Native American Boarding Schools: Stories of Resilience in the Face of Assimilation

Capstone Project

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to all the innocent, beautiful Native American children whose lives were forever changed because of the boarding school assimilation policy. Their suffering, their courage will not be forgotten. The intent of this project is to bring to light the hidden history of suffering these children endured, but also to emphasize the resiliency that is the Native American spirit.

I also would like to add a special dedication to the memory of my parents, Ray and Betty Peterson. The life-long encouragement that I received from them has carried me through, not only this project, but through my life. Mom, I will remember your words to me and I promise to always "fight the good fight."

Abstract

This research investigated the boarding school stories of three Native American's; Esther Burnett Horne, Adam Fortunate Eagle, and Paul Buffalo. All had attended different Midwest boarding schools, and some during different eras of the boarding school years. The perspective on different boarding schools and the different eras showed the changes that occurred during those years and how government and cultural attitude began to shift.

The focus of this research shows how these individuals were able to find their innate *resilience*.

In addition to *resilience*, other themes manifested; *security*, *militaristic education,* and the relationship with *boarding school staff.*

The outcome of the research shows that the presence and guidance of Native American staff at the boarding schools, along with other Native American children, allowed these three individuals to maintain their *Indian identity* against the overwhelming assimilistic tactics of the United States government among the confines of militaristic schools.

Native American children found boarding school staff, especially Native American staff, to be their connection to hope. With the proper tools, these Native American children showed great *resilience* in the face of assimilation. The guidance of the *boarding School staff*, was the core reason that, Essie Burnett Horner, Adam Fortunate Eagle and Paul Buffalo found the pathway to success. The presence of *security* bolstered them, in spite of the *militaristic education* they received, and allowed them to persevere. They were equipped with the right tools to navigate the uncertain terrain of their lives, and were able to follow the good red road.

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Chapter One

Introduction

The last great Indian war was against Native American children. Boarding schools were an attempt to erase Indian people through assimilation, and the American government had the perfect

Victim-Indian children. Adams (1995) showed that it was widely accepted by most government officials that any attempt to integrate adult Indians into American society was futile. As "the older

generation of Indians was incapable of being civilized," (p.18).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the stories of three Native American boarding school students, Esther Burnett Horne, Adam Fortunate Eagle, and Paul Buffalo. These individuals, all of whom attended Midwest boarding schools during varying eras, shared their stories of resilience during times of wanton cultural identity destruction.

Background and Significance of the Study

When you hear the term, "Boarding Schools" what comes to mind? Rich children sent away to military boarding school or a prep school? Most people automatically equate boarding schools with the rich. However, the first boarding schools were anything but for the rich and privileged. In fact, the reason we do not automatically add Native American Boarding schools to the list is because they have been kept hidden-well hidden from our history education. The Native American children who were forced to attend boarding schools were most often left with trauma from a cultural wound that continues to fester from generation to generation in the Native American communities. This part of our American education is steeped in assimilation if not in

attempted annihilation of a culture. The abuse that was so dominant in these schools has left generations of Native Americans in a state of generational trauma. There are countless stories of the horrors that these Native American children faced at the hands of cruel White teachers and staff at these schools. While most researchers have focused primarily upon the trauma of these Native American faced, there is a need to unearth those stories that we have not heard. The children that persevered in the face of such trauma, went on to forge strong bonds of friendship, and gained personal success. That success being their own personal triumph against their oppressor-the dominant White culture. While the goal of the United States government was to absorb the Indian children into the White culture by dismembering the Native Culture, what really happened was that "Indians became more alike. They learned bits of each other's languages, and everyone learned English. Graduates married into other tribes. Summer celebrations on reservations became increasingly intertribal. New political alliances were forged. And for better or for worse, the schools became a part of their histories" (Child, 2000, p. 4).

Many American Indian leaders emerged from boarding schools, "The stories of these Native Americans defy a particular cultural "fit" those who did find their way through the boarding school trauma brought with them fond memories. Horne and McBeth (1999) proved that there was life long bonds of friendship love and respect; a sense of belonging, safety and structure. Intense Indian pride/school pride. Others felt the need to take care of their siblings, therefore desired an education. "I was the oldest girl, so I had to take care of the younger ones. I wanted and education" (Lomawaima, 1995, p. 34).

Emmirch (1991) illuminated another aspect of Indian education, the Native American field matrons. Educated and prepped in the American culture of their time, they took

their training back to the reservations to help others. Even at a young age, many Indian children knew they had to have an education in order for their people to go on (de Leon, 1997).

Intergenerational trauma, a very real fallout of the boarding school era for many Native Americans, also has its critics from those who also went through the boarding schools system. Trimble (2011) states that while he recognizes intergenerational trauma, he also questions the continual need to excuse one's own decisions and actions, and use intergenerational trauma to defend the poverty, and many other modern negative social cultural issues in which many Native Americans find themselves. The Native American community has gathered to assemble the Wellbriety Movement (Lajimodiere, 2012) for healing the trauma that does still echo for many through the generations. While not all Indian children suffered from this either personally from experiencing the boarding school life, or through a family member who has suffered abuses from the boarding schools, the need for healing is very real. As the aftershocks and the negative impacts of assimilation continue to reverberate through Indian communities. It is important to locate the balance of stories. The need to see the experience of the boarding schools from many angles through many perspectives of Native Americans.

Setting

The focus of this research was on three individuals who had attended Midwest boarding schools and later became prominent members of their communities. This study utilized tertiary resources such as autobiographies, biographies, academic journals, books, documentaries, as well as photographs. Most of these sources focused on subjects in the Midwest with the exception of the photographic evidence.

Assumptions

The goal of this research is to uncover examples of the missing stories and resilient experiences of Native American children in boarding schools. The researcher wishes to show other perspectives from Native Americans regarding their personal experiences during their time in boarding schools. There is a need to not only provide the dark side of the boarding school life of Indian children, but also to illuminate the existing stories of those who were emboldened by their experiences. The researcher also wants to note that the traumas, abuses suffered by so many children are not being dismissed, nor devalued in this research. The aim here is to bring to light other voices that we have not heard from or know little about.

Definitions

- Assimilation - The process of being absorbed into another culture.
- Government run boarding schools - These are schools run by the United States government.
- Intergenerational trauma - Trauma that begins with a first generation and is transferred onto subsequent generations.
- Off reservation boarding schools/or government run boarding schools - Residential schools located away from reservations.
- Reservation boarding schools/or Day Schools - These were schools located on the reservation which allowed children to attend school and go back to their homes
- Native American, Indigenous, Indian and American Indian - For the purpose of this project, the researcher has chosen to use the identifying term, *Native American*.

Summary

The overall impact felt by Native Americans because of the boarding schools experience lives on in those Native Americans that attended the schools and those that had struggled to exist within the confine of the school experience. This research explored the stories of those that were able to adapt well and survive in the boarding school environment. There are multitudes of stories that require closer investigation. The negative impacts of the Boarding School experience have been widely documented and researched, but the stories of Native Americans who were able to carve out their own place in White culture also needs to be told. In a program designed to eliminate a culture through assimilation, there are many stories of resilience that require a further look beyond the known and undeniable trauma that the boarding schools inflicted.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Native American Boarding Schools: An Imposed Experience

Native American Boarding Schools legacies were a product of the United States government's attempt to assimilate and destroy Native American culture. According to Stout (2012) "The Chapter in American history of using education, specifically off-reservation government-run boarding schools, as a means to eradicate native languages and cultures and to assimilate native students into the dominant European American society is a misguided, shameful, yet vital piece of American history" (Stout, 2012, p. 119).

