

“FORWARD YOU MUST GO”: CHEMAWA INDIAN BOARDING SCHOOL AND
STUDENT ACTIVISM IN THE 1960s AND 1970s

by

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THESIS ABSTRACT

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High school student activism at Chemawa Indian School, a Native American boarding school in Oregon, transformed the curriculum, policies, and student life at Chemawa. Historians have neglected post-WWII boarding school stories, yet both the historical continuities and changes in boarding school life are significant. Using the student newspaper, the *Chemawa American*, I argue that during the 1960s, Chemawa continued to encourage Christianity, relegate heritage to safety zones, and rely on student labor to sustain the school. In the 1970s, Chemawa students, in part influenced by the Indian Student Bill of Rights, brought self-determination to Chemawa. Students organized clubs exploring Navajo, Alaskan, and Northwest Indian cultures and heritages. They were empowered to change rules such as the dress code provision dictating the length of hair. When the federal government threatened to close Chemawa many students fought to keep their school open even in the face of rapidly declining enrollment rates.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The student speaker for the 1962 graduating class of Chemawa Indian School, Irene Simon, dedicated her speech to celebrating the new life her boarding school had provided for her and her peers. Titled “New Frontiers for Us,” Simon’s speech began by comparing the image of “wagons pushing west” to the students’ journeys to boarding school. Like the drastic changes the American West experienced as a result of US imperialism, Simon proclaimed, “Here at Chemawa we have learned a new language, developed new skills, and have become acquainted with a new culture.” Lest her audience interpret these changes as mere alternatives to a traditional way of life, Simon clarified, “Perhaps some of us will go home but we will carry with us new ideas and a message to our people that the world is changing.” Young boarding school graduates understood both the value of the “modern” world over traditional ways of life as well as their place in this new world. Simon continued, “The world needs doctors, but it also needs welders. The world needs teachers, but it also needs nurses’ aids.” Armed with abilities as skilled laborers, Chemawa graduates could begin to change Native societies. Though boarding school education brought “progress” and “modernity” to Native societies, the place in modernity graduates could expect would be a subordinate one: working under White professionals and White managers. Simon reiterated, “The world is changing. Our way of life is changing. We must keep up with the new trends.” Finally, Simon concluded, “Chemawa has been our happy home...we must try to deserve the trust and faith our school places on us.”¹ Simon ended her speech with a reminder of the

¹ Irene Simon, “New Frontiers For Us,” *Chemawa American* 58, no 4 (April 1962): 4.

generosity of the boarding school system in allowing Native youth the opportunity for an education.

In the 1960s, Chemawa retained assimilationist policies, practices, and attitudes associated with Native boardings schools since they were founded in the 19th century. Through the rhetoric of “modernity,” administration, staff, and students perpetuated the ideology that anything White was better than anything Red.² Towards the end of the 1960s and through the 1970s, however, student activism inspired significant change at the historic boarding school. Dissatisfied with a curricular education that excluded Native history and Native knowledge, students formed clubs to study and engage their heritages and their cultures. Students used the student newspaper to write poetry, to publish art, and to comment on the state of Native America. Many students argued, sometimes overtly and often more covertly, that the United States had abused Native nations and that reform was desperately needed. Though many students fought to make their school better suited to their needs, other students, after experiencing the boarding school system, voted with their feet and either dropped out or did not reenroll. Students, whether through reforming student life to reflect their cultural needs or through dropping out of the boarding school system entirely, would determine the future of Chemawa Indian School.

² Following Peggy Pascoe, I capitalize White, since the capitalization connotes a marked ethnic group. She writes, “By capitalizing ‘White,’ I hope to help mark the category that so often remains unmarked, and taken for the norm, when the fact is that, in American history, to be ‘White’ is often as aspiration as well as an entitlement,” *What Comes Naturally: Miscegenation Law and the Making of Race in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009): 14. When I discuss the early boarding school era, I more often use Anglo American than White American to signify the immigrant nature of the White settlers. Also, I use Native American and Indian interchangeably, following Tsianina Lomawaima and Teresa McCarty, “*To Remain an Indian*”: *Lessons in Democracy from a Century of Native American Education* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2006): 7. Finally, the student newspaper rarely noted the nationality or tribal affiliation of Chemawa’s students and I include such information when possible.

Founded in 1880 in northern Oregon, Chemawa was the first boarding school in the West. Along with Carlisle Indian School in Illinois, Chemawa represented the US government's experiment with a new form of aggression against Native America. Moving away from militaristic actions, the United States government had emerged victorious after a century long campaign of wars, massacres, and land cessations with Native nations across what had become the United States. Now government officials engaged Christian and capitalist reformers in a new campaign of ethnic cleansing. Employing the ideology of Carlisle founder Richard Pratt, reformers sought to "kill the Indian in him and save the man."³ David Adams writes of this transition period, "The next Indian war would be ideological and psychological, and it would be waged against children."⁴ Preferring the ubiquitous and continuous indoctrination of off-reservation boarding school systems to military engagement, politicians and reformers aimed to transform Native American children and youth into capitalist Christians. According to Tsianina Lomawaima, the school became the "battleground of the body" through which school staff fought against the influence of Native families and societies for ownership and control of Native American children's bodies and minds.⁵

In the 1890s Congress made attendance at US schools compulsory for Native children, and Indian agents could force parents to send their children to schools of the agent's choosing.⁶ Significantly, many states did not make education compulsory for

³ David Wallace Adams, *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995): 52.

⁴ Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 27.

⁵ K. Tsianina Lomawaima, *They Called It Prairie Light: The Story of Chilocco Indian School* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994): 90.

⁶ Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 63-64.

their residents until decades later. Oregon, for example, mandated education for children in 1922. Once taken to school, Native American children were often not allowed to return home because the school refused to spare the travel expenses. The schools deemed few emergencies, even the death of a parent or the fatal illness of a student—the seeming epitome of emergency—drastic enough to warrant the expense of sending a child home.⁷ Children were prisoners in their boarding schools, violently punished for running away and used as collateral when parents threatened to disobey the US government.⁸ Boarding schools were composed of a variety of Native peoples from disparate locales, and administrators aggressively prohibited the students from speaking native languages.⁹ Reformers aimed to make Anglo American language and culture the only thing children had in common. Within just a few generations, policy makers hoped, the ethnic cleansing campaign would succeed and all Indians would function “productively” in a capitalist, Christian United States of America.

On January 1, 1880, Lieutenant Melville C. Wilkinson founded Chemawa Indian School, originally named Forest Grove Indian School, in a small town outside of

⁷ Brenda J. Child, *Boarding School Seasons: American Indian Families, 1900-1940* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998): 49-52.

⁸ For examples of holding boarding school children captive: Charles Eastman, Sioux doctor who witnessed the Wounded Knee Massacre, wrote of the tensions leading up to the massacre: “The large boarding school had locked its doors and succeeded in holding its hundreds of Indian children, partly for their own sakes, and partly as hostages for the good behavior of their fathers,” *From the Deep Woods to Civilization* (Mineola: Dover Publications, Inc, 2003): 61. Whites in the area near Chemawa’s original campus likewise saw the boarding school serving as a fortress when necessary. “One of the reservations, the Umatilla, it is generally expected, will be abolished soon. The Indians are violently opposed to a removal. Their children now at the school, are pledges for their keeping the peace, if removal should be determined by the government,” quoted in Sonciray Bonnell, “Chemawa Indian Boarding School: The First One Hundred Years, 1880 to 1980,” (MA thesis, Dartmouth College, 1997): 37.

⁹ Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 140-141.

Portland, Oregon.¹⁰ The US Secretary of War, Secretary of the Interior, and the Commissioner of Indian Affairs granted funding for a boarding school in the East, Carlisle Indian School, and a boarding school in the West, Chemawa Indian School. The government opened Carlisle and Chemawa within a year of each other and former military officers, who staunchly advocated what they regarded as a more peaceful alternative to the “Indian Problem” than military engagement, each headed the schools.¹¹ Wilkinson in particular had a brutal history of violence against Palouse Indians in the 1878 Paiute War, including an unprovoked attack on Palouse noncombatants in which Wilkinson, “seized control of the field piece and with his own hands unleashed a firestorm so deadly that when the shooting finally stopped ‘men, women, and children lay in every direction.’”¹² Only two years after this horrific incident, the government put Wilkinson in charge of a school for Northwest Indian children. On leave from his duties with the army, Wilkinson ran his school like he was training children for military service. Alumni recalled that the administration divided all students into regiments headed by a student sergeant. A staff “disciplinarian” and the student sergeants court-martialed students who disobeyed rules.¹³ Many of Wilkinson’s methods, however, were unpopular with the federal government, and two years after he founded the boarding

¹⁰ Before 1909, Chemawa went by different names: Forest Grove Indian Training School, Salem Indian Industrial School, United States Indian Training School, Indian Industrial School, and Salem Indian School. Bonnell, “Chemawa Indian Boarding School,” 38.

