had planned to run away during Thanksgiving but did not follow through on her earlier plan.<sup>187</sup>

Around 6:30 PM on Tuesday, December 5, 1916, the girls ate their dinner and left as Hancock was away eating her dinner. The girls' testimony is completely absent of any mention of the lights going out at the school but Miller and Hancock both claim the lights at the school went out after dinner. The girls' testimony shows the girls were unaware that the lights went out; it seems possible that the administrators corroborated the loss of lights and lied to excuse the hour they took to notice that the girls had left.<sup>188</sup> By all accounts, it was not yet freezing when the girls departed and there was no snow on the ground. All of the girls took caps, sweaters, and dresses from the clothing room, though there is a discrepancy on how many were taken. Some accounts mention two each, and some state that Buckskin was the only one who had two sweaters. They also took bread from the kitchen before they ran away. Miller states the girls

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185. "Evidence of Katherine Dick," *Investigation- Greenville Indian School*, 4.

186. "Evidence of Katherine Dick," *Investigation- Greenville Indian School*, 4.

187. "Evidence of Katherine Dick," *Investigation- Greenville Indian School*, 4.

188. "Evidence of Katherine Dick," *Investigation- Greenville Indian School*, 4.

“practically robbed the girls’ clothing room,” even though this school reportedly enrolled fifteen students over-capacity and had to turn away approximately thirty students every year.<sup>189</sup> By Miller’s account, the school had 92 students (fifty girls, forty two boys).<sup>190</sup> If the girls took ten articles of clothing total (one-fifth of the minimum amount of clothing if every girl was minimally clothes) and this amounted to robbing the clothing at the school, the school did not have near enough outerwear for the students at the school, especially considering the temperatures during the winter in Greenville were near and below freezing.

Hancock notified Miller after she realized the girls had left the school, which they assumed was about one hour after their departure.<sup>191</sup> Miller started a search party that night with a “Mr. Stanley” to a dam near the school and he made phone calls to parents, local officials, and stores within the Westwood and Susanville area to inform residents about the missing girls.<sup>192</sup> The girls walked towards Susanville for most of the night before falling asleep in the forest.<sup>193</sup> Stonecoal had asked to return to the school, reportedly crying, but she did not

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189. “Contemplated Abandonment Indian School Big Mistake,” *Feather River Bulletin* (Quincy, California), February 2, 1922.

190. Letter from Edgar K. Miller to Cato Sells, February 7, 1917.

191. “The Case of the Death of Molly Lowry,” *Coroner’s Inquest*, Deposition of Edgar Miller by Mr. Philbrook (Coroner), 1916.

192. “Report to Commissioner,” *Investigation- Greenville Indian School*, 6-7.

193. “Evidence of Katherine Dick,” *Investigation- Greenville Indian School*, 5.

want to go back alone and none of the other girls would join her so she remained with the group.<sup>194</sup>

Another search party was reportedly started the next morning, Wednesday, December 6, with Stanley who went to Engles Mine, twenty-five miles from the school, where Buckskin had a half-sister. Greenville was also searched because both James and Lowry lived in Greenville.<sup>195</sup> Stanley did not find any trace of the girls. The girls walked throughout the day until the afternoon when Buckskin, Lowry, and Stonecoal decided to sleep. Dick and James stayed awake and believed they heard someone. After an unsuccessful attempt at waking the girls, Dick and James left to hide then found a cabin at “camp 14 at some white mans [sic] house.”<sup>196</sup> Buckskin then left the two younger girls, Stonecoal and Lowry, on the side of a road on top of snow-covered Clear Creek hill, near Kavaza Ranch.<sup>197</sup> Buckskin testified that she wanted the younger girls to join her to find Dick and James but Stonecoal and Lowry wanted to go to sleep so she left them and headed towards Susanville.<sup>198</sup> When Buckskin was asked

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194. “Evidence of Katherine Dick,” *Investigation- Greenville Indian School*, 8.

195. “The Case of the Death of Molly Lowry,” *Coroner’s Inquest*, Deposition of Edgar Miller by Mr. Philbrook (Coroner), 1916.

196. “Evidence of Katherine Dick,” *Investigation- Greenville Indian School*, 6.

197. Letter/Report from Edgar K. Miller to Lafayette Dorrington, December 19, 1916, 3.

“The Case of the Death of Molly Lowry,” *Coroner’s Inquest*, Deposition of Edith Bucksin by Mr. Philbrook (Coroner), 1916.

198. “The Case of the Death of Molly Lowry,” *Coroner’s Inquest*, Deposition of Edith Buckskin by Mr. Philbrook (Coroner), 1916.

what clothing Lowry had on, she stated that she had a sweater and Buckskin did not leave her sweater for Lowry. In this interview conducted by Dr. Philbrook, the coroner, it is apparent that they are trying to pin Buckskin with responsibility for Lowry's death based on the line of questioning. He asks if Buckskin took any of her own clothing off for Lowry, if Lowry had anything over her, and if Buckskin had a bundle of clothing.<sup>199</sup>

The following day, Thursday December 7, Dick and James found Buckskin walking along the road alone.<sup>200</sup> The three girls stayed at a different white man's (Mr. McCleary) cabin that night while he tended to Buckskin's severely frozen feet.<sup>201</sup>

"Mr. Taylor" and "Mr. Green" (a probation officer from Westwood) went to Goodrich on Friday, December 8 and were told by Mr. McCleary that he had a "squaw" (Buckskin) in his cabin and that Dick and James left that morning; Buckskin was unable to leave with the other girls because her feet were frostbitten to the point that she could not put her shoes back on.<sup>202</sup> The girls left without Buckskin in order to avoid getting caught by the school officials.<sup>203</sup>

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199. "The Case of the Death of Molly Lowry," *Coroner's Inquest*, Deposition of Edith Buckskin by Mr. Philbrook (Coroner), 1916.

200. "Evidence of Katherine Dick," *Investigation- Greenville Indian School*, 5.

201. "Evidence of Katherine Dick," *Investigation- Greenville Indian School*, 6.

202. "The Case of the Death of Molly Lowry," *Coroner's Inquest*, Deposition of Mr. Green by Mr. Philbrook (Coroner), 1916.

203. "Evidence of Katherine Dick," *Investigation- Greenville Indian School*, 7.

Around 7:15PM on Friday, December 8, Miller first heard about the girls' whereabouts from Green who called Miller to inform him that he had "caught" Dick and James in a ranger station six miles away from Westwood- thirty-six miles from Greenville; he had also found Buckskin.<sup>204</sup> Green continued to search for Lowry and Stonecoal but was unable to locate them, blaming this on the found three girls who were claimed to have not provided any information on where Lowry and Stonecoal might have been.<sup>205</sup> The girls remained in Westwood and were forced to participate in inquest proceedings with a jury, who found that Lowry died as a result of "exposure and freezing."<sup>206</sup>

On Saturday, December 10, "Mr. Small," "Mr. Baker," and Green took Buckskin back out to search for Lowry and Stonecoal in the area that they had been left, despite Buckskin's obvious injuries.<sup>207</sup> A stage driver had seen Stonecoal near the road and sent two men to look around; they found Lowry's deceased body and left a marker near it. Small, Baker, and Green then found Lowry's body and called Dr. Philbrook who directed them to bring her back to Westwood in the midst of the inquest proceedings.