As Stout's book attests, students had to learn to live in two worlds. Many became cultural mediators of their people and were linked between the White and Indian worlds, and not fully embraced by either. Yet this ability to live in two cultures would help to assist their tribes into the future even if their homecomings were not always welcoming. Boarding schools produced a pan-Indian consciousness.

Native Americans went from being prisoners to pupils (as the government saw it) of what began as cultural genocide through assimilation and then changed to education with regimes of Caucasian structure and rules. The last great war was to be against children, leaving lifelong scars upon a culture. Adults were left alone without hopes of educating them because, "the older generation of Indians was incapable of being civilized," (Adams, 1995, p. 18).

Given the brutality and cruelty in which Native American children were ripped from one world and thrown into another, the question naturally arises; are/were there any positive

outcomes of the boarding school experiences? Horne and McBeth (1999) proved that there were life long bonds of friendship, love and respect, a sense of belonging, safety and structure, and intense Indian pride/school pride. Most tribes got along and bonds of commonality and comradery were forged that would not have had they not been thrust together under one roof. Knowledge of others' culture and beliefs were educational in themselves. This raises the question about what enlightening and positive experiences children may have had. They had developed close bonds with one another as well as with teachers. How then did those experiences help shape their futures?

Some Native American children made a choice to embrace the Euro-American values and Culture. Or it may be said that they were, after a time, worn down to accepting this life since day in and day out this is what they had grown to know from a young age. The influences of home quickly vanished; this was especially true of the very young children. There were many stories of children who hated being in the boarding school, but there were also those who wanted to be there. They never attempted to run away, but embraced the White man's knowledge. Lomawaima (1995) enlightens us with a narrative from a student, Rachel, who recounts how she and her brother saw their education differently. "Now see, he went there with resentment…He was critical when he first went in. He did not feel lucky like I did. My older brothers had gone the year before I did but they ran off. I loved the school, and I could not go to school at home. I was the oldest girl, so I had to take care of the younger ones. I wanted an education" (Lomawaima, 1995, p. 34).

Some felt the only way to survive as a culture was to be educated in the White world. Some Native Americans saw this as an opportunity to have food, clothing, safety from disease,

and education. Many Native Americans began to see boarding schools as the only hope for their culture to survive. There were difficult lessons and for many years American Indian children were sent to boarding schools: a policy many say took away their culture and identity. In de Leon's article, "Hard Lessons," (1997) one former student explains that, "They were painful times and yes, it was traumatic," said Campbell, who was sent to DeSmet when he was five. "But I knew even then that it was necessary so we could go on as a people. Our parents saw it as a way of preservation. (The boarding school) protected us from disease and violence. It saved us for the future" (de Leon, 1997, p. 2). The question then is this theory of thought only because the Native Americans had no hope. Or was it because they had been brainwashed from young ages by the militarized education style of the schools?

Boarding schools could forge a bond between tribes, kin, Non-tribal members, and mixed bloods. On the other hand, it could cause quarrels. Friendships were created, but blood ties made a significant difference in the student's experience at a boarding school.

Lopenzina (2003) shows us the life of Native Americans, such as Charles Eastman, who held the belief assimilation was going to save Native Americans. Charles Eastman who was born a Santee Dakota and recalls a childhood of freedom-to his transformation as an educated author lecturer. He could not relate to reservation Indians/he had been raised a free Dakota not as a reservation Indian. There was a disconnect with social/cultural differences. While he fought for Indian rights, he stayed true to White acculturation and values of assimilation.

Adoption of Assimilation or Transformative Cultural Survival?

Even before government boarding schools there were Native American teachers. Many tribes, Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Creek, Seneca, and others, had established

Tribal schools during the 1840's-1850's. These schools educated the future teachers who would teach in the government schools. The idea that tribes had already begun to see the need to change in order to survive in a White world, raises the question as to why these particular tribes did not need to be forced into schools--they created them. How do these Southern/Eastern tribes differ from the Western tribes? A longer history of contact between Whites and Native Americans? Gere (2005) touches on Indian teachers but not as to why these tribes were so different than those of the plains and West.

According to Gere (2005), "Native American teachers actually predated the emergence of government operated Indian schools. In the 1840s and 1850s a number of Native groups in Indian Territory (now Oklahoma) founded boarding schools like Spencer Academy (Choctaw); Wapanucka Institute and Bloomfield Academy (Chickasaw); Tullahasssee Manual Labor School (Creek/Muscogee); Quapaw Boarding School; the Seneca, Wyandot, and Shawnee Boarding School; and the Female Seminary (Cherokee)" Gere, 2005, p. 41).

Indian children's introduction to White schools was confusing, terrifying and painful-both physically and emotionally. "The vast majority had no clear idea at all as to why they were there nor why they had to remain" (Burich, 2007, p. 4). Burich was referring to another Indian School, Thomas Indian School on the Seneca Reservation. This school, while located on the reservation, was not considered a boarding school due to its origins as a missionary school in 1855.

We see that 24 years before Carlisle opened its doors, the Thomas Indian School already had a legacy of assimilating Indian children. Burich (2007) points out, "because missionaries founded Thomas as an orphanage, it has not received the same attention as the better known

federally funded boarding schools. Nevertheless, it predated and lasted longer than many of those schools and it affected many more generations of Indian children from the reservations of New York, where the scars it left are still visible today" (Burich, 2007, p. 1).

The role of boarding school education had one goal: to assimilate Indian children into White society. Watras (2004) points out in an article from Szasz (2005) that, "the federal government sponsored three separate forms of education for Native Americans from 1879-1930. These included industrial vocational boarding schools located outside reservations, vocational boarding schools located on reservations, and day schools on reservations that stressed academic curriculums. Mission schools were a fourth, but separate type of school for Indians" (Watras, 2004, p. 81).

Photographic Evidence of Assimilation

When looking back through the pages of history we are besieged with visual photographic images of what assimilation looked like. In *Images of Assimilation: Photographs of IndianSchools in Arizona,* Eric Margolis and Jeremy Rowe take us on a historical tour of what it looked like to be an Indian child in Arizona boarding schools. Boys and girls, taken from their families, their communities, their culture, and forced to adapt to an often times brutal new existence in the boarding school.

Photographs play an important role in illustrating the shift an Indian child took from their "old identity" in the Indian world to their "new" identity in the White world. As Margolis and Rowe (2004), explain in their two photographs the first, the arrival of a group of 10 Chiricahua Apache children to Carlisle School, "are illustrated of Pratt's effort to use photography to demonstrate the success of his school" (p. 206). In these photographs we see how Pratt and others who used propaganda through Indian photography attempted to prove that assimilation was working. We see through these photographs many symbolic meanings take shape. Some are overt and try to "create" the intended image, as in the case of Pratt's Carlisle pictures. It is a way of showing how the Whites have succeeded in taming the Indians, these savages, into docile, obedient pupils who will be able to be employed, as in the case of girls, as domestic help and that of boys, into the military or as tradesman. It is easy to see from these two propaganda laden images, the assimilation, the brainwashing, the loss of identity and the complete destruction of the Indian spirit within these children. We can find meanings hidden in the photographs. At first glance you see the propaganda, the image the photographer wants you to see, but upon closer analyses one can find the real story.

After leaving school, many Native American women became field matrons. The Office

of Indian Affairs (OIA) tried to attract single and well educated Native American women and Anglo women. Their job was to assist on the reservations, be an educator, nursemaid, and help educate reservation Indian women. They needed the skills that boarding and girl's seminary schools had instilled. Their role was to assist in the transition into new cultural ways. As we are told by Emmerich, (1991). `Reformers had a vision of attracting Native American women who had already been successfully assimilated into the White culture and who had proven to hold the same cultural ideals as her newly adopted White culture. An example of one of the first known Native American Field Matrons adopted into this program was Julia Kocer. "Assimilated and concerned with the welfare of her Arikara peers, she clearly represented the "new" Indian woman the OIA [Office of Indian Affairs] hoped to create. Nonetheless, the field matron corps remained closed to women like her until 1895," (Emmerich, 1991 p. 29). Julia was a half White and half Arikara. A woman of mixed blood, it appears she was trusted more due to her White blood.