¹¹ Cary Collins, “The Broken Crucible of Assimilation: Forest Grove Indian School and the Origins of Off-Reservation Boarding-School Education in the West,” *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 101, No. 4 (2000): 470 and 473.

¹² Collins, “The Broken Crucible of Assimilation,” 470.

¹³ Collins, “The Broken Crucible of Assimilation,” 475.

school Wilkinson was ordered back to military service. With a death rate of thirteen percent for the first five years, Chemawa began inauspiciously.¹⁴

Throughout the first fifty years of Chemawa's history, students labored for the school in a system that resembled indentured servitude while they worked towards their certificate of completion. Students did not earn a diploma, with the exception of Chemawa's brief period of accreditation from 1927-1933, and employers often did not see certificates from Chemawa as equivalent to diplomas from public high schools.¹⁵ From the school's founding through the 1960s, students attended school for a half day and labored the other half of the day. Student labor included vocational training as well as labor to maintain the school itself. Chemawa, like most boarding schools, aimed to be "as self-sufficient as possible," even though the federal government spent far less on these schools than on federal reform schools.¹⁶ Aside from farming much of the school's food and maintaining the cleanliness of the school, students also built the original campus buildings and earned money picking hops for the purchase of school land.¹⁷ Once students enrolled at Chemawa, they were virtual captives, often unfree to go home and brutally punished if they ran away. An alumna recalled school staff punishing her brother and three other boys for running away by hanging the boys from their wrists in the breakfast room. Students ate their breakfast as they watched their peers dangle from

¹⁴ Cary Collins also shows how the death rate was dramatically gendered. Twelve out of 193 boys died, 6.2%, and 31 out of 128 girls died, 24.2%. Collins, "The Broken Crucible of Assimilation," 472 and 474.

¹⁵ Bonnell, "Chemawa Indian Boarding School," 46-47.

¹⁶ Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 149. Bonnell quotes government expenditures from 1921 that reveal the staggering disparity: "Federal funding for boarding schools provided \$204 per pupil in 1921 compared to \$360 per boy at state reform school and \$436 per girl at state school for girls," "Chemawa Indian Boarding School," 48.

¹⁷ Collins, "The Broken Crucible of Assimilation," 479; Bonnell, "Chemawa Indian Boarding School," 39.

the ceiling, struggling to touch the floor with their toes. Such punishments served to physically harm runaways, to embarrass them in front of their peers, and to intimidate other students from similarly disobeying school rules.¹⁸

The Meriam Report of 1928 brought to national attention the atrocities and abuses in the boarding school system and questioned the assimilationist ideology of Anglo education of Native Americans. While the report did not problematize the US assumption that Native lifestyles were backwards and Anglo culture was modern, the report made clear that individuals and families should choose lifestyle and culture.¹⁹ On the individual boarding school level, the report encouraged some important changes. Chemawa was one of the many schools that closed in the wake of the controversy, but the school's administration successfully submitted to the federal government a new curricular and structural plan. After 1933, Chemawa's administration stopped recruiting youth younger than fourteen years of age and students who were not at a fifth grade level, and the school expanded the vocational program to include a greater diversity of job training programs, including cosmetology, auto mechanics, and stationary steam engineering.²⁰ The longest lasting change the administration instituted was abolishing the high school program and replacing it with only rudimentary academic lessons. Not until 1974, forty years later, would Chemawa again offer its students a complete high school education.²¹

¹⁸ Bonnell, "Chemawa Indian Boarding School," 50.

¹⁹ Many scholars such as Adams in *Education for Extinction* tout the Meriam Report as a dramatic shift in policy, but Lomawaima and McCarty take a more conservative approach towards the report. They emphasize both the changes and continuities in the report that encouraged some changes in policy and practice, Lomawaima and McCarty, "To Remain an Indian," 66.

²⁰ Bonnell, "Chemawa Indian Boarding School," 66-68.

²¹ Though Chemawa applied for accreditation in 1964, it wasn't until 1971 the school was granted temporary accreditation and finally full accreditation in 1974. "This is Chemawa," *Chemawa American* 61,

Chemawa's other policies and practices, however, remained largely intact. Students still dedicated large portions of their day to the maintenance of the school grounds, were prohibited from speaking their native languages, and were required to take a course in Ethics and Christian Doctrine.²² Following the changes of the late 1920s and early 30s, Chemawa and other boarding schools still inculcated the Protestant work ethic that they hoped, "fostered the belief that the schools were a privilege and that working to sustain the school was the student's responsibility." Students continued to be instructed that boarding schools were "a great gift from the government."²³

There is little scholarship analyzing Native American education in the 1950s, yet this decade is an important period in Native American education. Boarding schools in particular inhabited a strange place in the national consciousness of the US. In the 1950s, the termination of the sovereign status of Native nations was the official agenda of the United States government. Fundamental to the treaties between the US and Native American nations were agreements that the US would provide services to Native nations in return for the land the US could then claim as its own. The US, however, was entrenched in Cold War fears that communist specters infiltrated the American homeland. Choosing to ignore the fact that treaties not only provided services for Native nations, but also took millions of acres of land from Native peoples, members of Congress were outraged that the Bureau of Indian Affairs system of reservations and services could so resemble all they feared communism to be. Termination would, politicians assumed, lead

no 1 (November 1964): 2; "Chemawa Accredited!" *Chemawa American* 68, no 4 (January 1972): 1; "Basics Explained," *Chemawa American* 71, no 2 (October 1974): 1.

²² Bonnell, "Chemawa Indian Boarding School," 57 and 81-82.

²³ Bonnell, "Chemawa Indian Boarding School," 71-72.

to a liberated Native America more in line with capitalist ideals. At the same time, the US was undergoing one of the most significant movements in American history. The Civil Rights Movement had taught America that separate was never equal and that all US citizens had a right to live their lives to the fullest. In the midst of Termination on the one hand and the Civil Rights Movement on the other, segregated schools like Chemawa seemed to many White Americans like archaic relics.²⁴ What was the place of a boarding school hundreds or even thousands of miles away from children's homes and a boarding school that sequestered Native children apart from White, Black, Yellow, and Brown children?

The 1950s was a unique decade for Chemawa. For the first time in its history, the school recruited students from outside the Pacific Northwest. Though demand for a boarding school for Northwest Indians had not decreased, Chemawa's administration made the decision to help the federal government with its Five Year Navajo Special Program. After WWII, Navajo need for schooling had increased drastically and Congress raced to accommodate the thousands of new students who had no schools nearby. Instead of building schools on the Navajo reservation, the BIA sent many Navajo youth to boarding schools across the American West. Conveniently, the government also decided to provide only five years of schooling rather than the normal twelve years.

²⁴ For example, in the mid 1950s, former Director of Education in the BIA, William Beatty, gave a talk about his experiences Indian education. On the issues of the public schools, Beatty stated, "I have not been able to agree with many irresponsible people who have sought at one swoop to put all Indian children in public schools." After discussing further the views of such people, Beatty continued by describing the advantages of integration: "The first and most important advantage is that it enables whites and Indians to grow up together with the opportunity for mutual understanding and respect...The second advantage is psychological, both for the Indians and the whites, when the admission of Indian children to the public schools marks the acceptance of Indian children to the public schools marks the acceptance of Indians as fellow citizens." Willard W. Beatty, "Twenty Years of Indian Education," in David A. Baerreis, ed, *The Indian in Modern America: A Symposium Held at the State Historical Society of Madison* (Madison: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1956): 45-46.

Sonicray Bonnell writes of the government's reasoning for this drastic cut in public education for Navajos, "It was believed that students starting school at age twelve who had little or no past schooling would learn at a faster rate than a student starting at the age of six."²⁵ After accommodating only the Navajo Program for much of the 1950s, Chemawa again opened its doors to Northwest students. Starting in 1961, Chemawa educated Navajos in the Five Year Special Program as well as Alaskan and some Northwest Indians in a junior high and vocational school program.²⁶ For the remainder of the 60s, the boarding school would continue to educate both Navajos and Alaskans as well as some Northwest Indians. Not until the early 1970s would the school again serve only the Northwest.