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204. Letter/Report from Edgar K. Miller to Lafayette Dorrington, December 19, 1916.

205. Letter/Report from Edgar K. Miller to Lafayette Dorrington, December 19, 1916, 2.

206. "The Case of the Death of Molly Lowry," *Coroner's Inquest*, verdict of the jury, 1916.

207. "The Case of the Death of Molly Lowry," *Coroner's Inquest*, Deposition of Mr. Green by Mr. Philbrook (Coroner), 1916.

Stonecoal and Lowry were not found until approximately 10AM on Saturday, December 10. Lowry was dead and Stonecoal's feet were badly frozen, requiring amputation.<sup>208</sup> Miller picked up all of the girls as well as Lowry's body and took them back to Greenville, admitting Buckskin and Stonecoal to the school hospital. Upon examination by the school hospital and physician as of December 19, 1916, it was reportedly unlikely that Stonecoal would survive due to her injuries but Buckskin would "lose only a few toes;" there was no mention of Buckskin's potential to die.<sup>209</sup>

#### Katherine Dick

The testimony of the girls is very similar and consistent until they are asked the same questions multiple times. Dorrington interviewed Dick on January 8, 1917. When asked why she left the school, Dick stated, "Because I did not like the matron. She got after me all the time. She scold [*sic*] me all the time for nothing. She whip [*sic*] me two times."<sup>210</sup> Dick testified that both she and Buckskin were strapped with a paddle three times in the morning and the same had happened a week prior because the girls were not ready in time.<sup>211</sup> Dick asserted that she was not whipped hard either time and that Hancock was not

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208. Letter/Report from Edgar K. Miller to Lafayette Dorrington, December 19, 1916, 2.

209. Letter/Report from Edgar K. Miller to Lafayette Dorrington, December 19, 1916, 2.

210. "Evidence of Katherine Dick," *Investigation- Greenville Indian School*, 1.

211. "Evidence of Katherine Dick," *Investigation- Greenville Indian School*, 1.

angry when she hit them. Dick's testimony is consistent with one account described by Hancock- Hancock hit the girls while they were in the midst of getting dressed. Dick asserted that she and Buckskin were still on time to line up for breakfast.<sup>212</sup> When asked if Dick believed that Hancock did the right thing, Dick said "She done right both times she whip [*sic*] me and Edith."<sup>213</sup> When pressed again as to whether she liked the matron, Dick's answer completely changed from the beginning of the interview, shifting from resent for Hancock to liking and appreciating Hancock and even apologizing for running away, claiming she would never do it again.<sup>214</sup> The same questions were asked throughout the interview and Dick's response began to change to a more positive outlook on the matron, the superintendent, and the school conditions. Dick was then asked if she got the idea to run away from "any old Indians" and if she encountered "any old Indians" once they ran away; she responded that they purposely tried to stay hidden away from everyone, both white people and Indians.<sup>215</sup> At the end of Dick's interview, Dorrington repeated the same questions again,

Q: Now tell me the truth Katherine. Did you run away from the school because Miss. Hancock whipped you?

A: Edith asked me to go. That is why I went, but I don't like to be whipped neither.

Q: Did Miss. Hancock hurt you any?

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212. "Evidence of Katherine Dick," *Investigation- Greenville Indian School*, 2.

213. "Evidence of Katherine Dick," *Investigation- Greenville Indian School*, 3.

214. "Evidence of Katherine Dick," *Investigation- Greenville Indian School*, 3.

215. "Evidence of Katherine Dick," *Investigation- Greenville Indian School*, 8-9.



A: No she don't whip like other matrons long time ago. Miss. Hancock just whip easy like I told you. She no hurt a bit.

Q: Then you would not have left because Miss. Hancock whipped you if Edith had not asked you to go?

A: No I would not go if Edith don't ask me. She asked Elweza to go with us. Edith told me Elweza was going with us.<sup>216</sup>

The line of questioning by Dorrington is obviously an attempt to sway Dick's answers away from blaming Hancock and towards blaming Buckskin for running away. Dick's answers changed throughout the interview when Dorrington asked the same questions and he led her into placing the blame on Buckskin. Indian students commonly used defense mechanisms, such as denial and minimization, when being interviewed about their experiences in the schools.<sup>217</sup> This would explain why Dick's answers changed through the course of her interview and why she walked back some of her responses. Further, Dick was aware she would get punished for her actions and was being interrogated by an older, white official, more than likely making her feel that she was in an unsafe environment; therefore, swaying her answers in order to gain approval.

### Rosa James

Dorrington interviewed James on January 8, 1917. James claimed that she left the school because Dick asked her to go home with her and "I guess the

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216. "Evidence of Katherine Dick," *Investigation- Greenville Indian School*, 9.

217. Colmant, Schultz, Robbins, Ciali, Dorton, Rivera-Colmant, "Constructing Meaning," 35.

devil make [*sic*] me go. I had no reason for going.”<sup>218</sup> When asked if she liked the school, James, who had never run away from the school prior to this incident, said “I like the school and I like everybody. I like the matron and I like Superintendent Miller.”<sup>219</sup> Dorrington was aware of the plans James and Lowry had to run away from the school on Thanksgiving and when asked about this, her answer was, “I guess the devil got me to think that way.”<sup>220</sup> James stated that everyone got one sweater but Buckskin had two. When questioned about whether the lights were on at the school when they left, she stated that they were burning.<sup>221</sup> James’s testimony completely matched Dick’s testimony from when they left Buckskin, Stonecoal, and Lowry to sleep on Clear Creek hill.<sup>222</sup> Dorrington asked James mostly the same questions as Dick and she corroborated Dick’s answers.

#### Elweza Stonecoal

Dorrington interviewed Stonecoal on January 9, 1917. Stonecoal’s answers were much shorter than Dick’s and James’s and it seems like Dorrington struggled getting information from her, stating she had “mental

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218. “Evidence of Rosa James,” *Investigation- Greenville Indian School*, 1.

219. “Evidence of Rosa James,” *Investigation- Greenville Indian School*, 1.

220. “Evidence of Rosa James,” *Investigation- Greenville Indian School*, 2.

221. “Evidence of Rosa James,” *Investigation- Greenville Indian School*, 3.