However, the admittance of full blooded Native American women into the field matron profession seemed a necessity to the Indian Service Program as the speed in which the tribes were assimilating, if at all, was slow. The service that these Native American women provided to the reservations ran from 1895-1905. As Emmrich maintains, "they played an active and occasionally prominent role in civilization work. Neither their participation nor their visibility, though, could guarantee a permanent place in the program. While field matrons continued their work on reservations until the 1930's, Native American involvement declined rapidly after 1905, and the recorded number of Native American field matrons were "34 Indian women representing a wide range of tribes and levels of assimilation worked as field matrons"

(Emmirch, 1991 p. 30).

First Generation Boarding School Graduates

Graduates such as Charles Eastman and William Apess were both examples of Native Americans to have graduated from the first government run boarding schools. Charles Eastman was an advocate and an employee of the Carlisle Indian School, was with U.S. forces at the Battle of Wounded Knee, a graduate of Dartmouth and Boston College, and a physician. Eastman's father told his son that school was the best option for him. Eastman, according to Lopenzina (2003) lived in both worlds and saw his identity in both despite his emersion in White culture. One observation is that while his life seemingly appeared to be wholly as an advocate for full assimilation, one has to ask why then did he hold onto much of his Indian identity - he did not forsake either, would not relinquish, but also appeared to not fully embrace either identity.

Another well-established Native American and student of White education is William Apess, a Pequot Indian from birth, but raised by Whites, found the Christian Faith through the Methodist Church. As told by Wyss (1999) Apess saw both his "Nativeness" and his indoctrination into the White culture. He published his autobiography, entitled, Son of the Forest (1829) without an editor.

Luther Standing Bear was educated in Carlisle School and had been fully immersed in the doctrines of assimilation. As an adult he realized the error of the White centric ideology. He then fully embraced that changes to the way Native American children were being educated. He saw the need to sustain the Native languages and Native schools of thought so that students would learn their culture through Native American teachers.

Luther Standing Bear in his early years at Carlisle wrote to his father and tried through his letters to assimilate his father. “I want you must give up the Indian way. I know you have given it up a little. But I will say it again you must believe God, obey him and pray to Him. Dear father I know it is very hard for you to do that out there” (Keatah Toh, 1882 p. 4). This is an example of the impact of assimilation, but in Luther’s later years he began to question the ideology he had been taught and became more attuned to the Native American culture. This questioning of assimilation needs to be researched more.

There were very successful tribes that were able to adapt to the assimilation while holding onto their traditions and culture. The Navajo of Arizona are also a prime example of this ability, or rather willingness to adapt to reservation life but to hold onto their way of life. While their story is different in terms of adjustment than that of the Grand Ronde tribes, who became farmers; the Navajo were already farmers and raised stock. This ability to raise stock to sell is what helped the Navajo retain their cultural traditions far more easily than other tribes.

“Historians of the early reservation period have frequently portrayed the reservation experience as destructive, lamenting the loss of Native cultural traditions and the death of appropriate and meaningful replacements” Benson (1991). Yet, even though this school of thought was rampant during this period amongst historians and others, the success of some Native American communities in the United States during the assimilation period had instilled within their own communities a sense of hope instead of despair.

Generational Trauma from Assimilation

Researchers have recently begun to acknowledge intergenerational trauma as a part of direct effects of the boarding schools. The impact is felt through the generations. There are

questions from both Native Americans and Whites as to the value of this idea. Is it theory or fact? Some Native Americans believe in Intergenerational trauma but others see this used as a crutch and seen more of an excuse than a valid truth. Many Native Americans never were affected by abuse or other traumas which have been depicted in the vast boarding school narratives. Charles Trimble, in his article, "I survived Boarding School, unfortunately…," points out that he is, "skeptical of the HT/IGT (historical trauma and Intergenerational trauma) phenomenon, and thus, to the true believers, I am a heretic, an agent of the demon of denial or forgetfulness or truth. I'm not questioning that HT/IGT is real and valid. But I see it being abused by some with personal or political or even economic motives. Even asking pertinent questions brings excoriation and abuse from those zealots of the cause" (Trimble, 2011, p. 16).

The question then is what is the truth and is it that simple? Could it be that first and second-generation boarding school children suffered more frequently and as time wore on, the focus moved away from Native Americans and onto the Great Depression and WWI that trauma and abuse was declining, that the government had given up trying to assimilate them?

In "*A Healing Journey"*, Denise Lajimodiere, an interviewer for the National Boarding School Healing Project, recounts the life of her father and of others. She tells of the stories of many survivors of the boarding schools who are haunted daily by memories. Her father, who was often inebriated to keep the pain at bay "would often state repeatedly, "I just want to be a man, not a fucking Indian" (Lajimodiere, 2012). This is what the boarding school had done to Native Americans: created self-hatred.

There is now a movement of healing taking place. Don Coyhis, a Mohican, has founded the White Bison Center for the Wellbriety Movement. "White Bison offers sobriety, recovery,

addiction prevention, and wellness, Wellbriety learning resources to Native American communities nationwide" (Lajimodiere, 2012 p. 14). Native Americans are healing amongst themselves. They do not require the intrusion of Whites to remedy this. It is a cultural healing that must take place within their own communities because only they know the "Intergenerational trauma" (Don Coyhis) that has taken place. Through education and healing of their own people, they will emerge even stronger, healing but never forgetting the wounds and injustices of the past.

Plenty is written about the trauma of the boarding school experience, but there were also other stories that needed to be told. Stories that depicted resilience and the survival needed to withstand the boarding school life. The search for these stories is what prompted this study.

Chapter Three

Methodology

This research explored the experiences of three Native Americans who attended boarding schools.

This chapter discusses the methodologies used in this research. First, it describes in detail the research design used. Secondly, participants are defined. Thirdly, the role of researcher is explained. Finally, an explanation of the data gathered for this research are presented and a concise summary will conclude the chapter.

Research Design

The researcher has engaged specifically in qualitative research narrative methodology in order to unearth some of the positive themes of their individuals' experiences in boarding schools. This was an aspect of Native American research which hasn't been done before. This study, by using narrative research, captured the shared experiences through documentation.

The individuals who were the focus of this research, Esther (Essie) Burnett Horne, Adam Fortunate Eagle, and Paul Buffalo, were chosen because they fit a select group of criteria. The first and most prominent reason was they were all Native American. Within this criteria, the researcher sought to have at least one female. The second criteria was that they were from the Midwest region and all attended Midwest boarding schools. The third criteria was they had all attended multiple years in boarding schools. They did not have to attend the same boarding school, nor was it necessary they attend during the same years. The final criteria was that access to autobiographical, biographical; and other writings about the individuals that existed. Since

Esther (Essie) Burnett Horne, Adam Fortunate Eagle, and Paul Buffalo all shared this select set of criteria, these individuals were recognized to be the best representatives for this research.

Researcher's Role

The researcher holds a B.A. degree in Anthropology and a minor in History from the University of Minnesota Duluth (UMD). During her undergraduate years she had been invited and had participated as part of the Anishinabe club at UMD. It is through these exposures that her interest in Native American culture began.