If Chemawa's student body changed in the 1950s, the school continued many of the policies and practices of vocation, Christianity, and White culture that had defined its program for seventy years. Staff assigned students "details" that were intended to teach students how to function as adults in American society. Details were mostly personal maintenance chores, but also included activities like milking the school's one hundred and fifty Holstein cows early every morning. In their boarding school childhoods, students would learn skills such as kitchen duty, laundry, gardening, and shoe repair.²⁷ Many students thought the details were excessive and unfair. One alumnus said in an oral interview, "The campus was always kept good. Well, they had a lot of free labor [Laughter]."²⁸ Another former student commented, "That's how a lot of us grew up:

²⁵ Bonnell, "Chemawa Indian Boarding School," 87.

²⁶ "Junior High School News," *Chemawa American* 59, no 1 (November 1962): 6.

²⁷ Bonnell, "Chemawa Indian Boarding School," 91-92.

²⁸ Bonnell, "Chemawa Indian Boarding School," 96. The alumnus was identified as Walt.

with scrubbing. I think what they were raising us for was to be maids.”²⁹ Students did not passively and without suspicion accept the administration’s curriculum. Rather, students understood their education was training them to be socioeconomically inferior to members of White society. Ironically, students were punished for enjoying the fruits of their labor. One student recalled being grounded for a week for getting caught eating apples in Chemawa’s apple orchards. A staff member had caught the students by spying on them with binoculars, something he did habitually.³⁰ Despite the continuity of decades old policies at Chemawa, however, changes slowly appeared. For example, school policies no longer explicitly disallow Native languages, religions, and cultures, yet the ubiquitous preference of English, Christianity, and White cultural values continued to marginalize student homes and backgrounds.³¹ Since the federal government controlled the school, change would have to come from the demands of students themselves.

In this thesis, I narrate the story of Chemawa Indian School through the 1960s and 1970s. I argue that significant changes in the valuation of Native cultures and heritages occurred at Chemawa in the 1970s because of student activism. In Chapter 1, “Assimilation Policies and Rhetoric at Chemawa in the 1960s,” I argue that in the early to mid 1960s Chemawa’s policies and practices persisted in emphasizing student indebtedness to a government and a dominant culture that was presented as more progressive than and superior to Native societies and cultures. First, I will analyze vocational education at the school and show that staff taught students to expect place in the American workforce inferior to White Americans. Second, I will explore the

²⁹ Bonnell, “Chemawa Indian Boarding School,” 93. The alumnus was identified as Wilma.

³⁰ Bonnell, “Chemawa Indian Boarding School,” 100. The alumnus was identified as Frank.

³¹ Bonnell, “Chemawa Indian Boarding School,” 102.

Christianity that permeated life at the boarding school through mandatory church attendance and the preference of Christian holidays and rituals over Native celebrations throughout the school year. Finally, using the concept of the “safety zone,” I will show how students were allowed to explore their cultures, but only within the context of contained and controlled performative events or sales of Indian commodities.

In the 1970s, however, for the first time in its history, Chemawa’s primary aim was to cater to the educational and cultural needs of students as defined by students themselves. In Chapter 2, “Student Activism and Self-Determination at Chemawa in the 1970s,” I argue that student activism in the 1970s produced significant changes in the value of Native cultures and heritages at Chemawa. First, I will show how the activism at Intermountain Indian School, a boarding school in northern Utah, that led to the Indian Student Bill of Rights created a national dialogue on student rights and needs in boarding schools. Second, I analyze student writings that proliferated in the student newspaper, the *Chemawa American*, questioning and debating the place of Native Americans in United States society. Third, I follow the popular and influential student group Native and Indian Culture Explorers (NICE) and the changes they helped institute at Chemawa. Fourth, I will tell the story of the campaign to build a new campus. In debates that ensued over a new campus, many groups of people, including Native nations, White politicians and community members, and most importantly Chemawa’s students and alumni, questioned the purpose and values of the school for Native peoples of the Pacific Northwest. Though supporters prevailed and Chemawa was rebuilt in 1978, the school’s legacy of militant assimilationism continued to taint the institution.

Utilizing students' voices has advantages and disadvantages; any source can be inaccurate but the value of student stories outweighs the risks they pose to an objective understanding of the past. Along with children's historians such as Steven Mintz, Gael Graham, and Rebecca de Schweinitz, I argue that children and youth are important actors in world history both as agents that affect their worlds and because the ideology and state of childhood are vital aspects of a society's general historical situation.³² Children and youth are also, however, dependents who have not yet matured into full personhood. Relying on student opinions and voices, therefore, could pose some significant challenges. While children and youth are less reliable than adults because of their relative immaturity and their dependency on adult protection and support, their stories and actions are nevertheless indispensable to a history of a school and to the larger history of education. Following historians such as Brenda Child, who uses family letters to analyze boarding schools, I tell Chemawa's story primarily through Native American voices.

Because the opinions and actions of students are central to my analysis, I will rely substantially on the student newspaper, the *Chemawa American*, published since the school's founding in 1880 with only brief hiatuses. Throughout the 1960s and 70s, the *Chemawa American* published primarily student work, except for the occasional staff or administrative message to the student body. Usually the paper came out monthly, but some years had as few as three issues during the school year. The paper covered a range of topics and genres from editorials to sports to poetry. Part of the significance of the

³² Steven Mintz, *Huck's Raft: A History of American Childhood* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004); Gael Graham, *Young Activists: American High School Students in the Age of Protest* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois Press, 2006); Rebecca de Schweinitz, *If We Could Change the World: Young People and America's Long Struggle for Racial Equality* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009).

student newspaper was that its audience extended beyond Chemawa's student body. The paper was sent to thirty states to students' homes, tribal governments and community centers, US governmental organizations, and alumni across the US.³³ When students published in the newspaper they were no doubt aware that they were speaking not just to those within the school's walls. They were also likely, however, to have been more concerned with their immediate audience. While neither the *Chemawa American* nor official school documents I studied mentioned policies regarding censorship, it is likely that the newspaper was censored.³⁴ Major controversies regarding the school were rarely covered in the newspaper and there was seldom even mild criticism of the school, its staff, or its policies and practices though articles would later reveal changes students had made through their actions. In every issue before 1969, the superintendent and his administration were listed first in the obligatory publisher's box. Even without overt censorship, however, students would certainly self-censor their writing and interviewing or would not engage the newspaper altogether, since anything published in the paper would be read by the administration, the staff, and student families. Even when student journalists sought a broad range of opinions on a broad range of topics, therefore, the power relationships inherent in a school system would prevent the student paper from being a truly representative publication of student news. Despite the drawbacks of the

³³ Mr. Dashney, "Join the American Next Year," *Chemawa American* 68, no 7 (May 1972): 2; Isaac Jack, "Where Does It Go?" *Chemawa American* 72, no 3 (November 1975): 3.

³⁴ High school activists of the 1960s and early 1970s often commented on the ubiquity of newspaper censorship. For example, at the Columbia Scholastic Press Association in 1969, high school students organized to share stories about their own experiences with censorship, John Birmingham, ed, *Our Time is Now: Notes from the High School Underground* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970), 7-8. Further, in *Hazelwood School District v. Kuhlmeier* (1988), the Supreme Court upheld the school's right to censor student publications, thus qualifying *Tinker v. Des Moines Independent School District* (1969), which granted students full First Amendment Rights.

Chemawa American, however, the student newspaper was an invaluable resource for student expression throughout the two decades under study here.

Most of the literature on the history of Native American education covers what has been termed the Boarding School Era, beginning with Carlisle Indian School in the late 1870s and ending in the 1930s after the school closures following the Meriam Report.³⁵ Some works, most notably, Tsianina Lomawaima and Teresa McCarty's book, *"To Remain an Indian": Lessons in Democracy from a Century of Native American Education*, discuss Native American education in the second half of the twentieth century, but focus on day schools rather than boarding schools.³⁶ I add to the body of literature by continuing the story of Native American education in an era of termination and relocation policies in the 1960s and self-determination and Red Power in the 1970s.³⁷

³⁵ For example, Adams, *Education For Extinction*, Child, *Boarding School Seasons*; Lomawaima, *They Called It Prairie Light*; Jean A. Keller and Lorene Sisquoc, eds, *Boarding School Blues: Revisiting American Indian Educational Experiences* (Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 2006); Margaret D. Jacobs, *White Mother to a Dark Race: Settler Colonialism, Maternalism, and the Removal of Indigenous Children in the American West and Australia, 1880-1940* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009); Herbert M. Kliebard, *Schooled to Work: Vocationalism and the American Curriculum, 1876-1946* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1999).