222. “Evidence of Rosa James,” *Investigation- Greenville Indian School*, 3-4.

deficiency and apparent inability to converse intelligently. She seemed unwilling to talk to any extent and required a great deal of coaxing and coaching.”<sup>223</sup>

However, her answers were consistent with the other girls. Stonecoal confirmed that she wanted to go back to the school because she “got scared” but no one would join her so she remained with the girls.<sup>224</sup> Stonecoal stated that the other girls made fun of her because she was scared and constantly crying.<sup>225</sup>

Stonecoal had no memory of Buckskin leaving but when she and Lowry woke up, Stonecoal tried to get Lowry to leave with her. Lowry could not walk so Stonecoal attempted to carry her unsuccessfully because they kept falling. Lowry then went to sleep and Stonecoal stated that she attempted to wake Lowry up and when she did not wake, she knew Lowry was dead.<sup>226</sup> Dorrington then brought up a letter that Stonecoal wrote to her father. In this letter, Stonecoal stated that she desired to return to her home, that she and Buckskin fought with one of the Carsoner girls (other students in the school), she cried every night, and dreamt of being extremely sick.<sup>227</sup>

On January 15, 1917, H.A. Morel, M.D. submitted a document to Miller diagnosing Stonecoal as “mentally deficient,” which was included in Dorrington’s

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223. “Report to Commissioner,” *Investigation- Greenville Indian School*, 3-4.

224. “Evidence of Elweza Stonecoal,” *Investigation- Greenville Indian School*, 2.

225. “Evidence of Elweza Stonecoal,” *Investigation- Greenville Indian School*, 3.

226. “Evidence of Elweza Stonecoal,” *Investigation- Greenville Indian School*, 3-4.

227. Letter from Elweza Stonecoal to her father, October 13, 1916.

investigation.<sup>228</sup> Morel did not include any explanation. Miller stated in his report that Stonecoal is a girl “not bright.”<sup>229</sup>

Stonecoal also had a history of running away. In a letter dated January 16, 1917, Roxy Groves testified that Stonecoal came to her “with the intentions of deserting the School [*sic*]” and told Groves that she was not treated well at the school, nor did they give her enough to eat or enough time to eat.<sup>230</sup> Joseph Pratt and Stanley testified in a letter that Stonecoal had run away from school in early October 1916. This instance was used by Dorrington to render Stonecoal’s own testimony unusable. When Stonecoal ran away in October 1916, she blamed the Carsoner girls for leading her away and then leaving her.<sup>231</sup> The Carsoner girls refuted Stonecoal’s statement and Pratt and Stanley assert that other neighbors of the school witnessed Stonecoal’s “tales” that were later found to be “untrue.”<sup>232</sup>

As of January 22, 1917 when Dorrington wrote his report to Sells, Stonecoal was “in the school hospital in a pitiful condition.”<sup>233</sup> Stonecoal had survived but lost both legs four inches below the knee.<sup>234</sup> Dorrington found that

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228. Statement from H.A. Morel, M.D. to Edgar K. Miller, January 15, 1917.

229. Letter/Report from Edgar K. Miller to Lafayette Dorrington, December 19, 1916, 3.

230. Statement from Roxy Groves to Lafayette Dorrington, January 16, 1917.

231. Statement from Joseph J. Pratt and Robert Stanley to Lafayette Dorrington, January 10, 1917.

232. Statement from Joseph J. Pratt and Robert Stanley to Lafayette Dorrington, January 10, 1917.

233. “Report to Commissioner,” *Investigation- Greenville Indian School*, 3a.

234. “Report to Commissioner,” *Investigation- Greenville Indian School*, 7-8.

Stoencoal would be “doomed to nothing more than a miserable existence the balance of her days.”<sup>235</sup>

### Edith Buckskin

Both Miller and Dorrington believe Buckskin was convinced to run away by a fellow student. In one letter from Miller to Dorrington, Miller informs him of Inez Jack, an Indian girl and student from Susanville who Miller brought to the Greenville hospital because she was having eye trouble. Miller asserts that Jack was “sent away” from Riverside (possibly the Sherman Institute) and had a “bad name.”<sup>236</sup> The matron found Jack with Buckskin in bed and Jack was consequently sent home; Miller later learned, through hear-say, that Jack was encouraging Buckskin to run away from the school.<sup>237</sup> None of the records provide any evidence that Buckskin was asked about Jack.

It is possible that Buckskin had a poor reputation prior to enrolling at Greenville and potentially had a history of running away. According to the Reno-Gazette in Nevada, a girl by the name of Edith Buckskin was reported to have run away from the Carson Indian School with two other girls in October 1910.<sup>238</sup> Though I cannot confirm if this Buckskin is the same as the Buckskin in the

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235. “Report to Commissioner,” *Investigation- Greenville Indian School*, 31.

236. Letter from Edgar K. Miller to Lafayette Dorrington, January 17, 1917.

237. Letter from Edgar K. Miller to Lafayette Dorrington, January 17, 1917.

238. “Three Indian School Girls are Arrested,” *Reno Gazette-Journal*, October 13, 1910.

Greenville Investigation, the potential is present because the Carson School may have transferred her to the Greenville School if she was indeed a troublesome student. Buckskin was also listed as a ward in the 1915 census so she may have moved between schools. If this negative history followed her, it is unsurprising that the Greenville School officials had issues with her.

Both Dorrington and the staff at the Greenville school were far from fond of Buckskin, making it easy to use her as a scapegoat for the death of Lowry. Dorrington arrived at the school after Buckskin had already passed away but his report states, "Edith displayed considerable animosity towards the school."<sup>239</sup> Dorrington was swayed against Buckskin immediately upon his arrival to Greenville, especially because both the inquest proceedings and Miller's report had been completed and did not show Buckskin in a kind light.

Miller made no qualms about blaming Buckskin, Dick, and James for the death of Lowry, stating that the three girls were careless about "the trouble, expense and death they have virtually caused."<sup>240</sup> In multiple documents, Miller refers to Buckskin in the derogative. In his report, he described Buckskin as being "the worst character we have in the school," and tried to send her back to her home in Susanville with a Mr. Bates who refused to take her back.<sup>241</sup> In the inquest, Miller testifies that, "These are all good girls except Edith Buckskin. We

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239. "Report to Commissioner," *Investigation- Greenville Indian School*, 11-12.

240. Letter/Report from Edgar K. Miller to Lafayette Dorrington, December 19, 1916, 3.

241. Letter/Report from Edgar K. Miller to Lafayette Dorrington, December 19, 1916, 4.

have never had any trouble with any of them except Edith and she is a very bad girl.”<sup>242</sup> Buckskin’s reputation was already spelled out for Dorrington before he was able to perform an impartial investigation, swaying him to place blame on Buckskin for both the run-away event and Lowry’s death.

As a result of the negligence by both the search party and school officials, Buckskin lost a portion of each of her feet and ultimately, her life.<sup>243</sup> Dr. Morel said he had concerns about Buckskin from the moment he saw her in the hospital because her “condition was not good.”<sup>244</sup> This statement proves negligence on behalf of the school, the coroner, and the search party because they allowed her to be taken back out into the cold in order to search for the younger girls before giving her any medical attention. The coroner also performed inquest proceedings with a jury before seeking medical attention for any of the girls.

Further, Miller’s original report on Buckskin’s condition from December 19, 1916 is in direct opposition to Morel’s statement taken by Dorrington. Miller discussed Stonecoal’s condition as dire but hardly mentioned Buckskin’s poor condition.<sup>245</sup> Miller also stated that Buckskin, James, and Dick “laughed and

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242. “The Case of the Death of Molly Lowry,” *Coroner’s Inquest*, Deposition of Edgar K. Miller by Mr. Philbrook (Coroner), 191

243. “Report to Commissioner,” *Investigation- Greenville Indian School*, 7.