Interest in Native American Boarding Schools came years later when the researcher watched a documentary of government run boarding schools and the lasting impact that it had on Native American lives and culture. The researcher was shocked to discover this well-hidden aspect of American History. During the course of the researcher's undergraduate career and even having been a part of the Anishinabe club, this important piece of history had not been revealed. The researcher wanted also to find out why this was and to hopefully bring more attention to this history through sharing of research findings and making these findings available to others.

The researcher found it to be vital to uncover not just the broader hidden history of the boarding schools, but to focus specifically on the children. The researcher payed particular attention to those who attended and survived the boarding schools in order to reveal their stories so that others may become educated; not only about the cultural genocide of Native Americans, but even more importantly, their resilient spirit.

Data Gathering and Analysis

Roxanne Gould, a Grand Traverse Band Odawa/Ojibwe and Assistant Professor of Indigenous Studies and Environmental Education at the University of Minnesota Duluth, played a critical role in this research as a mentor. Professor Gould provided guidance and direction to relevant and insightful academic research done by Native American writers, as well offering first-hand knowledge of prominent events and cultural insight of Native American history. The researcher was guided to collect relevant data through mentored meetings with Professor Gould. Through these meetings, the researcher was able to vet and interpret the data that was collected via credible public documents, autobiographies, biographies documents and academic writings. This was the main research data gathering that was employed.

Visual materials such as paintings, photographs and pictures were also essential components of the process. Images were used by the researcher to emphasize and draw an authentic image to assist in answering the research questions. The data was organized into computer files. Analysis of this qualitative data was done through the use of memos and notes which evolved into the themes used in this research. The researcher then used a coding method called text segment in order to manage those themes which arose from the documents. An emphasis on detailed themes is used throughout the analysis process. Interpretation and validity of the research was completed by employing the expertise of an academic Native American educator and mentor for detail accuracy of the document data from primary sources.

Summary

This qualitative study focused on primary source documents, such as diaries, journals, articles and books. A coding process was used to work through the themes and categories of the

study. Contemporary and historical visual images were also included to help capture the essence of the stories.

Chapter Four

Results and Discussion

This chapter introduces the stories of three very distinct Native American's who attended Midwest boarding schools during three decades: Paul Buffalo (1909-1911); Esther Burnett Horne (1924-1929); and Adam Fortunate Eagle (1935-1945). Each individual had attended a boarding school during a different decade, but appeared to have had some very similar experiences. These decades saw many changes within the boarding school system. It would seem that these Native Americans would have had all very different experiences given the policy changes and turmoil within these government run schools during these decades, but in fact, the opposite appears to be true.

In this chapter the researcher shares the experiences of these individuals, who's stories, while different in many ways, also walk a very similar road in the commonality of shared experiences. Those shared experiences are: security, militaristic education, resilience, and boarding school staff. These three Native Americans in which this chapter is focused show the resilience that each of them found in order to survive. That resilience would help them to overcome, often times insurmountable odds. Those being; regimentation, subpar curriculum, substandard care, homesickness, and loss of cultural identity all which were a common reality during the harsh educational assimilation practices that were present in boarding school system during this era.

Results

The researcher's results provide correlations that tie the three Native Americans experiences together. Various themes emerged during the course of this research providing the

researcher with numerous possibilities of context. In the end, the most prevalent and important themes; *security, militaristic education, resilience and boarding school staff* were chosen to provide the reader with a view of how these Native American's maintained, defied, and chose the path of resilience against the dominant culture.

Throughout this qualitative research, the researcher has chosen a narrative design to report on the results. Photographs of the boarding school era illustrate and provide the reader with another dimension of understanding within the context of the research.

Security

A child's experience when first being told they must be taken away from his/her family is a traumatic event. Yet, this was the norm during the boarding schools years. Many parents, unable to care adequately for their children due to a death of a spouse, economic times, alcoholism, or the inadequate rations provided by the government, many were left with no alternative. Family members, such as aunts, uncles, grandparents, also stepped in when they saw the basic needs of the children were not being met. They realized the need for their security became paramount. During the research of the three participants, four basic needs emerged: A safe place to live, enough food, warm clothing, and finally the bonds of community. So while shelter, food and clothing, the three basic needs of every human are vital, the bonds of community were added because, it was a key element in these three participants' success stories. The bonds of security for these children came from one another, and in some instances staff. Without the existence of these securities, Essie, Adam and Paul, would have had a much more difficult boarding school experience. The shared commonality of a traumatic experience brings people together. Forging bonds that otherwise never would have existed. In the boarding school

experiences we see how children who came from different tribal affiliations, each with distinct customs, shared a vital common denominator-they were all Indigenous children.

Students came together for support. Without their parents, these children turned to one another for the family closeness they so desperately needed. Of course, not all children got along, but overall this sense of community and security became an important part of the children's resilience. According to Essie Horne, "We students nurtured a sense of community among ourselves, and we learned so much from one another. Traditional values, such as sharing and cooperation, helped us to survive culturally at Haskell, even though the schools desired to erase our Indian culture, value, and identities." (Horne & McBeth, 1998, p. 33).

Essie Burnett Horne's White father had died and left her mother, a Shoshone woman, with six young children to raise on her own. This was a common theme among Native Americans and is evidence of how she and other children ended up at boarding school. Horne and McBeth (1998). "Things *had* fallen apart-our family no longer had a mother and father, and we children were left to take care of ourselves and hadn't fared so well. The wheels were set in motion through the Wind River Indian Agency to enroll us at Haskell Institute, a BIA non-reservation boarding school in Lawrence, Kansas" (p. 31). It was her father's brother and her aunt who would initiate those changes.

This main theme is one of the catalysts to willingly send children to the boarding schools. Depending upon the era, depending upon the circumstances and even tribal affiliation, many families had the choice to enroll or not enroll their children. During the *"pilot"* years of the off reservation boarding schools (1880's-1900's) most indigenous peoples had little say, as the government forcibly rounded up children for the boarding schools.

This need for security bleeds into the experiences of the three Native Americans discussed in this research. All three, as in Essie's case, were sent to boarding schools as a last resort. Reservation life was harsh. Life without a mother and father made it even more difficult. When children arrived at their new *"home"* it was not with joy and relief. The trauma of being separated as a young child from everything you have known, whether good or bad, and not having the support of your family or tribal community was traumatic. Some students could not tolerate the separation, and suffered in many ways, even by dying of heartache, others, appear to have found the resilience to navigate their way through a foreign world. For some lucky students, their sense of security and resilience came from their direct link to home. As Brenda Child (2000) explains, "The letters between family members speak for the deepest bonds, able to survive separation and efforts to undermine American Indian families. This essential communication kept young people from feeling abandoned and sustained children and parents alike (p. 100)."

A student since age 5 at Pipestone Indian Training School, Adam Fortunate Eagle shows us a peek into the experience of coming back to the "security" of his surrogate home was not without renewed trauma. Adam Fortunate Eagle (2010) recalls the homesickness in which children experienced.

> I turned six years old on July 18th, and the end of summer brings an end to school vacation and the students go back to school, like ducks and geese flying south for the winter. New students and old students fill the dormitory. The sounds of boys crying in their beds prove that I am not the only lonely boy. I could call it the crying season (p. 31).

This is how Essie, Adam, and Paul saw things when they first began to settle into boarding school life. Aside from the regimentation, the cutting of hair, or the often stripping of given names for Christian names, these three students were thrilled with the fact they always had food, warmth (for the most part) and shelter. While this was not always the case across all boarding schools, for example, the Meriam report of 1928 proved malnutrition and lack of nutritious food was fed to the children. The children's health was also a factor. Some boarding schools provided better care than others. Seeing these things through the lens of a child coming from a harsh reservation life, one must realize that while the quality of the above mentioned securities, were oftentimes not even adequate. However, in contrast to their home on the reservation, they seemed better. This gives us insight into what the state of reservation life must have been when these students considered their boarding school to be better than their home life. Paul Buffalo (Roufs, 1997-2014) states, "after we got in school we had so much fun that we thought we were better off there. We had three meals a day, and a good place to sleep" (para. 16, Chapter 36).