³⁶ Lomawaima and McCarty, *"To Remain an Indian."*

³⁷ Some works on Chemawa, like other works on Native American boarding schools, do not go beyond the so-called Boarding School Era. Articles by Cary C. Collins, though significant for Chemawa's early history, do not study postwar Chemawa: "Through the Lens of Assimilation: Edwin L. Chalcraft and Chemawa Indian School," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 98, no 4 (1997): 390-425; "The Broken Crucible of Assimilation: Forest Grove Indian School and the Origins of Off-Reservation Boarding-School Education in the West," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 101, no 4 (2000): 466-507. Also focusing specifically on the early period of Chemawa is SuAnn M. Reddick's article, "The Evolution of Chemawa Indian School: From Red River to Salem, 1825-1885," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 101, no 4 (2000): 444-465. Patrick McKeehan's dissertation provides a good starting point for whole history of Chemawa, but provides very little discussion of the 1960s and 70s: "The History of Chemawa Indian School," (PhD diss., University of Washington, 1981). Sonciray Bonnell's Master's thesis provides invaluable oral interviews from Chemawa alumni, but provides no interviews from students attending Chemawa during the 1960s. His very brief discussion of the 1960s relies on evidence other than alumni or the *Chemawa American*. For the 1970s, Bonnell focuses on the alcohol program at Chemawa and only briefly mentions that, with some struggle, the school was rebuilt. Sonciray Bonnell, *Chemawa Indian Boarding School: The First One Hundred Years, 1880-1980* (Hanover: Dartmouth College, 1997). Finally, Melissa Parkurst provides a thorough discussion of the history of music at Chemawa, giving important insight into a vital aspect of Chemawa's

I also add to the literature by analyzing two sets of documents that have not been explored by historians. First, I will base much of my discussion on the Chemawa student newspaper, the *Chemawa American*, during the 1960s and 1970s. Second, I will explore the national Indian Student Bill of Rights of 1972. No historian has analyzed these sources.³⁸

culture: Melissa Parkhurst, "To Win the Heart: Music at Chemawa Indian School" (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin, 2008).

³⁸ Gael Graham mentioned the Bill of Rights in a paragraph discussing mainstream schools' bills of rights during this time period, but her book was not on Native American students and this was her only mention of any activism in Native American communities or boarding schools. Gael Graham, *Young Activists, American High School Students in the Age of Protest* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2006): 118.

CHAPTER II

ASSIMILATION POLICIES AND RHETORIC AT CHEMAWA IN THE 1960s

In 1958, journalist Ashley Russell set out to investigate Oregon's high schools in a post-Sputnik America. Russell presented Chemawa Indian School in Salem as a rare success story, commending Chemawa for successfully placing many of its graduates with jobs mostly in agriculture, and also in "painting, mechanics, carpentry and metal work." Russell described the efficiency of the school, noting that students farmed the school's 450 acres of agricultural land. By training students for their future careers, Russell stated that Chemawa, "raises a good percentage of its own food." Principal Nell Brannon described the school's 750 Navajo students to be adjusting well to White cultural values. When asked about the romances between boys and girls at the school, Brannon stated, "We often have marriages here at the school. The girls wear conventional wedding dresses, complete with veils and flowers, and invite their friends, as do white girls." Aside from the students' transition into White gender roles and rituals, Russell noted the rules of private ownership Navajo youth had to learn. She wrote, "Our laws are strange, too. For instance, the Navajo considers an apple in an unfenced orchard as common property and that to let it rot on the ground is sinful." The students, according to Brannon, generally adjusted well to life hundreds of miles from home and, "they often show great affection for their teachers and ward attendants, even as they would for a parent." She painted student life as peaceful and casual with students hanging out around the campus much as they would at a mainstream high school. Quickly and naturally, so read Russell's message, did Navajo students adjust to the life that at first had been so

foreign.³⁹ Chemawa was a successful school because it fulfilled its mission of assimilating Navajo youth into White society.

From its founding through to the early 1960s, Chemawa's mission was to bring a "modern education" to its students and in so doing to shape the "whole student" for integration into White society.⁴⁰ Chemawa's administration and staff justified vocational education for Chemawa youth on the basis that it molded them into productive citizens and that it created a role for them in society. At the beginning of the first year of the vocational and junior high program in 1961, Chemawa's staff published a list of desired objectives and outcomes for students. The staff listed three general objectives they hoped their teaching would instill in students. First, staff hoped, "to equip the student through general and special training with the skills necessary for satisfactory living." Second, "to prepare him for the responsibilities and privileges of family life as a contributing member of our American society." Third, "to develop the ability and desire to evaluate and improve his own standards of behavior." After finding Chemawa's program, a graduate would be able to function with a stable job, a healthy family life, and a positive attitude towards one's life. Much more than teaching the three R's, Chemawa would mold the "whole student" into a productive participant of the US capitalist system.⁴¹ In addition to the general three objectives staff hoped to achieve, the 1961 workshop also detailed fourteen specific outcomes staff saw as integral to realizing the three objectives. Included in the list were outcomes such as "taking and following directions" and "care and respect for property" that White Americans associated with capitalist democracy.

³⁹ Ashley Howard Russell, "Chemawa Serves Country Well," *Oregon Journal* (December 7, 1958): 22.

⁴⁰ "Chemawa—Then and Now," *Chemawa American* 60, no 4 (May 1964): 2.

⁴¹ "Chemawa—Then and Now," *Chemawa American* 60, no 4 (May 1964): 2.

Just as staff made it a high priority to mold students into obedient workers, so they aimed to show students the values of respectful, even subservient, citizenship. Staff aimed for students to achieve, “social acceptance by others both in personal habits and in living and working areas.” Chemawa graduates, staff hoped, would fit in to the US mainstream.⁴²

For Navajo and Alaskan students who did not speak English, gaining fluency in English was a central part of achieving a “modern” education. Staff listed as their first desired outcome the “maximum use of English” at Chemawa.⁴³ While school policy no longer strictly prohibited students from speaking Native languages, staff and students alike encouraged students to speak only English inside the classroom as well as in casual social interactions.⁴⁴ Student Marian Willard commented on how easy it was to slip into speaking Native languages with friends, “We always forget to speak English until someone says, ‘Say, speak English!’ Then we start chattering in English for a while, and before long we talk in our own languages again. We should not speak Navajo or Eskimo too much.”⁴⁵ Student Thomas Brown explicitly linked English to modernity. “If we speak only our own language, how can we get along in the white people’s world? If we don’t know how to speak English, we might be afraid to go out into the world. Then we might as well go back to herding sheep.”⁴⁶ Brown had learned well the lesson of his

⁴² “May and August Workshops,” *Chemawa American* 58, no 1 (October 1961): 3. The whole list of objectives and outcomes is in Appendix A.

⁴³ “May and August Workshops,” *Chemawa American* 58, no 1 (October 1961): 3.

⁴⁴ Other boarding schools were explicitly prohibiting students from speaking their Native languages. Of the annual Navajo Youth Conference, student Arthur Ahkinga wrote, “I went into the group that was called ‘Language.’ I learned in this group that some of the schools are restricting from activities their boys and girls who talk Navajo...Navajo parents or guardians who know how to speak English should talk to their children in English more often,” Arthur Ahkinga, “Youth Conference Attended,” *Chemawa American* 58, no 2 (December 1961): 1.

⁴⁵ Marian Willard, “Student Briefs,” *Chemawa American* 58, no 3 (March 1962): 7.

boarding school that English was a tool for achieving social and economic success in a world dominated by White culture. For other students English was associated with fitting in. In an article titled, “How to Be Popular,” the eighth grade class wrote, “The popular student...Is friendly with everyone. Is fun to be with. Is a good listener. Isn’t shy. Has good manners. Has good grooming. Has good English. Doesn't swear. Leaves other people’s property alone. Shows gratitude. Obeys rules.”⁴⁷ For these students, proper English was one of the many requirements to being accepted in youth culture.