244. “Report to Commissioner,” *Investigation- Greenville Indian School*, 8.

245. Letter/Report from Edgar K. Miller to Lafayette Dorrington, December 19, 1916, 2.

talked about the affair all the way home from Westwood as though it were a huge joke instead of such a serious affair.”<sup>246</sup> This discrepancy either alludes to Miller’s blasé attitude about Buckskin’s condition or Morel changed his opinion from his conversation with Miller to his conversation with Dorrington. If Buckskin’s condition was as poor as Morel asserted, then Buckskin would not have had the energy to be light-hearted about her circumstances. It was negligent to force Buckskin to join the search party for Lowry and Stonecoal when her condition was described as obviously poor. Buckskin’s medical treatment was too late and she passed away on January 2, 1917.<sup>247</sup> No justice was ever given to Buckskin; rather, she was used as a scapegoat by those who were supposed to protect her.

Due to her ward status, the negative commentary about her from Miller, and her death, it seems that Buckskin was used as a scapegoat by Dorrington to follow the directive from Sells to find if anyone was at fault for Lowry’s death. By blaming the victims and using a scapegoat who could not speak for themselves, Dorrington was able to resolve a case within three days and had no repercussions, as the convicted person was deceased. Buckskin’s death was not investigated as far as I could find.

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246. Letter/Report from Edgar K. Miller to Lafayette Dorrington, December 19, 1916, 3.

247. “Report to Commissioner,” *Investigation- Greenville Indian School*, 3a.



## Molly Lowry



Figure 3. *Going Home*, 1992.

Currently displayed at the Heard Museum, this painting by Molly's great-niece Judith was inspired by Molly's disappearance and death (see figure 3).<sup>248</sup>

Molly passed away on or around Thursday, December 7, 1916 on Clear Creek hill in Plumas County. An inquest jury concluded that her death was "by exposure and freezing."<sup>249</sup> Throughout the investigation, Molly was described as unintelligent and defective by school officials; however, evidence within the Greenville Investigation says otherwise.

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248. Dobkins, Caldwell, and LaPena, *The Legacy of Maidu Indian Artist Frank Day*, 91.

249. "The Case of the Death of Molly Lowry," *Coroner's Inquest*, verdict of the jury, 1916.

Molly obviously despised the Greenville School, as shown by evidence that Molly told Stonecoal that she “would rather die than go to school” when Stonecoal asked her to go back after they had run away.<sup>250</sup> Her extreme disdain for the school might be the reason the school officials called her defective. Miller described Molly as “a defective child, with no mind, and there is no doubt in my mind about her being led away by the three other girls.”<sup>251</sup> Hancock agrees in her own testimony when she described Molly and Stonecoal, “Two of these girls were of defective mind. Both being far below normal at all times and one of them appeared demented at times.”<sup>252</sup> Testimony from William Lanahan, the dentist for the girls, stated “these two girls are or were feeble-minded [*sic*] and have or have had little or no mind of their own.”<sup>253</sup> Despite this commentary from school officials, Molly had multiple instances where she behaved in ways that someone of “defective mind” would not.

Molly had a history of running away from the school and always finding her way back.<sup>254</sup> Additionally, Molly and Dick were the girls who decided to get food for the girls prior to departing the school. An absent-minded girl would not have the foresight to gather sustenance before running away nor would they

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250. Letter/Report from Edgar K. Miller to Lafayette Dorrington, December 19, 1916, 3.

251. Letter/Report from Edgar K. Miller to Lafayette Dorrington, December 19, 1916, 3.

252. Testimony from Edith Hancock (Matron), December 18, 1916.

253. Testimony from William J. Lanahan (Field Dentist and S.D.A.), December 16, 1916.

254. Testimony from Edith Hancock (Matron), December 18, 1916.

consistently be able to find their way back to their school. If Molly had some mental deficiency, she probably would not have been allowed to go to that school, according to multiple newspaper articles describing the students at the Greenville School as “absolutely contented, and successful, in their pursuit of knowledge” and “All who have passed through this school are, without exception, equipped to take position as self-respecting, self-supporting citizens of the state and nation.”<sup>255</sup> None of the other students ever described Molly as deficient and based on the high academic standards of the school, the descriptions of Molly given by school officials seem inaccurate and point to denigration and victim-blaming. Furthermore, regardless of mental deficiency, Dorrington and the Greenville officials had a responsibility to care for the girls – an obligation they utterly failed. Blaming the victims shows the failures of the system and inherent racism that pervaded the BIA and the Greenville school.

Despite the lack of published narratives like Molly’s, many American Indian families are all too familiar with missing and murdered relatives and a justice system that failed them, as shown by the current MMIW crisis. Judith’s painting and work keeps Molly’s story alive but other families are unable to give

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255. “Contemplated Abandonment Indian School Big Mistake, *Feather River Bulletin* (Quincy, California), February 2, 1922; “Greenville Indian School a Need,” *Feather River Bulletin* (Quincy, California), February 23, 1922. See C. Richard King, “The Good, The Bad, and The Mad” in the *European Journal of American Culture* 22 no. 1, (2003): 37-47. King discusses the use of intelligence tests in the U.S. in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (in the midst of the eugenics movement in California) as a means to fraudulently prove American Indians were an inferior race. “Feeble-minded” was a common term used during this time frame to describe and denigrate American Indians, whether this description was accurate or not.

voices to their own stolen ancestors. Tragedies like Molly's continue to happen today and there is an atrocious lack of attention paid to MMIW.

What occurred at the Greenville School in 1916 and 1917 continues to occur to this day. The current epidemic of MMIW is not a new issue, despite the media only recently publishing articles about it; rather, American Indians have been ignored, harmed, stolen, and killed since the first Europeans landed in North America. The Indian education system implemented by the U.S. government was just one system of many that perpetuated the abuse of Indigenous women and the intergenerational trauma many American Indians experience currently. Current MMIW cases parallel the lack of justice experienced by the five girls in the Greenville Investigation, despite occurring over one-hundred years ago.

### The Greenville Investigation Findings

Dorrington's report, sent to Sells on January 22, 1917, placed full blame on Buckskin and relinquished any and all culpability from school officials. Dorrington attests that no "severe or corporal punishment" was administered by Hancock to Buckskin and Dick, though both girls testified that they were hit, though not hard.<sup>256</sup> He also found that "everybody had been most diligent throughout," which contradicts the evidence of the carelessness of the coroner

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256. "Report to Commissioner," *Investigation- Greenville Indian School*, 28.

and the search party who took Buckskin back into the cold despite her injuries.<sup>257</sup>

In one prominent statement, Dorrington describes the school in a much different light than some of the girl's testimony, even leaving out any of the girl's testimony that spoke negatively about the school,

...the school is unusually well conducted; that same is given the personal and constant supervision of Superintendent Miller; that the food furnished is ample, of good quality and well served; that the children are treated with the utmost kindness and consideration by the superintendent and his co-workers; that the general welfare of the children at the school is the aim of the superintendent and those associated with him, and therefore no just cause or reason for deserting existed at the time the girls left the school....<sup>258</sup>

Dorrington's finding contradicts evidence that is included in both his and Miller's reports and testimony that is supplied by the girls. Dorrington abandons any responsibility on the behalf of the BIA and the Greenville School and instead places blame on the girls, themselves. He finds that Dick, James, and Buckskin were "cowardly" and guilty of "willful abandonment" when they left Stonecoal and Lowry and that Buckskin "was no doubt the instigator and prime mover in this whole affair."<sup>259</sup> Dorrington states that there should be no fault placed upon any of the school officials and that the commissioner should contemplate some form of punishment for Dick and James, reminding the commissioner that they were under the guidance of Buckskin and do not deserve much blame.<sup>260</sup>

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257. "Report to Commissioner," *Investigation- Greenville Indian School*, 29.