One of the most important forms of security they found in their boarding school experience were those of forging bonds with other children. "The irony of the boarding school experiences lies in the fact that the very institutions trying to destroy Indian cultures and identity also contributed to their strengthening and survival" (Vuckovic, 2008, p. 14). Some staff also proved to be a vitally positive influence in the lives of these students. It is not surprising that many of those important teachers and staff had a common link-they shared an Indigenous heritage.

While there are very dark stories about staff abuse of students at boarding schools, there are also those stories of closeness, respect and even love felt for some of the teachers, house mothers, and other staff that made up the boarding school administration. In all three of the Native American's in this research, there were those whose attentiveness, kindness and warmth helped to buffer the trauma of separation from their families. In the case of Essie, Adam and Paul, the staff they became close to, or felt affection for, were Native American.

Adam Fortunate Eagle's experiences with the staff and his house mother at Pipestone Indian Training School was a positive one given the fact that there were one-hundred boys assigned to three staff. Two of the staff were Mr. and Mrs. Burns who became the children's surrogate parents during their years at Pipestone. The children were comforted. Adam Fortunate Eagle recalls upon his arrival at age five to Pipestone when Mrs. Burns holds him in her arms as he cries. Throughout his years at Pipestone, Adam Fortunate Eagle reminisces about how wonderful both Mr. and Mrs. Burns were to him and to all the children.

The compassion that is shown to the children threads through all three of these student's lives. To say there was an abundance of nurturing may be walking a dangerous line, but the memories of how other students and staff gave them hope, and a sense of belonging made it easier for these children to believe in themselves and provided them with a true sense of security. This feeling of security is especially true in Essie Burnett Horne and Adam Fortunate Eagle's experiences. We see the presence of self -worth. Something that was scarce for many of the students who went through the boarding school experience.

The researcher's conclusion was the sense of security and trust that these particular students felt toward their schools, friends and staff, is clearly *adaptation.* These students had

adapted to a new culture and to the people who existed there. Even though the government schools and their regimentation were pillars of a dominant culture, the realm of the boarding school world for many students clearly proved that it was not the White man's culture and not the Indian culture, but a hybrid culture. This mysterious boarding school culture bred both trauma and hopelessness, but surprisingly, in many instances, it emerged as a culture of hope. In these stories, it gave children purpose and a sense of belonging in an otherwise uncertain world.

It is difficult, even in reading the first-hand accounts, to accept the idea of boarding schools being a place of safe haven and happiness: security. It is contrary to what we know of the generations of suffering and cultural trauma and genocide that the boarding school policy created for so many Native American children. The cost was still high. Having to give up your culture and live away from the influence of family was the lifelong burden they carried. All for the security of their boarding school.

> For many years, Haskell fell short in providing its students with the most basic elements of care: adequate food, shelter, clothing and medical attention. The children were subject to strict discipline, hard labor, and inferior living conditions. Over the years conditions at Haskell improved, but even by the 1920s, the school did not cater to all the children's physical and emotional needs. Despite these shortcomings, many youth were eager to attend, and many students recall their years at Haskell as a positive experience. The children adapted to the circumstances and compensated for the institutions' deficiencies with their great sense of community, friendship, humor, and compassion. (Vuckovic, 2008, p. 84).

This passage from (Vuckovic, 2008) describes the bonds of security that existed with the children at Haskell Institute in Lawrence, Kansas. While the research explains that the three general security aids for survival; shelter, food and clothing were in place, they were not stellar, but did provide the very basic needs. Although in the earlier years, some boarding schools were not much better than home. This was not the case in the three participants of this research.

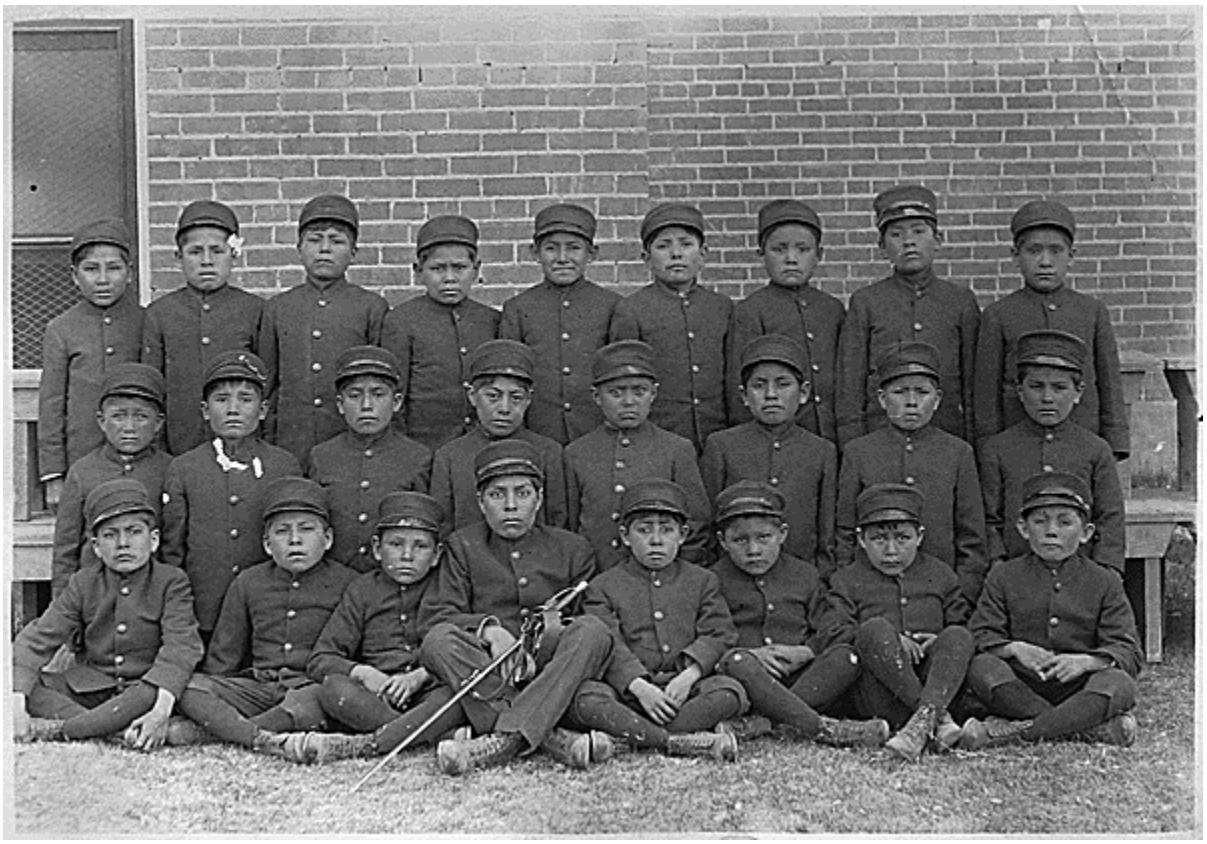
Throughout it all the one constant commonality with all three individuals in this research is the fact that a sense of family persisted, even through the years, miles and many struggles the families faced. These Native Americans still had their family. Emotionally, these students knew that they were loved. They had reassurance with siblings from those still at home or from those they attended school with. They may have been separated physically for short or long periods of time, but the invisible thread of connectedness remained unbroken, even if at times it threatened to. Their sense of cultural identity never completely vanished with the boarding school experience. The resiliency was there. With their own personal sense of humor, and view of their world, they were able to put their own experiences, both good and bad, into perspective.