Not only did Chemawa’s staff aim to bring a “modern” education to its youth, they also hoped to make students look like “modern” citizens. The second desired outcome staff listed in their 1961 workshop was, “good health, proper posture, physical fitness, and suitable clothing.”⁴⁸ After learning the language of the dominant culture, Chemawa’s staff thought it most important that students also look like the dominant culture (or at least to strive for the same ideals of appearance). Chemawa was, staff and students argued, “As modern and progressive in their conduct and dress as any ordinary high school group.”⁴⁹ Students reminded each other that, “Good grooming is a habit. Every person should practice it to keep themselves attractive, lively, and happy.”⁵⁰ Girls were trained how to dress as stylish, modern women. “Posture parades” were a common way to ensure girls were physically fit and to teach girls how to hold their bodies in a

⁴⁶ Thomas Brown, “Job Placement Is the End Goal,” *Chemawa American* 58, no 3 (March 1962): 2.

⁴⁷ 8th grade, “How to be Popular,” *Chemawa American* 59, no 3 (March 1963): 2.

⁴⁸ “May and August Workshop,” *Chemawa American* 58, no 1 (October 1961): 3.

⁴⁹ Carolson Malemute, “86 Years of Service to Indian Students,” *Chemawa American* 62, no 3 (March 1966): 4.

⁵⁰ Anna Northway, “Grooming Tips,” *Chemawa American* 64, no 1 (January 1968): 2.

confident, yet modest way.⁵¹ Formal and informal classes were provided for girls to determine “the right kind of clothes” to wear to “get prettier.”⁵² Girls were required to wear dresses and when they were eventually allowed to wear pants they were specifically prohibited from jeans or faded pants.⁵³ For boys, short hair was associated with professionalism and attractiveness. The school dress code included rules stating that boys, “couldn’t have their hair below the collar, and their shirts had to be buttoned.”⁵⁴ Boys had to cut their hair before any special occasion, like school dances.⁵⁵ Likewise, boys were to present to the Salem community a clean and professional front. “Before a boy can go to town,” student Raymond Waska reiterated, “he must have a good hair cut and have nice, clean clothes or otherwise no town trip.”⁵⁶ Student Eugene Woody used his paragraph in the *Chemawa American* to discuss bad and good behavior, “These are the things we don’t do: We don’t drink and we don’t smoke and we don’t get mad. These are the things we do. We keep ourselves clean and we keep our hair short.”⁵⁷ Embodying modernity was as important for boarding school students as was gaining a supposedly modern education.

⁵¹ “Posture Parade Trophy Is Won by McBride Hall’s Unit Four,” *Chemawa American* 58, no 3 (March 1962): 4.

⁵² Pauline Flynn, “Styles Get Attention,” *Chemawa American* 58, no 4 (April 1962): 6; Pauline Denmert, “Girls Get Prettier,” *Chemawa American* 62, no 2 (January 1966): 4; Virginia Linn, “Job’s Daughters Visit McBride Hall,” *Chemawa American* 58, no 4 (April 1962): 6; Pat Standifer, “Living in a Girl’s Dormitory,” *Chemawa American* 62, no 1 (October 1965): 3.

⁵³ “Chemawa Has Changed,” *Chemawa American* 69, no 3 (January 1973): 2; “Student Council Report,” *Chemawa American* 67, no 5 (March 1971): 7.

⁵⁴ “Chemawa Has Changed,” *Chemawa American* 69, no 3 (January 1973): 2.

⁵⁵ Joseph James, “Special Occasions,” *Chemawa American* 58, no 3 (March 1962): 6.

⁵⁶ Raymond Waska, “Boys Town Day,” *Chemawa American* 59, no 2 (January 1963): 10.

⁵⁷ Eugene Woody, “Student Briefs,” *Chemawa American* 58, no 1 (October 1961): 7.

Throughout the 1960s, articles in the *Chemawa American* emphasized that students could be modern only with the vocational training Chemawa provided. This statement in a 1969 article was typical: “The importance of teaching vocational skills to Indian children cannot be stressed enough. The day has passed when these students could expect to return to their reservation and herd sheep or pick crops.”⁵⁸ Students often embraced these ideals and reminded their peers of the importance of a Chemawa education. Student Anderson James, for example, wrote, “For our future we must be qualified, not only in earning a living, but also in becoming a well adjusted well informed citizen of the world of tomorrow.”⁵⁹ A typical week at Chemawa started early Monday morning. Before 8:20 am, Chemawa students were expected to get ready, eat breakfast, and do morning “details” or assigned chores in the dormitories and around campus.⁶⁰ School started promptly following the morning duties, with a half day of academics and a half day of vocational training.⁶¹ The afternoon and early evenings were spent doing chores and structured recreational activities. For example, every afternoon and until the early evening some students would work in the school dairy, collecting milk for the school’s use.⁶² Every evening Chemawa youth had an hour of free mingle time, where, for the first and only part of the day, girls and boys could socialize.⁶³ Saturdays most youth had a job in the Oregon community picking beans or berries, working in yards, or

⁵⁸ “Industrial Education,” *Chemawa American* 65, no 6 (April 1969): 7.

⁵⁹ Anderson James, “Education the Key to the Future,” *Chemawa American* 61, no 2 (January 1965): 2.

⁶⁰ Midas Koenig, “Job Placement is the End Goal,” *Chemawa American* 58, no 3 (March 1962): 2.

⁶¹ “The Fast Moving Days of School,” *Chemawa American* 58, no 2 (December 1961): 2.

⁶² Henry James, “Vocational Activities: Farm,” *Chemawa American* 58, no 4 (April 1962): 9.

⁶³ “The Fast Moving Days of School,” *Chemawa American* 58, no 2 (December 1961): 2.

cleaning homes and businesses. These Saturday jobs were usually eight hours from around nine to five.⁶⁴ Some rare Saturdays Chemawa youth would go on trips, usually to Salem, and always separated by gender.⁶⁵ Sundays were also busy for students. Although they were not required to labor, Sunday school attendance was mandatory.⁶⁶

Youth labor yielded tangible benefits for the school, not just in terms of chores, but also in the type of vocational projects youth were required to undertake. Besides the daily morning details and afternoon chores, vocational class projects targeted specific areas of the campus that needed improvement. Some vocational projects involved large scale campus renovations, like clearing small trees and brush from unused areas of campus, or building a 400-gallon sheet metal water tank for the school.⁶⁷ Other school projects included sewing curtains for classrooms, replacing poles, making trashcans, and canning food, all for the school's use.⁶⁸ These projects were integrated into the curriculum and students often expressed satisfaction that the work was useful. Some students considered such projects useful not just for the school community, but also for their own education, as when student Betty Blackhorse declared cleaning windows of the employee's club to be "learning in action."⁶⁹ Certainly most adolescents were required to do chores in their homes and since these youth lived at Chemawa, perhaps it could be argued that these chores constituted not child labor, but rather the regular responsibilities

⁶⁴ For example, Clara M. Pete, "Picking Peaches," *Chemawa American* 59, no 1 (November 1962): 12.

⁶⁵ Aloysius Crane, "Student Briefs," *Chemawa American* 58, no 3 (March 1962): 7.

⁶⁶ "Chemawa—Then and Now," *Chemawa American* 60, no 4 (May 1964): 2.

⁶⁷ "A New Look on Campus," *Chemawa American* 61, no 4 (May 1965): 1; Roosevelt Titus, "Vocational Activities: Shop," *Chemawa American* 59, no 1 (November 1962): 10.

⁶⁸ Katherine Burnell, "Food Preservation," and "Basket Rack Project," *Chemawa American* 61, no 1 (November 1964): 4; Tom Horse, "Our Flag Pole," *Chemawa American* 58, no 3 (April 1962): 8-9.

⁶⁹ Betty Blackhorse, "Doing is Learning," *Chemawa American* 58, no 3 (April 1962): 8.

of maturing into adulthood. Chemawa youth, however, labored before school began, for half of the school day, into the evening, and on many weekends for full days.