258. "Report to Commissioner," *Investigation- Greenville Indian School*, 29.

259. "Report to Commissioner," *Investigation- Greenville Indian School*, 33.

260. "Report to Commissioner," *Investigation- Greenville Indian School*, 34.

Both Miller and Hancock had obvious motive in this investigation because if they were found culpable for any deaths or for being the catalyst to the girls running away, they could have lost their jobs or received punishment. Miller was preoccupied with many other administrative tasks during this time and blamed the entire event on Buckskin, despite his obvious negligence. Hancock, though exonerated, turned out to be a less than credible source according to two telegrams included in this investigation file. In August 1917, just seven months after Dorrington completed his investigation, Miller sent a somewhat cryptic telegram to Dorrington stating, "Nothing from Office on transfers. Urge by wire immediate transfer of the two parties. Neither here now."<sup>261</sup> Dorrington then sent a telegram to Sells, stating, "For good of Greenville School I urgently recommend immediate transfer of Miss Hancock matron and Mrs. Furlong seamstress. Their retention will certainly be detrimental. Both on vacation and should be saved return expense if possible."<sup>262</sup> The urgency of the telegrams hint at issues with Hancock that needed to be resolved immediately. It is possible that the school had other issues with her which, if true, render her testimony unfair within the Greenville Investigation, depending upon the circumstances.

One section of documents contains correspondence regarding Pablo M. Herrera, an Indian disciplinarian for the Greenville school. Herrera wrote to Sells,

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261. Telegram from Edgar K. Miller to Lafayette Dorrington, July 3, 1917.

262. Telegram from Lafayette Dorrington to Commissioner Cato Sells, August 3, 1917.

the commissioner of Indian Affairs on November 26, 1916 requesting a transfer from the school.<sup>263</sup> He then wrote to Dorrington on December 23, 1916, informing him that he did not want to work at Greenville any longer.<sup>264</sup> Herrera insisted that Miller and the assistant matron, Miss Dietrich, were treating him “unjustly” since he arrived at the school after being transferred from the Carlisle Indian Industrial School in April of the same year.<sup>265</sup> Miller wrote to Dorrington on January 9, 1917, while Dorrington was in Greenville investigating the case, stating that he no longer wanted Herrera employed at the Greenville School.<sup>266</sup> The controversy stemmed from purported issues between Herrera and the Indian girls who attended the school. Herrera is never connected with any of the five girls involved in the Greenville Investigation, but his correspondence shows some strife within the staff at the Greenville School in the midst of the issues with the five girls who ran away.

The end of the file contains multiple letters written by Miller and sent to Dorrington and other BIA officials regarding administrative issues. In the midst of Dorrington’s investigation, Miller was also concerned about his school’s enrollment figures and hiring a night watchman to protect the school at night from “fires and risks,” which he spoke to Dorrington about in great length while he was

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263. Letter from Pablo M. Herrera to Commissioner Cato Sells, November 26, 1916.

264. Letter from Pablo M. Herrera to Lafayette Dorrington, December 23, 1916.

265. Letter from Pablo M. Herrera to Lafayette Dorrington, December 23, 1916.

266. Letter from Edgar K. Miller to Lafayette Dorrington, January 9, 1917.

at the school.<sup>267</sup> One letter is in regard to a student from another school. Relevant to the Greenville Investigation is the cost of garden operations in exchange for a new building at the school. Miller wrote to Dorrington on December 21, 1916 to ask him to advocate for the building which was cut from Greenville's budget. Miller stated that it was necessary in order to continue functioning.<sup>268</sup> When this letter is put into context with commentary from an article in the Feather River Bulletin just a few years later in 1922, the Greenville School was in complete inadequate shape for a boarding school. A local farmer stated that the "building should have been condemned several years ago."<sup>269</sup>

Despite Miller's desire to enroll students far beyond the capacity, the institution seems to have been far from acceptable for students, especially an overload of them. The school was overcrowded but he didn't want to cut enrollment because he would lose money.<sup>270</sup> Miller's lack of regard for student comfort in favor of money and "KEEP[ING] THAT COST DOWN" show where his priorities were.<sup>271</sup> Miller also becomes political about Molly's burial, asking the property owner to request a government settlement for a specific amount of land

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267. Letter from Edgar K. Miller to Commissioner Cato Sells, January 12, 1917.

268. Letter from Edgar K. Miller to Lafayette Dorrington, December 21, 1916.

269. "Contemplated Abandonment Indian School Big Mistake," *Feather River Bulletin* (Quincy, California), February 2, 1922.

270. Letter from Edgar K. Miller to Commissioner Cato Sells, February 7, 1917.

271. Letter from Edgar K. Miller to Commissioner Cato Sells, February 7, 1917.



which would settle “the burial-ground matter and the septic-tank problem.”<sup>272</sup>

Miller also wrote letters at length about the inadequacy of old superintendents keeping up records for the school. Miller attempted to take care of multiple administrative tasks in the midst of the Greenville Investigation which displayed a lack of empathy for the issues going on at the time.

Miller’s letters are suggestive of a very distracted administrator who was unable to keep his head above water with documentation, up-keep of his school, and controversy. In the midst of the dire issues with Stonecoal and Buckskin, Miller was sending and receiving large amounts of correspondence about the school’s functions. The tragedy of the runaway girls seemed to have little emotional impact on Miller except that the investigation and search was taken from the Greenville school’s budget. His position seemed to be cut out for him, especially in 1917- the midst of the nation-wide controversy over the adequacy and effectiveness of Indian boarding schools.

Dorrington did not complete the full investigation in the short time he was in Greenville and had to ask Miller to collect more testimony. Dorrington’s final report includes this testimony and does not include any of the negative things the girls said during their interview in his summary of the investigation, which shows how skewed the investigation was when sent to the commissioner.

The girls were not properly taken care of after their desertion and the case was not investigated by the BIA until a month after the girls had disappeared.

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272. Letter to Edgar K. Miller to John A. Perry, February 14, 1917.

This tragedy is an example of the resistance and unfair consequences of American Indian girls, the negligence of school officials, and the failure of the paternalistic system as a whole.