Militaristic Education

When you look at photographs of boarding school life, especially those of the first 60 years, one obvious theme is present throughout; the children all look like miniature soldiers in an army regime. They embodied the military experience, but not by choice.

The United States armed forces has played a major role in the lives of Native Americans. From the trauma that was induced upon Indigenous peoples of this continent during the colonization of the America's, to Thomas Jefferson's removal of the Cherokee from their lands,

known as the “trail of tears,” to the great plains wars, and everywhere in between, Native American’s were initiated into the dominant culture.



Albuquerque Indian School

The United States government’s first goal was extermination. When that did not work, then it was to corral Native Americans onto lands where they were controlled by the military. When those attempts waned, there was a last resort--take the children. Remove children from everything they have known and mold them into the model soldier. The goal of military boot camp for the average young adult who joins, is to break you down, and then transform you physically and mentally into the collective mindset of a loyal soldier; these children experienced the same treatment. Only it was much more sinister. A malicious attempt to strip them of their

names, their clothing, their hair and their language. It was through brutal means that this was accomplished. “We dressed, we ate, we drilled, we studied and recited our lessons with a precision that left not one minute without its duties” (Churchill, 2004, p. 25). Additionally, Churchill (2004) states, ‘It was a military school,’ wrote Helen Sekaquaptewa of the Phoenix Indian School, which she began to attend in 1915. ‘We marched to the dining room three times a day to band music. We rose to a bell and had a given time for making our beds, cleaning our rooms, and being ready for breakfast. Everything was done on schedule, and there was no time for idleness.’ Boys and girls lined up in uniform each Sunday morning. The boys saluted and the girls held out their hands to be checked; the ‘officers’ noted every flaw in appearance [emphasis original] (Churchill, 2004, p. 165).

This was especially true in the early days of the boarding school era. It was an atmosphere of regimentation spurred along by strict discipline. Even though the future reform policies had changed the harshness of how the children were treated, and the core values of what the boarding schools were first built upon remained. The children from a very young age came to accept that this was normal.

Life in the boarding schools during the early eras had taught young Native American children to survive. Being taken away from home, and learning to overcome homesickness, drilled daily in a regimented militarized school atmosphere. Adam Fortunate Eagle recounts in his book, the boys often played warrior games at Pipestone Indian Training School which helped them learn how to elude an enemy. This helped to mold them into perfect military soldiers. They had a distinct advantage over their White and Black counterparts in boot camp. Of course, the advantage came at a high price: that being freedom. They had already been living as mini

soldiers, many since kindergarten. They had not been given the choice, but they had learned to adapt, they had learned to survive.

Essie Burnett Horne also felt the pull to serve and knew that she would have excelled at being a WAC or a WAVE during World War II, but instead she chose marriage and children and teaching over military service. Horne recounts her military experience while enrolled at Haskell Institute:

> I became a commissioned officer by working my way up through the ranks. One had to demonstrate leadership skills, maintain a superior
>
> academic record, and be knowledgeable about military organization. It became a matter of honor to discipline my best friend or a relative. It was not easy for me to hand out demerits, and it often created hard feelings. I realized that we officers were being used by the school, but like student government bodies today, we were aware that we were being taught self-discipline. While we were encouraged to compete as individuals and to vie with other students for privileges and favor, we also managed to maintain a sense of responsibility to our fellow students. This responsibility to community is part of the Indian way. The intention of military drill may have been to break down tribal values of cooperation, but we found other avenues through which we expressed this strong sense of group responsibility. We nurtured a sense of community among ourselves, which helped us not only to survive the boarding school experience but grow in it and learn from it (Horne & McBeth 1998, p. 34).

Paul Buffalo also had the urge to enlist in the armed forces. He wanted to drop out of school so he could go into the army. Any hope of getting into the Army was abandoned as he

was told he was too young, not eighteen yet and he had problems with his right arm and right leg which disqualified him from being accepted into the armed forces. Paul then returned to finish out the rest of his schooling, but eventually dropped out to become a laborer. This desire to join the armed forces, in spite of the obstacles Paul Buffalo faced showed the impact that a regimented existence had on young minds.

Adam Fortunate Eagle, while not joining the military himself, had all four of his older brothers, Alton, Stanley, Curtis, and Wallace Nordwall enlist into the US military all during World War II and one also during the Korean war. All of them became high ranking. Brother Stanley became a POW for a short time in a German military concentration camp, but escaped. His combat drops during the war were made into Hollywood movies. Stanley received numerous medals of honor, including the purple heart.

Unfortunately, one of his brothers, *didn't* fare as well, The trauma of World War II was too much for Wallace Nordwall to bear, and "he went onto become a quiet and moody alcoholic (Fortunate Eagle, 2010)." Sadly post-traumatic stress destroyed his life and "Wally, was found dead lying next to an abandoned car he called home (p. 153)."

In Red Pedagogy (Grande, 2004) gives us an example of the dominant cultural thought regarding Native American's in military service in a report by the United States Department of Navy. Native Americans have the highest record of service per capita when compared to other ethnic groups. The reasons behind this disproportionate contribution are complex and deeply rooted in traditional American Indian culture. [Native Americans]…have distinctive cultural values, which drive them to serve their country. One such value is their proud warrior tradition…best exemplified by the following qualities said to be inherent to most if not all Native

American societies: strength, honor, pride, devotion, and wisdom. These qualities make a perfect fit with military tradition…Military service affords an outlet for combat that fulfills a culturally determined role for the warrior. Therefore, the military is an opportunity for cultural self-fulfillment. By sending young tribal members off to be warriors, they return with experiences that make them valued members of their society…With the 21st century on the horizon, the United States military can be expected to provide continuing opportunity for Native American men and women. For their part, Native Americans can be expected to carry on their centuries-old warrior tradition-serving with pride, courage, and distinction (Grande, 2004, p. 164).

The researcher found this report to be a glaring example of stereotypical pigeon holing of a people without taking the time to learn about these "warriors" and is a perpetuation of the same assimilationist values that we have seen throughout this research. What is so obvious to anyone who takes the time to do the research is the fact that this *choice* to join the military wasn't typically out of some unanswered, inner yearning. Nor was it a call of their inner "warrior spirit" to put themselves in harm's way for the sake of wanting to serve the same government that had been oppressing them for centuries. Joining the military was one of the few options they had. White culture had seen to that. Trained, and raised to serve, whether it be on a grand scale in the military or by laboring or becoming a domestic servant, regardless of patriotism the factors that shaped their individual decisions were reminiscent of one another. They continued upon the road that had been laid out from their first day at boarding school. However, it was no yellow brick road, and the path they traveled was fraught with challenges and danger. If they were lucky and

had the support of loved ones, friends and community, then maybe they would find their way back onto the good path.

Resilience

Resilience is not something new. It is merely a new term that describes what every human is born with, and in the right environment, has the ability to achieve. This is how HeavyRunner and Marshall (2003) describes resilience, "We like to think about resilience in a positive, proactive way. Resilience is the natural human capacity to navigate life well. It is something every human being has - wisdom, common sense. It means coming to know how you think, who you are spiritually, where you came from and where you are going. The key is learning how to utilize innate resilience, which is the birthright of every human being. It involves our inner spirit and finding a sense of direction" (p. 2).

Resilience in Native American children was not what the US government wanted. Instead, the US government fostered an atmosphere of oppression. Doing everything to eradicate any self-awareness, independent thought, and offered little support or positive reinforcement. If those aspects were present, especially during the eras covered in this research, then they were the exceptions rather than the rule. In the cases of Essie Burnett Horne, Adam Fortunate Eagle and Paul Buffalo, they are some of the exceptions. Then there are those Native Americans who were or still are haunted by dark memories, and whose families have also suffered the residual trauma from their experiences. This is where we see fractured resilience.