An essential part of the Chemawa experience was the Saturday job, which the *Chemawa American* euphemistically described as a chance for students to “earn as they learn.”⁷⁰ “Located in a metropolitan area in a rich farming center,” stated an article in the student newspaper, “Chemawa offers students many opportunities for Saturday and summer employment.” The article continued, “Not only does this give the students work experience, an opportunity to earn money, but also to develop friendly relationships within the community.”⁷¹ There were ample farming and domestic jobs for girls and boys, allowing Chemawa youth to make connections as more permanently hired laborers for the Salem community. One of the most common autumn Saturday jobs was picking beans and berries. Dressed in clothes that could easily be washed, staff bused students out to Salem farms early Saturday morning.⁷² The students would fill crates with their pickings in exchange for a ticket that would later be partially reimbursed as spending money. In the middle of the day the students would break for lunch, eating a packed lunch of a sandwich and an apple. Even though some youth complained of being still hungry from their morning of hard work, a long afternoon of picking remained ahead.⁷³ Students would finally return to campus in the early evening after a full day’s work. Picking was not the only choice for Saturday work and the community offered a range of other work for the youth. Private individuals and businesses would hire youth to work in

⁷⁰ “Students Earn as They Learn,” *Chemawa American* 61, no 4 (May 1965): 3.

⁷¹ “Chemawa—Then and Now,” *Chemawa American* 60, no 4 (May 1964): 2.

⁷² Stella Chester, “Clothes for the Job,” *Chemawa American* 59, no 1 (November 1962): 2.

⁷³ Ella Sun, “Berry Picking,” *Chemawa American* 59, no 1 (November 1962): 3.

their yards, to perform routine or large project cleaning, and to care for younger children. For their labors, youth were paid varying amounts, sometimes making as little as \$3 a day or as much as \$1 an hour.⁷⁴ During the 1964-65 school year, students earned a total of \$40,000 from their Saturday jobs.⁷⁵ Whatever their job, students knew each Saturday they were to aim, “to improve their work and be valuable employees.”⁷⁶

Students and staff worked together to find jobs for students over the summer vacation. Summer jobs gained students experience and gave them an opportunity to save money for the next school year.⁷⁷ Though youth had a variety of summer jobs, jobs overwhelmingly tended towards the manual labor students were “learning” at school. Many of the accounts of summer jobs given in the *Chemawa American* emphasize the difficulty of the jobs. For example, Jackson Tapaha worked seven days a week during the summer, with the occasional Sunday off for some much needed leisure and David Yazzie worked on a construction project that required twelve-hour days. Other youth found temporary work whenever they could at trading posts, as forest fire fighters, or as nannies. One could argue that the vocational training was successful because youth obtained jobs with skills learned at their boarding school. One could also argue that the youth already had these skills upon entering Chemawa and that the vocational training was meant to keep youth in a certain socioeconomic status. Whatever the case, youth used their vocational skills not only to labor for the White community, but also to help

⁷⁴ Midas Koenig, “Job Placement is the End Goal,” *Chemawa American* 58, no 3 (March 1962): 2; Alice Begay, “Employment Experience Gains,” *Chemawa American* 60, no 1 (November 1963): 3.

⁷⁵ “Students Earn as They Learn,” *Chemawa American* 61, no 4 (May 1965): 3.

⁷⁶ Clara Pete, “Home Economics,” *Chemawa American* 59, no 3 (March 1963): 4.

⁷⁷ “Students Take Summer Jobs,” *Chemawa American* 61, no 4 (May 1965): 1.

better their own communities. Many youth spent the summers helping others in the Alaskan or Navajo communities whether by building houses or by earning money for the poor through berry picking.⁷⁸ Other students used their new knowledge of White society to help their communities, such as Ella Mae Clah who looked forward to summer work as a translator for her community.⁷⁹ Summer proved, then, not a relaxing time away from the regular school year, but rather a continuation of the worker training of Chemawa. When possible, however, youth took summers as an opportunity to better themselves and their communities.

In the *Chemawa American*, students often repeated the rhetoric of being good workers. In the introduction to a collection of student briefs titled “Job Placement Is The End Goal,” the newspaper editor wrote, “Through their part in the daily campus and building maintenance, their first small-paying jobs, Saturday employment, summer placement, and special training in both vocational and academic classes, they become aware of the qualities they must have for successful placement.” The editor continued that the qualities students identified were, “responsible citizenship, good personality, right attitudes, satisfactory work, employer-work relations.”⁸⁰ Students such as Shonnie Madison emphasized self-discipline in employment, including working the way one’s employer wants one to work, dressing right for the job, and returning promptly from vacation. Madison concluded, “There must be no end of trying to improve ourselves. If we try to always improve and follow these rules we will all be able to keep our jobs.”⁸¹

⁷⁸ “Summer Time Experiences,” *Chemawa American* 59, no 1 (November 1962): 4.

⁷⁹ “I want to go to School,” *Chemawa American* 58, no 1 (December 1961): 2.

⁸⁰ “Job Placement is the End Goal,” *Chemawa American* 58, no 3 (March 1962): 2.

⁸¹ Shonnie Madison, “The Rules for Keeping a Job,” *Chemawa American* 59, no 2 (January 1963): 2.

Student Stella Chester advised her peers on how to be “good workers and good citizens.” She wrote, “We know what is meant by good attitudes toward your job and employer. We use good manners when we are on a job and when we are off the job.”⁸² One article gave youth four tips for working with willingness. “(1) Forget the word can’t. Say to yourself, ‘I can.’ (2) Never think a job is beneath your dignity. (3) Try to find the reason you must do a job, but if you are unable to do so, think, ‘There must be a good reason that I do not understand.’ (4) Every job has a rhythm. Once you find it, work becomes fun.”⁸³ These tips were aimed at unwilling workers. If one has to remind oneself that a job is not beneath dignity, there is clearly something without dignity about the work. The third tip indicates resistance from youth challenging staff as to the usefulness of their work. Though there was an undercurrent of resistance, many students understood the student newspaper as an opportunity to repeat the rhetoric of being obedient, willing workers.

Another outcome staff detailed at the 1961 workshop was “patriotism and loyalty to the school, community, and country in teaching and practicing democracy.”⁸⁴ Intimately tied up with teaching students to be good workers was inculcating in Native American youth patriotism and loyalty to the US. Students were to be good workers for their own benefit, but also for the larger benefit of the society to which they dedicated themselves. Patriotism and loyalty to the US were concepts that staff actively taught in class. For example, one *Chemawa American* article printed the reflections that social

⁸² Stella Chester, “Opportunities,” *Chemawa American* 59, no 3 (March 1963): 2.

⁸³ “Willingness, Necessary for Job Satisfaction, Can Be Learned,” *Chemawa American*, December 1961, p. 2.

⁸⁴ “May and August Workshops,” *Chemawa American* 58, no 1 (October 1961): 3.

science students produced in response to the question, “I am American. What does this mean to you?” Student John Trefon replied confidently to the question: “Being an American means we live in a free country, with freedom of speech, freedom of religion, and freedom to go where we want. Everyone has a fair trial. We have good food, health care and religious freedom. I am happy to be an American citizen today.” For Trefon, American citizenship was associated with freedom and a better quality of life. Other students were not so clear on why they were happy to be an American. Kathleen Olson wrote, “We all have the privilege to vote for our leaders. Being an American means a lot but I can’t put it into words. I only feel free.” Similarly, Lucile Killbear stated, “Being an American means a lot to me. The older I grow, the more it seems to mean. America to me is a land where there is freedom. It is hard to express in words how thankful I am to be one of the young American citizens.” These students knew that America represented “a land where there is freedom” and they seemed to know they should be happy and grateful to be an American, but they had a hard time articulating exactly why that was the case. Evelyn McLaughlin’s response was much more specific. She wrote, “My being an American is really wonderful. It means freedom of living—to think and stand up to civil rights. Knowing I am an American makes me want to better myself, my life and make people know I am glad to be a citizen of this country.”⁸⁵ McLaughlin, like the other respondents, repeated the idea that the US was in essence a land of freedom, but she nuanced this discussion by noting the freedom to fight for civil rights. But rather than proceeding to identify with those who were actively fighting for their civil rights, McLaughlin reminded her audience of her loyalty to the US. During this class session, students were first told they were Americans and then they were asked to reflect on that

⁸⁵ “I am an American,” *Chemawa American* 60, no 2 (January 1964): 2.

fact. If students gave responses that revealed ambivalence towards being an American or if students responded that they were also citizens of their Native nations, articles such as this one did not reflect this duality. Students came to Chemawa to embrace mainstream values and attitudes.