## CHAPTER FIVE: THE MISSING AND MURDERED INDIGENOUS WOMEN CRISIS

In 2017, the film *Wind River* premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in the U.S. The fictional film, directed by Taylor Sheridan, is about an FBI agent and a Fish and Wildlife agent who investigate the death of Natalie Hanson, an American Indian woman on the Wind River reservation who was found dead and frozen outside in the middle of winter. Her death was first ruled as death by exposure, identical to Molly's death. The end of the film finds that Hanson was raped and ran for her life, dying as a result of running to safety in the freezing temperatures. The scene prior to the credits displays the following: "While missing person statistics are compiled for every other demographic, none exist for Native American women." Though this movie was technically fictional, Sheridan told NPR that "It's based on thousands of actual stories just like it."<sup>273</sup>

Sheridan's narrative brought the epidemic of MMIW into the spotlight among white Americans in 2017 and was the catalyst for thousands of media articles and interviews about "stolen sisters" - Indigenous women who have been stolen from their families and are missing or murdered. A simple Google search will show articles from media outlets from NPR to local newspapers about MMIW

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273. Taylor Sheridan, interview by Scott Simon, *Movie Interviews*, National Public Radio, August 5, 2017.

and legislation that is being passed to help curtail this problem. During my research for this thesis, despite the seemingly loud media attention around this problem, I heard the same concern from many American Indians that I spoke with- people are not listening, law enforcement is not held accountable, legislation is not enough. This epidemic is not new, nor is it drastically improving with national media attention and acknowledgement by white Americans.

#### United States Media and MMIW

In 2018, Mollie Tibbetts, a white woman, was kidnapped and murdered while she was jogging near her home in Iowa. Her picture and name were plastered all over the news for months and her killer was found just one month after her disappearance. In 2005, Natalee Holloway, a white woman, disappeared on a trip in Aruba and was declared legally dead in 2012, despite never finding her remains. In 2002, Laci Peterson, a white woman, was reported missing in Modesto, California and her remains were found a few months later. In 2001, Chandra Levy, a white woman, disappeared from Washington, D.C.; her remains were found one year later in Rock Creek Park. When a white woman goes missing, it is a common occurrence for the story to gain quick traction in the national news. The images of these women remain in a Google search for years. Their tragic stories become Lifetime films and Netflix documentaries and people remember their names. The rates that white women go missing or are murdered are tracked in national statistics every year. Opposing this are the statistics of

American Indian women who are murdered or go missing “at rates 10 times higher than the national average” but “95 percent of these cases go undocumented or unreported by national news media.”<sup>274</sup> There is a massive discrepancy between how missing and murdered white women are treated versus how their American Indian counterparts are treated. This is one of the reasons for the MMIW movement.

### MMIW Advocates

Many people from American Indian communities have dedicated their lives to educating people about the MMIW crisis, from scholars to high school students. Annita Lucchesi (Cheyenne), a PhD student in Geography at the University of Arizona, created the first database that collects information on MMIW in the United States which now belongs to the Sovereign Bodies Institute (SBI). Isabella Madrigal (Cahuilla) is a high school student at the Orange County School of the Arts who wrote, directed, and performs in a play titled *Menil and Her Heart*, a story about MMIW. These women are just few of the many who are trying to create much-needed awareness around the MMIW crisis in the U.S. and beyond.

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274. Isabella Madrigal, “Young Women of Color Making History: Isabella Madrigal,” *Center for Law and Social Policy* (blog), March 26, 2020, <https://www.clasp.org/blog/young-women-color-making-history-isabella-madrigal>.

Lucchesi founded the MMIW database that is now run by SBI and continues to serve as the executive director. A survivor of domestic violence and human trafficking, Lucchesi created the first system that keeps track of MMIW. Her research and work have helped to create more awareness about the MMIW epidemic in the U.S. and she has pioneered a tangible way to work toward solving this crisis. She is currently working on her dissertation which “examines the intersections of Indigenous data sovereignty, violence against Indigenous women and girls, and cartography, by studying how data on colonial sexual violence and mapping technologies are utilized in tandem to subjugate Indigenous women and girls and occupy Indigenous homelands.” Lucchesi’s work is vital to creating both awareness and a solution for the MMIW crisis.<sup>275</sup>

In February 2019, Madrigal performed her own play about MMIW in front of a community gathered at the Dorothy Ramon Learning Center during the Native Voices Poetry Festival in the small town of Banning, California. This play resonated strongly with the local community and soon spread like wildfire across the state and the country. Madrigal has been interviewed by a plethora of Southern California media outlets and most recently appeared on the Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP) website. She believes her play “creates an opportunity for people to speak their truth, and when people speak their truth,

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275. Annita Lucchesi, Annita Lucchesi’s webpage, accessed October 10, 2019, <https://www.annitalucchesi.com/>.

they become visible.”<sup>276</sup> Madrigal’s use of art combined with social justice makes the MMIW crisis more relatable within communities and, similar to Judith Lowry’s painting, finally gives a voice to stolen American Indian women and their families. Madrigal’s work is admirable and telling of the long-lasting, intergenerational trauma caused by this crisis.

### MMIW and Social Media

Social media is an extremely vital source for American Indian communities who have lost their family members. Due to an exceptionally common lack of law enforcement investigations into MMIW cases, families are forced to publish their traumatic stories in order to gain traction and awareness to help find their missing relatives. Public Facebook pages that are dedicated to finding MMIW and men include “Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women USA,” “Missing and Murdered Native Americans,” “Missing Flowers: Missing Murdered Indigenous Women & Men,” “Walking the Healing Path, Inc.,” “Indian Country’s Missing,” and many others. These pages are run either by American Indians or people who are directly involved in the MMIW crisis. This tactic is necessary because, until recently, MMIW have not gotten the media attention that missing and murdered white women receive. Further, reaching out has helped families reunite with their loved ones and find resolution in MMIW cases.

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276. Isabella Madrigal, “Young Women of Color Making History: Isabella Madrigal,” *Center for Law and Social Policy* (blog), March 26, 2020, <https://www.clasp.org/blog/young-women-color-making-history-isabella-madrigal>.

New missing persons are posted daily to social media because reporting them to law enforcement does not initiate the effort needed to find them. Social media is a necessary outlet for awareness utilized by American Indian communities.

### Law Enforcement: Hypothermia and Exposure as a Scapegoat in MMIW Cases

It would be unfair and illogical to say that law enforcement is the only factor in issues with MMIW or that no law enforcement follows through with MMIW cases. Money, expertise, and manpower are lacking in multiple areas where people go missing which is one factor that can render law enforcement officials unable to properly investigate. However, improper investigations still make this crisis a deeply rooted systemic problem that is unacceptable, disproportionately impacts American Indian families, and does not remove the responsibility from these agencies in performing thorough investigations.

Death by hypothermia and exposure is a common cause of death determined by law enforcement and coroners in order to avoid further investigation into MMIW cases, whether intentionally or not, both today and in the past as evidenced by the Greenville Investigation and current MMIW cases. Molly's death was ruled as death by "exposure and freezing," despite evidence that any reasonable person would conclude puts the school officials at the Greenville School partially at fault for poor conditions and lack of care. Buckskin's death was not investigated because she succumbed to her injuries sustained



from freezing, despite evidence that the search party forced her out into the cold again in order to search for Molly and Stonecoal, perpetuating Bucksin's injuries.