Then there are those stories, like Essie's, Adam's and Paul's that make their way to the surface and pause to give hope that maybe even despite the trauma, pain, homesickness, hunger,

and fear, that the spark of resilience was there. It only needed the right conditions to be ignited and to become a quiet burning flame.

Adam Fortunate Eagle is a prime example of resilience. As a five year old boy he suffered the death of his father, and because of his father's death and the inability for his mother to take care of all her eight children he was then sent, along with his five brothers to Pipestone Indian Training School. His introduction was one of fear and confusion, but what immediately separated his experience from those of others was that he was immediately comforted by a staff member who would become one of the centerpieces of his world. Mrs. Burns and her husband were a Native American couple who oversaw the boys and they were a vital life line that gave the boys reason to be proud not only of who they were as individuals, but also as Native Americans.

Adam Fortunate Eagle's resilience was always there within him, but it was nurtured by the staff, by friends, and his family. In his later years, long after his boarding school years, he became known as the "contrary warrior." His charismatic attitude, wit and sense of humor was well known. It was this quality about him that enabled him to overcome adversity easier than those who fought against the boarding school system. Yet, these traits alone would most likely not have been enough to maintain or cultivate his resilience. One of the most necessary pieces of the puzzle was *support.* With support a child's self-esteem and resilience could flourish. A sense of cultural identity was another factor that enabled Native American students to preserve through difficult times. Again, this cultural identity was in most boarding schools, especially in the first few eras were glaringly apparent.

Extinguishing the flame of cultural identity was one of the most important goals of the assimilation policy. However, in many stories, we see Native American staff covertly instilling indigenous pride and tradition in students when they could. With few exceptions, they had to be careful or they risked retaliation if they were caught teaching traditional ways or speaking their languages.

As the policies slowly changed, many schools who had more enlightened superintendents and staff allowed for more freedom of Indigenous expression. Yet, even here there were limitations as to what was allowable.

Essie Burnett Horne also had two inspirational Native American teachers, Ella Deloria and Ruth Muskrat Bronson.

Horne & McBeth (1998) wrote of the women:

> They had a wonderful sense of humor. They taught non-Indian subject matter but had a very strong respect for Indian culture, and they were clever enough to integrate it into the curriculum. They taught their students to have a healthy respect for themselves as individuals and a pride in their heritage. They taught us about Indian values and kept them alive in us (p. 42).

While Paul Buffalo doesn't give us the same sense of closeness that Adam and Essie shared with their teachers, his experiences were far more optimistic than many of the traumatic stories that exist. One thing he never lost was his ability to speak Ojibwe. In the first three years he attended boarding schools in Northern Minnesota, he never forgot how to speak his own language. During the turn of the century, it was still forbidden to speak anything other than

English. Many children forgot, but Paul never did. He even helped other Ojibwe students learn to speak their language.

Boarding School Staff

There are countless heartbreaking stories of children who desperately tried to flee the boarding schools, often dying in the process of trying to get back to their families. We see, too those students who refused to go home and wanted to stay at school. Why would children willingly want to stay all year long? None were orphaned or unloved by their families. Yet, we see the common ties of stability and attachment which these three Native Americans had for the staff and the institutions they attended (Horne & McBeth, 1998). Looking back, Essie expresses her feelings for two of her teachers at Haskell, "I have the fondest memories of my Haskell teachers. They seemed to care about me and the other students there; they knew that they were our family, as well as our role models" (p. 44). Essie Burnett Horne and Adam Fortunate Eagle both felt very close to the staff members who appear to have become surrogate family members.

Paul Buffalo, while not returning home for the first three years of his boarding school experience and being transferred to many different schools, still described the affection he felt, not specifically to any one staff member, but to the institution as a whole - to the government schools.

Roufs (1997-2014) reported Paul Buffalo as saying:

> I enjoyed the boarding school where we stayed. I stayed there three years without going home. I didn't want to go home. I just wanted to stay there because they had good schooling. We had night watches, night watchmen, to take care of us. In my times we were dressed good. We went to school good. We had good teachers. I could name quite

a few schools I went to. I think I appreciated everything I went through, because I enjoyed it (Para. 111, Chapter 36).

Throughout this research, the one defining theme that stands out above the rest is the presence of the Native American staff and their impact on these students. These were the people who had the power through sometimes just their presence to keep these children's spirits alive. The staff were the ones who attempted to make an abnormal situation as normal as possible. They invoked hope and self-esteem in those children who had little of either.

Horne, Fortunate Eagle and Buffalo speak very fondly of the staff. The Native American staff that worked for the government run boarding schools had been through the trauma themselves, and knew what the children faced. While they too may have lost the connection to their own tribes, they attempted to keep alive in these students a sense of pride and community. They did not let them forget who they were or where they came from. Some could openly speak their language in these schools, others could not. Even when the latter was the rule, there were always ways the staff could covertly keep that thread of knowledge alive in the children, and teach them the ways of other tribes as well.

The Native American staff, while having been molded into what the White administrators deemed as assimilated, did not forget easily or cast aside the traditions and teachings that were in every fiber of their being. They passed on what they could, with the knowledge they had to the children. It was a heroic attempt to keep their hope and spirits alive, but also to keep the Native American culture alive.

The staff were looked upon as surrogate parents and mentors. They were role models that these children could aspire to be like. They were the bright beacon, at the center of what

was a dark period in our history. Had the White administrators realized what was transpiring under their nose, the roles of Native Americans as educators within the government boarding schools may very well have ended.

As Lomawaima & McCarty (2006) explain:

> Native teachers were scattered throughout the Indian Service from the early years of the century, and their numbers grew as the century progressed. Some like Qoyawayma, were able to teach in their home communities, but many taught among the communities of other tribes, as Horne did throughout her career. The majority of students in the system never experienced a classroom with a Native teacher, but the few who did might remember their influence as long as they lived, just as Essie remembered Ruth Bronson and Ella Deloria (p. 81).

We should ask what indeed would have happened if there had not been Native American staff there to help guide and support these children? While many well intentioned White staff would have tried to bolster children, there is doubt that the outcome would have been the same, especially for these three individuals. The Native American staff were their lifeline to their culture.

Summary

These are just a few stories of Native American's whose resiliency transcended a traumatic and culturally devastating event in our American history. Emerging from this research were the themes of security, militaristic education, boarding school staff, and resiliency. This shows that while the White dominant culture's policy to assimilate and eradicate the traditional culture of Native Americans tried and succeeded to destroy many lives, it did not manage to rob

these three Native Americans of their spirits. However, the experiences still came at a great cost - their freedom. Freedom they lost to be home with family, helping their extended families and tribal communities. They lost years of traditional gatherings and ceremonies with family and friends. They may have lost years, but these students did not lose themselves. In spite of growing up under a regimented, militaristic education, because of the guidance and support of the Native American staff and teachers, an internal safety net was woven. Because of the support network that each one had, they survived: they persevered against all odds. Due to this resiliency and this knowledge base, Essie Burnett Horne, Adam Fortunate Eagle and Paul Buffalo have all been able to impart to others the courage to rise above assimilation. Through their voices extends an outward web of support and wisdom to future generations in hopes that they too can reveal their own resilient spirit.