The *Chemawa American* was a critical tool for students to remind each other of the ideals of US patriotism and citizenship. Through the newspaper students could recite lessons from classes, tell educational stories, or reflect on topics like personal values or goals. For example, students used the *Chemawa American* to respond to national events and comment on the meanings of these events. For example, student Lee Houston published his response to John Glenn's flight around the Earth. Recognizing Glenn's heroism, Houston wrote, "We can't all be heroes with headlines announcing our outstanding deeds, but we can be unsung heroes." Houston then provided examples of unsung heroes, "We can be good workers in any field we are trained. We can be good mechanics. We can help build bridges. We can weld the wing of an airplane or help make a part of a missile. We can gain knowledge by reading, observing, going to night school or trade school." Houston concluded, "We can find happiness and security in our work. We are part of a great team. We are citizens of the United States of America. We can be a good teammate or a poor teammate of this great country. It is up to us."⁸⁶

Student Jane Greist likewise published her response to President Kennedy's January 1962 State of the Union Address in which he discussed "the constitutional rights of all," including "the right to a free public education." Motivated by Kennedy's speech, Greist reminded her peers, "The government spends a great deal of money for each one of us here. It pays for our fares and our board, heat, light, housing, supplies, and other things."

⁸⁶ Lee Houston, "Team Mates," *Chemawa American* 58, no 4 (March 1962): 4.

It is ironic that Greist responded to Kennedy's speech with subservient patriotism. Her education was by no means free since her great grandfathers and mothers had received promises of compensation as they lost their land and their lives. Yet rather than embrace her education as her right, Greist reminded her peers of their debt to the US government. She concluded, "We could not be here if it weren't for the government."⁸⁷

Students often expressed their gratitude with what they noted to be the benevolence of the US government in providing a "free" education. In an article titled, "The Old Refrain," student Mary Lou Noble wrote, "Something that I like about Chemawa is that many things are free to us, like food, a place to sleep, places to enjoy ourselves with others, a hospital, a place to learn, and things that we have in our classrooms and in the dormitories."⁸⁸ In discussing the job training Chemawa provided, student Shonnie Madison wrote, "We must remember that we are not sent to Chemawa to school [sic] just to have fun, have a bed, food, get an education and have the free use of public utilities."⁸⁹ These expressions of gratitude towards the US showed an understanding of education not as a mandate of treaties or as a right for citizens. Education so conceived was rather a gift for which the students should feel gratitude and indebtedness. Struggling through childhood and adolescence, Native youth had the additional worry about the need to not, in student Norman Snare's words, "waste government money."⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Jane Greist, "Classes Hear the President," *Chemawa American* 58, no 3 (March 1962): 2.

⁸⁸ Mary Lou Noble, "The Old Refrain," *Chemawa American* 58, no 1 (October 1961): 7.

⁸⁹ Shonnie Madison, "The Rules for Keeping a Job," *Chemawa American* 59, no 2 (January 1963): 2.

⁹⁰ Norman Snare, "Job Placement Is the End Goal," *Chemawa American* 58, no 3 (March 1962): 11.

Along with learning a certain way of thinking about the US government and the meanings of US citizenship, Chemawa's students learned the symbolism and ritual of US patriotism. The US flag was an important symbol on the school campus. Students learned the history of the US flag, they made the flag the centerpiece of floats, and one year the shop class even made the campus a new flagpole as one of its projects.⁹¹ In 1968, Senator Wayne Morse honored Chemawa by giving the school a flag that had been flown over the US capital building.⁹² Even more significant for the campus, in 1976, Chemawa became the first Oregon high school to fly an "authentic bicentennial flag."⁹³ The *Chemawa American* closely noted every holiday on which it was especially important to fly the flag, including Inaugural Day, Freedom Day USA (May 1), Armed Forces Day (3rd Saturday in May), Constitution Day (September 17), Columbus Day, presidents' birthdays, in addition to the more mainstream US secular and Christian religious holidays.⁹⁴ Chemawa students honored US holidays most Americans haven't even heard of, such as Freedom Day or Constitution Day. Significantly, they also flew the US flag on Columbus Day, marking 1492 not just as the "discovery" of the Americas, but also as the event marking the ownership and possession of the Americas. Staff and students at Oregon's boarding school went above and beyond in their efforts to prove their loyalty to the United States.

⁹¹ Marie Green, "Students Like Educational Films," *Chemawa America* 58, no 2 (December 1961): 5; "Homecoming 1969," *Chemawa American* 66, no 2 (December 1969): 1; Tom Horse, "Our Flag Pole," *Chemawa American* 58, no 3 (March 1962): 8-9.

⁹² Mary Kaleak, "Senator Morse Brings Flag," *Chemawa American* 64, no 2 (February 1968): 2.

⁹³ "Chemawa Raises Bicentennial Flag," *Chemawa American* 72, no 6 (March 1976): 1.

⁹⁴ "Our Flag Holidays," *Chemawa American* 65, no 4 (February 1969): 4.

Thanksgiving was the most patriotic holiday of the school year and it was a big event at Chemawa. Thanksgiving was particularly meaningful for boarding school students as an opportunity to reflect on the early history of relations between Native nations and European immigrants. While students looked forward to Thanksgiving as a time to share a feast with loved ones, many students also celebrated Thanksgiving both as a nostalgic remembering of mythic pasts and as a time for religious and patriotic reflection. Two years in particular, the *Chemawa American* spotlighted student discussion of Thanksgiving. In a 1961 article, the *Chemawa American* allowed students to reflect on, “the real meaning of Thanksgiving Day.”⁹⁵ While some students, such as Susie Grandson, chose to discuss Thanksgiving as a patriotic remembrance of “the freedom which we have in the United States,” other students focused on Thanksgiving as a time for religious reflection.⁹⁶ Student George Manygoats wrote, “This is the time to thank God for the many things which He has given us and done for us.”⁹⁷ Leroy Williams wrote that he was thankful that, “God has given us food, clothing, and a nice place to live.”⁹⁸ Every student who commented on their home traditions in this article also discussed Thanksgiving as a holiday to remember God and to congregate with one’s church family. Chemawa, therefore, drew on many student traditions by embracing Thanksgiving as a Christian holiday as well as a patriotic holiday.

Eight years later, in 1969, Chemawa students continued to discuss Thanksgiving as an important holiday for both patriotic and religious lessons. Student Moses Edwards,

⁹⁵ “Thanksgiving Day at Chemawa,” *Chemawa American* 58, no 2 (December 1961): 7.

⁹⁶ Susie Grandson, “Thanksgiving Day at Chemawa,” *Chemawa American* 58, no 2 (December 1961): 7.

⁹⁷ George Manygoats, “Thanksgiving Day at Chemawa,” *Chemawa American* 58, no 2 (December 1961): 7.

⁹⁸ Leroy Williams, “Thanksgiving Day at Chemawa,” *Chemawa American* 58, no 2 (December 1961): 7.

humble and reverent in his thoughts on Thanksgiving, wrote, “I think Thanksgiving means it is a time for prayer and to thank God for everything we have received in the past year. It is a great day for all us of.” He continued, “I hope I can receive the goodness and the kindness I received in the past year. Someday, maybe, I’ll get to know even more what Thanksgiving really means.” For Edwards, Thanksgiving was primarily a religious day. Another student, Lorraine Snyder, connected the holiday’s religious and political meanings, “Thanksgiving is the day we give thanks to God for all He has done for us and for the things we have done for ourselves which are good and helpful. We also celebrate the day because of the peace that was made between the Pilgrims and the Indians in the Colonial Days.” According to the myth retold by Snyder, peaceful relations had defined the early relations between the pilgrims and the Indians and in continuing the Thanksgiving tradition Americans were keeping alive the happy remembrance. Student Richard Vanderpool wrote, “When I think of Thanksgiving, I think of the Pilgrims, who were very brave people. I wonder what it would be like if they wouldn’t have made it when they settled in this land.” Perhaps Vanderpool was being ironic when he pondered the possibility of Europeans not settling in America. For the remainder of his reflection, however, Vanderpool lauded the courage of the Pilgrims and celebrated the peacefulness of the first Thanksgiving meal.⁹⁹ Whatever his particular motivation, Vanderpool and his peers had been taught the myth of Thanksgiving in which Indians peacefully opened the doors to US invasion and settlement. Students understood that the *Chemawa American* was a forum for celebrating the myth.