Currently, there are hundreds, if not thousands, of MMIW cases which have not been investigated properly. Mariah High Hawk was found dead under a utility trailer. Law enforcement ruled her death accidental and caused by hypothermia despite information that she was in an abusive relationship and was locked out in freezing temperatures without a phone to call for help. High Hawk had bruises all over her face when she was found and these injuries were not investigated.<sup>277</sup>

Selena Not Afraid (Crow and Nakota) disappeared on New Year's Day 2020 and her body was later found and ruled accidental due to hypothermia. Her family believes that foul play was involved based on eye-witness testimony and because an AMBER alert (an emergency alert dispersed to the public when a child is abducted or goes missing) was never sent out during the search.<sup>278</sup> Not Afraid's family is attempting to get justice for her according to media outlets.

Unfortunately, these cases are only a few of the thousands that have not been given proper attention or justice. American Indian families are left to their own devices while law enforcement concludes hypothermia as the cause of

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277. "The Mysterious Death of Mariah High Hawk," *Justice for Native Women*, last modified February 1, 2018, <http://www.justicefornativewomen.com/2018/02/the-mysterious-death-of-mariah-high.html>.

278. McBride, Jessica. "Selena Not Afraid: Body of Montana Teen Found." *Heavy*. March 18, 2020. <https://heavy.com/news/2020/01/selena-selina-not-afraid-notafraid-missing/>.

death and moves on. Law enforcement agencies are the only protection these communities have, and that protection is often rendered inept. Over one hundred years ago, Molly and Buckskin's lives were taken and their murderers were never brought to justice by the "great father." One hundred years later, stories like Molly's and Buckskin's are still a common occurrence, despite new legislation.

### MMIW Legislation

Between 1917 and 2020, American Indians have gained citizenship and other rights, so too has legislation been passed to help find missing and murdered people and bring their kidnappers and killers to justice. Most recently on the federal level, the Not Invisible Act of 2019, H.R. 2438 aims to create a joint commitment between the federal government, victim advocates, and local law enforcement to work to track and prevent MMIW. This bill recognizes the disproportionate numbers of American Indian and Alaskan Native women who go missing and has not yet been passed by the House or the Senate.<sup>279</sup> Savanna's Act, S. 227 is the second version of this bill and "directs the Department of Justice (DOJ) to review, revise, and develop law enforcement and justice protocols to address missing and murdered Native Americans."<sup>280</sup> This bill was passed by the Senate and is waiting to be passed by the House. Studying the Missing and Murdered Indian Crisis Act of 2019, H.R. 2029 "requires the

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279. *Not Invisible Act of 2019*, H.R.2438, 116th Cong., 1st sess.

280. *Savanna's Act*, S.227, 116th Cong., 2d sess.

Government Accountability Office to report on the response of law enforcement agencies to reports of missing or murdered Native Americans and to make recommendations on how to improve the utilized databases and notification systems.”<sup>281</sup> This bill has not been passed by the House or the Senate. The Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2019, H.R. 1585, which was originally passed in 1994 in order to protect victims from domestic violence, is currently stalled in the Senate.<sup>282</sup> Though this new legislation is a forward step in the right direction, a common complaint from those who are directly impacted by the MMIW crisis is that until law enforcement on all levels is held accountable, American Indian women will continue to be abused and they will not get the justice they deserve that is already given to white women. Further, none of this seemingly common-sense legislation has been enacted, thus perpetuating the severe injustices faced by American Indian women throughout U.S. history.

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281. *Studying the Missing and Murdered Indian Crisis Act of 2019*, H.R.2029, 116th Cong., 1st sess.

282. *Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2019*, H.R.1585, 116th Cong., 1st sess., to reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act of 1994 and for other purposes.

## CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

Despite the over one-hundred year difference between the contemporary MMIW crisis and the Greenville Investigation, American Indian women continue to experience the same lack of justice, ignorant paternalism, scapegoating, and victim-blaming that their ancestors suffered from in the past. The so-called “great father” continues to be a figurehead and nothing more when it comes to the protection of American Indians who are in crisis as a result of trauma and racism imposed by the “great father.” Dorrington’s investigation parallels the investigations of Not Afraid, High Hawk, and thousands of other American Indian women who were never given true justice. Though the MMIW crisis was recently acknowledged by white Americans and the U.S. government, this epidemic has impacted American Indian families since colonization began in the United States; the boarding school system is just one instance of this problem.

I wrote this thesis to give a voice to Edith Buckskin, Katherine Dick, Rosa James, Elweza Stonecoal, and Molly Lowry. In the process, I found that their experiences paralleled the experiences of American Indian women today; all of these women deserve equal acknowledgement and justice when they are abused. Miller and Hancock, as representatives of the BIA and the only adults in charge of the Greenville school, displayed extreme negligence toward their

students and failed to take any responsibility in Molly and Buckskin's death.

Dorrington, as a representative of the BIA, failed in his investigation of Molly's death by failing to investigate further than Miller. The search party failed Buckskin by forcing her back into freezing conditions despite her obvious injuries.

Currently, law enforcement officials who stop their investigations at hypothermia, despite evidence of foul-play, fail their communities and their oath to protect them. The U.S. government as a whole has undeniably failed American Indians in both the past and present by accepting minimal responsibility, accountability, and action on the MMIW epidemic and failing to pass any common-sense legislation that could help curtail this crisis.

My hope with this thesis is to create more awareness of MMIW so others may write more narratives and provide more enlightenment on this topic at a scholarly level. As scholars learn more about the gross mistreatment of American Indians, it becomes more evident that assimilating American Indians was never the goal; rather, the U.S. government has constantly attempted to erase American Indians from American society. MMIW's lack of justice is yet another example of literally erasing American Indians from their own land. Madrigal's words embody the fight American Indians face daily- "It is all too easy to continue to ignore the violence Indigenous girls face. To say their suffering

doesn't exist. That we don't exist. But we do, and it's worth the fight to be seen."<sup>283</sup>

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283. Isabella Madrigal, "Young Women of Color Making History: Isabella Madrigal," *Center for Law and Social Policy* (blog), March 26, 2020, <https://www.clasp.org/blog/young-women-color-making-history-isabella-madrigal>.

## METHODOLOGY

When I began the Interdisciplinary Studies MA program, I was working as a research consultant for the Luiseño Band of Pechanga Indians and had already taken an interest in American Indian studies from my work as an undergraduate student. My experiences as a National Park Service Park Ranger during my undergraduate studies introduced me to Mark David Spence's *Dispossessing the Wilderness* which inspired my senior paper about the displacement of the Yosemite Indians. Upon my acceptance into CSU, San Bernardino's Interdisciplinary Studies graduate program, I was clueless as to what I would write about for my thesis. I watched the film *Wind River* on Netflix during my first quarter and was jarred by the story and the title card at the end- American Indian women are not included in missing-persons statistics. I had never heard of this before and I knew I wanted to write about it.