Chapter Five

Summary and Conclusions

This research focused on three Native American boarding school students who either went onto a career in education, or who educated their communities and the public through their experiences. The voices of Essie Burnett Horne, Adam Fortunate Eagle and Paul Buffalo breathe life into the research. For it is through their stories, that the researcher was afforded a different perspective on the boarding school experience. Each of these Native American's went on to educate others. Essie Burnett Horne, dedicated her life to education, teaching other Native American children from all tribes. Adam Fortunate Eagle became a businessman, writer, storyteller, and educational activist. Through his Indian activism, he educated the world on the civil rights of Native Americans. Paul Buffalo also made his imprint in education by imparting his knowledge and life story by means of an Ethnographic Biography.

Roufs (1997-2014) stated:

> Paul's mother told him, You are the oldest and I have taught you my ways. Someday someone will ask you about these things. I have dreamed of that. Keep these things that I have taught. Someday people will want to hear about them again. As his mother had foreseen, Paul had found the person his mother had dreamed about. (Para. 1, Chap 1).

The researcher chose to use autobiographical such as Paul Buffalo's Ethnographic Biography (Roufs, 1997-2004) as well as biographical sources that would lend a more credible, authentic voice to the research of boarding schools. Each source brought emotion, and a frankness to their words that allowed me to build on this research.

The researcher also sought out and reviewed scholarly works, many from Indigenous scholars, which gave me a clearer approach to this research while lending a necessary Indigenous voice to this research. This literature review afforded a holistic approach and understanding to the trauma invoked by the government boarding school experiment.

Significant Findings

At the onset of this project, the researcher studied the literature and what was discovered, while helpful, did not answer the questions of how Native Americans made the boarding schools endurable by forging close bonds with other Native American children and with the boarding school staff. Nor, for the few success stories, exactly what set those Native American children apart from countless others that had reported such horrible experiences. The researcher felt it was a mystery to uncover, and one that needed research. It was a vital missing piece to the culturally devastating puzzle, which our United States government had created.

As the research progressed, the researcher quickly noted the threads of commonality in the three person accounts. Most significantly are the four defining themes. Those being: ***security*** (a safe place to live, enough food, warm clothing, and finally the bonds of community); ***militaristic education*** (an military style atmosphere of regimentation spurred along by strict discipline meant to break down the will and spirit of the child); ***resilience*** (the ability to know yourself and have the inner strength and wisdom to manage the success as well as the tribulations of one's life); and finally ***boarding school staff*** (teachers as well as other staff who helped to instill in children the hope and self- esteem they needed).

However, the researcher had not expected the one major constant commonality and that was the influence and guidance of Native American staff at the boarding schools. The researcher

noted, that in Paul Buffalo's interview with Tim Roufs (1997-2014), he does not directly mention Native American staff, but he does mention his fondness for some of his teachers. Essie Burnett Horne and Adam Fortunate Eagle do specifically mention the staff. They espouse adoration and thanks to their Native American staff for treating them like family and showing them their worth as Native Americans. It was through this finding of positive Native American role models, that they had a chance to find within themselves, the resilience to persevere despite the dominant culture's oppression.

It was a delight to discover this and it raises questions and invites future research. This is not to make a broad assumption that just because a staff member was Native American, that all the children whom they came into contact with were naturally able to find that resilience.

Educational Implications

The research of Native American boarding school experiences and thus, Native American experiences, especially those of a historic nature in which this research was based, bleeds out into a vast expanse of unearthed history of stories waiting to be told. These lived experiences are what give authenticity to our history, especially the way Native American history has been perceived and/or excluded from our public schools and often times higher education. One implication and recommendation based on this research is directed to our educational system which has done a subpar job of covering this important historical time period and events in the lives of Native Americans. The current educational curricula needs to include this boarding school history. Only through our understanding of this history can we understand the reasons for the many struggles of Native American culture today.

It is important not only to all of America's children, but mostly for the Native American communities who should have this dark history recognized for what it is - *a cultural holocaust.* It is fine to discuss at length, with movies, etc., the tragedy of the Jewish people at the hands of the Nazis, but it is not ok for the United States government to fail to acknowledge the irrevocable damage they committed upon the Indigenous people of this country. It is one of the US governments "dirty little secrets."

It is not enough in higher education to have Indigenous scholars being the only ones to share this history. It must start in high school, it must be included in our history texts. Yet, that being said, a summary of a chapter in a high school history text is not sufficient to relay the story accurately. We need *authenticity*-the first person accounts that make history and the truth emerge. It must capture the attention of our young people. It should illuminate the worth of a people, and the resilience of those people who nearly lost their culture and their way. It should tell the stories of resilience and the experiences that helped people like Paul Buffalo, Esther Burnett Horne, and Adam Fortunate Eagle be resilient. If we teach and have students reading excerpts from Dr. Martin Luther King, then should we not, say for example, have students read Black Elk speaks among other influential Indigenous scholars and other influential Native American elders?

Recommendations for future research

Upon completion of this project, the researcher would like to know: who were these Native American teachers, and staff members who fostered such resilience in their students? More research needs to be done to uncover the little known lives of the very first Native American boarding school teachers and staff. How did they manage to take these children under

their protective wings, and then give them the skills they would need to succeed in a dominant culture? These teachers might have been the very first boarding school students. If that is true, this raises more questions as to how they managed not to lose their way, or their sense of culture throughout the hostile assimilation process of the government boarding schools. How did they navigate the waters of the White run boarding schools? How did they cope with the atrocities they witnessed only to emerge as teachers themselves? What may have ignited in them a desire to go back to these very same schools?

These future research questions are the important prologue to this thesis. These stories are an important part of not only Native America history, but the history of all of us. There needs to be more research on resilience. The researcher notes that this theme did not receive the in-depth research that is needed. It deserves to stand alone as a topic for future research.

A final thought on future research must include the study of resilience and what it means and how it evolves not only in individuals, but in Native American communities.

Summary

There are a hundred directions a researcher could take when looking at the history of government run boarding schools. From disease, to trauma, to sexual abuse, to curriculum, the emphasis on military style education; countless research topics await. This research provided the researcher a glimpse into another world, the world of Native American boarding schools. The experiences of Essie Burnett Horner, Adam Fortunate Eagle and Paul Buffalo were studied. This research unearthed four significant themes that shaped the lives of these three Native Americans. Security, militaristic education, boarding school staff, and resiliency are all tightly woven together in their boarding school experiences. One did not exist without the other. Two lessons

learned through this research were most important. One was boarding school staff, especially Native American staff, were the lifeline the children so desperately needed. Native American children, like any child, can show great *resilience* if they are given the right tools. That resilience can be fostered through the guidance of another who understands them. Boarding School staff were the core reason that, Essie Burnett Horner, Adam Fortunate Eagle and Paul Buffalo were able to find their own paths to success. Secondly, there is the discovery of resilience. It is what each individual has the capacity to evolve within them given the right conditions. It is knowing oneself and trusting in one's abilities to handle the many changes in life. When we look more into the phenomena of resilience, we will find many truths, and many answers to our questions regarding their ability to come back from the brink of genocide and more importantly, to no longer be silent.

The two defining factors that allowed these three individuals to emerge from the oppressive grips of assimilation were their relationships with their boarding school staff and their inner resiliency. Essie Burnett Horne, Adam Fortunate Eagle and Paul Buffalo became well armed with the educational tools to instill in other Native Americans the need to take back their culture, their communities, and their own spirits from the oppression of the dominant culture.

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Appendices

Appendix I

IRB Approval Letter or Email

Jp <perke001@umn.edu>

Attachments10/21/15

to me

Hello Jeanne,

I have reviewed your recent IRB Determination submission and have determined that no further review is required as the project does not meet the definition of human subjects research.

The stamped form indicating this decision is attached.

--

Jeffery Perkey, MLS, CIP

Research Compliance Supervisor, Social Behavioral Sciences IRB

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