My advisor, Professor Dr. Thomas Long, informed me of documents he recalled browsing through that were about girls who went missing from an Indian boarding school in Northern California. I reached out to the National Archives in San Bruno, California and the archivist scanned and emailed the Greenville Investigation file to me. I utilized these documents for a draft literature review assignment for my Advanced Public History course with Dr. Cherstin Lyon.

Most of my research included reading the Greenville Investigation file in its entirety and going through public organizations on Facebook that were involved in the MMIW movement. This research was predominantly qualitative; I specifically utilized the narrative method and the phenomenology method. I gathered primary documents, including the Greenville Investigation, census lists, military lists, and newspaper articles which I put together throughout my writing. I then interpreted and studied the current MMIW crisis from the viewpoint of various media outlets. I came to my own interpretation and findings by connecting my findings from both methods.

I found a plethora of public Facebook pages both in and outside of the U.S. that were dedicated to the MMIW crisis. Public Facebook pages gave me an idea of how widespread the MMIW problem is throughout the United States, which is how I learned about High Hawk, Not Afraid, and other American Indian people who go missing daily.

For my literature review, I researched a plethora of books and scholarly journal articles that discussed American Indian history, Indian education history, and personal narratives from students who were in the Indian boarding school system in the United States. Through this research, I found Judith Lowry's painting. I also utilized Google to find media sources about MMIW and I discovered multiple articles in which Lucchesi was interviewed. During my research, I was unable to find any scholarly sources that could parallel my thesis.



Due to the lack of scholarly MMIW-boarding school narratives, I decided that my research was vital to the historical field.

I utilized both Ancestry.com and Newspapers.com, extensively, for my primary documents, such as the census documents and newspaper articles. These documents helped me learn more about the people involved in the Greenville Investigation, especially Dorrington, and to gain more information about the Greenville School. I found multiple newspaper articles about the Greenville school, Dorrington, and runaway students from the Greenville school and other schools. I also found census records for Dorrington, Buckskin, and Stonecoal and military records for Dorrington. These websites gave me context and background information regarding people involved in the Greenville Investigation without requiring me to comb through archives that were located far away from my home and became inaccessible during the COVID-19 outbreak.

I used all of the background and scholarly information I accessed to analyze the Greenville Investigation documents. Through my analysis of the Greenville documents, I found obvious negligence on behalf of the BIA and school officials which became a pattern once I analyzed the information I gained from MMIW cases that have occurred in the last few years. Hypothermia as a cause of death for MMIW in the past and present was a very specific pattern that I found in my research; investigators in the past and present stopped investigating once hypothermia was ruled as the cause of death despite other evidence that might lead to homicide. All of the information I studied led me to my

conclusion that the same issues that occurred during the Greenville Investigation are still occurring to this day during MMIW investigations.

I wrote historical background information into my thesis to provide readers with proper context into Indian education and the Greenville School. This context is necessary in order to understand the ideas that created Indian boarding schools and the Eurocentric beliefs that forced assimilation and inequality onto American Indians. The trauma from these decisions carries through to today, exacerbating the MMIW crisis. My research shows that paternalism and negligence are still proving to be an issue for American Indian communities and their missing today, strikingly similar to 1917.

## TERMINOLOGY

**“The Indian Problem”-** Nelson Miles wrote *The Indian Problem* in 1879 which asked, “What shall be done with the Indians?” (p. 304). The “problem” with Indians was that European-Americans did not know what place Indians could have in the United States. This “problem” was asked throughout the boarding-school era because government officials and the public realized assimilation would not work not would their idea of “civilization.”

**The Great Father-** Prucha defines the Great Father- “It was common for Indians to refer to the president (head and symbol of the United States government) as the Great Father, and the term was adopted by government officials as well. It was an appropriate usage for the paternalistic attitude of the federal government toward the Indians as dependent children.” Xxviii, *The Great Father*

**Desertion-** I do not use this term in my thesis but it is a common term used for American Indian students who ran away in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries because it was a military term used to describe soldiers illegally abandoned their post.

Describing runaways as deserters implied that students who ran away were being disloyal. Scott Riney, *The Rapid City Indian School, 1898-1933* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999), 149.

**Paternalism-** Eugene Genovese’s seminal work titled *Roll, Jordan, Roll* (1974) defines paternalism as a relationship which “grew out of the necessity to

discipline and morally justify a system of exploitation” and insisted “upon mutual obligations- duties, responsibilities, and ultimately even rights- [which] implicitly recognized the slaves’ humanity.”

**Resistance-** David Wallace Adams who defines resistance as “ways of extracting joy, or at least satisfaction, in an institutional setting hegemonically oppressive in so many of its features.” (Page 57 Boarding School Blues)

**Runaway-** A form of resistance that Indian students participated in when they left the school grounds without permission from school authorities.

**Special Agent (different from Agent)-** As defined by Eugene E. White in *Service on the Indian Reservations* (1893) “The duty of the special agents and inspectors is to visit and inspect the Agencies from time to time, and investigate all complaints concerning the Indians or affairs on the Reservations. Special Agents are also often detailed to serve as agents for indefinite terms. The Special Agents are under the immediate direction and control of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, and the Inspectors are in like manner subordinate to the Secretary of the Interior.” (p. 3)

**American Indian-** Indigenous people to North America.

**Indian education-** K. and T. Tsianina Lomawaima’s definition “When scholars refer to ‘Indian education’ of the past two centuries, we usually mean the education of Indians by others. The education of American Indian people by others- by missionaries, federal employees, or public school teachers- has been

shaped by policies and curricula largely uninfluenced by Indian people themselves.” (Estelle Reel p. 5)

**Off-reservation boarding school-** Education institutions for American Indian students not on reservation land. Students were sent either forcibly or optional.<sup>284</sup>

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284. Refer to Appendix A for off-reservation boarding school student enrollment compared to other schools.

APPENDIX A:  
DISTRIBUTION OF INDIAN STUDENTS BY INSTITUTIONAL TYPE, 1900-1925

Distribution of Indian Students by Institutional Type, 1900-1925

	1900	1905	1910	1915	1920	1925
<b><i>Government Schools</i></b>						
Off-reservation boarding	7,430	9,736	8,863	10,791	10,198	8,542
Reservation boarding	9,604	11,402	10,765	9,899	9,433	10,615
Day schools	5,090	4,399	7,152	7,270	5,765	4,604
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>22,124</b>	<b>25,537</b>	<b>26,780</b>	<b>27,960</b>	<b>25,396</b>	<b>23,761</b>
<b><i>Public Schools</i></b>	246	84	2,722	26,438	30,858	34,452
<b><i>Other- Mission, private, state institutions- contract and noncontract</i></b>	4,081	4,485	5,150	5,049	5,546	7,280
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>26,451</b>	<b>30,106</b>	<b>34,652</b>	<b>59,447</b>	<b>61,800</b>	<b>65,493</b>

*Source: Adams, Education for Extinction*, 320 from Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs (ARCIA), 1900, 22; ARCIA, 1905, 50; ARCIA, 1910, 56; ARCIA, 1915, 51; ARCIA, 1920, 147; and ARCIA, 1925, 51.



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