Chemawa staff aimed to shape “the whole student,” from personal appearance to career choice to orientation towards the United States. Staff also hoped to shape student

⁹⁹ “Thoughts on Thanksgiving,” *Chemawa American* 66, no 2 (December 1969): 2.

values and morals. Another 1961 staff desired outcome was to instill in students an, “understanding of high moral and spiritual standards and values in the application to daily living.”¹⁰⁰ In the 1962 case *Engel v. Vital*, the Supreme Court had ruled prayer in state funded schools unconstitutional. Justice Black writing for the Court stated, “Religion is too personal, too sacred, too holy, to permit its ‘unhallowed perversion’ by a civil magistrate.” This groundbreaking Supreme Court decision mandated, “Each separate government in this country should stay out of the business of writing or sanctioning official prayers and leave that purely religious function to the people themselves and to those the people choose to look to for religious guidance.”¹⁰¹ Federally operated boarding schools, however, created a more complicated situation for the right to freedom of religion. After all, the ruling presumed children and youth had the capacity to privately pursue their own religious beliefs under the guidance of their parents. Youth in boarding schools often did not have the same freedoms of movement. At Chemawa, students did not have freedom of religion; rather a Christian culture pervaded the institution.

Christian church attendance was a part of the routine at Chemawa. Each Chemawa student had indicated on their application their family’s religious preference and the school created the infrastructure to allow for many preferences.¹⁰² Reverend William H. Stevens, former Sherman Institute Indian School “missionary” and Chemawa’s Religious Education Coordinator, ran the Sunday school program.¹⁰³ Every

¹⁰⁰ “May and August Workshop,” *Chemawa American* 58, no 1 (October 1961): 3.

¹⁰¹ *Engel v. Vital*, 370 U.S. 421 (1962): 369.

¹⁰² “Church Groups Meet,” *Chemawa American* 58, no 1 (October 1961): 5.

Sunday morning at nine o'clock Chemawa hosted Sunday school and worship for Protestant, Catholic, and Latter Day Saints students.¹⁰⁴ If students preferred another Christian denomination for which Chemawa did not provide on campus services, Chemawa staff bused students to off campus churches.¹⁰⁵ *Chemawa American* editors commented on the Sunday School Program that, "Under the direction of religious leaders services of many faiths are provided."¹⁰⁶ While Chemawa did have a diversity of Christian faiths represented with both the on and off campus church programs, Christianity was the only sanctioned religion. It cannot be called freedom to vote when candidates are not freely chosen. Likewise, Chemawa's Sunday School Program could not be called freedom of religion when the religion was not freely chosen.

While providing the opportunity for church attendance might well be a necessary service in a boarding school situation, Chemawa went beyond just providing students with these services by actually mandating participation in religious activities. In a 1965 article titled, "All Students Have Worship Opportunity," students were made aware of the usual four on campus Christian churches available to them. The article ended with a reminder, "In addition there is religious instruction for those who have no particular church choice or preference."¹⁰⁷ There are many things that are significant about this

¹⁰³ Jane Lind, "Religious Program Started," *Chemawa American* 60, no 1 (November 1963): 4; Cyrus Savetilik, "Church Groups Busy," *Chemawa American* 62, no 2 (January 1966): 3; Audrey Natkong, "Girls' Guidance Program," *Chemawa American* 62, no 2 (January 1966): 4.

¹⁰⁴ Grace Brown, "Student Briefs," *Chemawa America* 58, no 1 (October, 1961): 7.

¹⁰⁵ Jane Lind, "Religious Program Started," *Chemawa American* 60, no 1 (November 1963): 4; "Off Campus Church Service," *Chemawa American* 60, no 2 (January 1964): 4. These churches included Quaker, Lutheran, Baptist, and Episcopalian churches. Of 762 youth, 656 attended on campus Christian churches, "Enrollment Facts and Figures" and "Church Groups Meet," *Chemawa American* 58, no 1 (October 1961): 2 and 5.

¹⁰⁶ "Chemawa—Then and Now," *Chemawa American* 60, no 4 (May 1964): 2.

¹⁰⁷ "All Students Have Worship Opportunity," *Chemawa American* 61, no 2 (January 1965): 3.

passage. What if the student chose a religion outside of the accepted four churches, Protestant, Catholic, Orthodox, or Mormon? What if a student's religious preference was no religion? Finally, what was the nature of this "religious instruction"? Instruction connotes a unidirectional teaching path. Students were to absorb the teachings of their instructors. Presumably, the instructor would decide the denomination of the religious instruction. How, then, was Chemawa embracing the Constitution's mandate that the government, "shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof"? Two years after the ruling that prayer in schools was unconstitutional, Chemawa continued to give Christian instruction to all its students.

During the school week, Chemawa students had many religious social activities in which they could chose to participate. Reverend Stevens, coordinator of Protestant Religious Activities as well as Coordinator of Religious Education, ran many activities at Chemawa such as church basketball for boys and girls who did not make the school's teams.¹⁰⁸ Students also had several other explicitly religious groups and clubs they could join. For example, students of all Christian faiths could join Catacomb Club, offering its members weekly gatherings with refreshments, singing, and craft projects.¹⁰⁹ Chemawa also offered its students religious leadership positions. The Inter-religious Advisory Council included community religious leaders as well as religiously active students whose aim was to "work with the administration in rendering advice on religious matters it applies to our Chemawa student body."¹¹⁰ As late as 1966 students and community

¹⁰⁸ Lorraine Angnaboogok, "Activities," *Chemawa American* 62, no 1 (October 1965): 3; "Church League Hangs Onto First," *Chemawa American* 64, no 2 (February 1964): 4; "Church Teams End Season," *Chemawa American* 67, no 5 (March 1971): 8.

¹⁰⁹ "Campus Activities," *Chemawa American* 66, no 1 (October 1969): 3.

¹¹⁰ "Inter-Religious Convo [sic] at Chemawa," *Chemawa American* 62, no 3 (March 1966): 3.

religious leaders were able to have authority in the school from within a structured and officially supported advisory council. This passage also shows that Chemawa was applying religious matters to students and seeking out Christian leaders for guidance. Some religious social activities, therefore, were not merely for recreation. Some extracurricular activities offered ambitious religious students an opportunity to help dictate school policy.

As late as 1973, Chemawa's school breaks were defined by the Christian calendar. Chemawa's administration allowed parents to excuse their children from school only three times a year: the week of Thanksgiving, three weeks around Christmas, and three days around Easter Sunday.¹¹¹ The holiday season was defined by White Christian understandings of "the holidays" and students were encouraged to embrace and regurgitate this aspect of Christian culture in the conventional ways. Christmas was a busy time at Chemawa both on campus with performances and events and off campus at churches and community functions. Chemawa students and staff celebrated Christmas with parties, dances, and dinners.¹¹² They also engaged in community service activities, such as making presents for hospital patients. While many of these activities were secular celebrations of Christmas, religiously themed events took the front stage. For example, every December, "the Protestants" organized an assembly to retell the Nativity story.¹¹³ The *Chemawa American* termed this assembly a Christmas "worship service" for the students, overtly calling attention to the active religious content and goals of the

¹¹¹ "Chemawa Student Handbook" (Salem, OR: Chemawa Indian School, 1973-1974): 7-8.

¹¹² "Christmas Dance—A Silver Freeze Fairyland," *Chemawa American* 61, no 2 (January 1965): 3; Rosaline Thomas, "Invited Out by Friends," *Chemawa American* 61, no 2 (January 1965): 4; The Students of Chemawa Indian School, "Open Letter," *Chemawa American* 61, no 2 (January 1965): 2.

¹¹³ Cyrus Savetilik, "Church Groups Busy," *Chemawa American* 62, no 2 (January 1966): 3.

program.¹¹⁴ The *Chemawa American* was an important resource for churches to announce their Christmas activities and through the *Chemawa American* students often thanked churches for their holiday dinners and parties. Students also used their school paper to discuss the themes of Christmas. In one article, two students wrote an article that began with the statement, “The reason for Christmas is to celebrate the birth of Jesus.” The article continued by exploring celebrations of Christmas around the world. The students concluded, “However Christmas is celebrated people are united in their feelings of joy on the birthday of Christ.”¹¹⁵

At the close of the year, Christianity framed Chemawa’s graduation ceremonies. The *Chemawa American* published the complete graduation programs in 1962 and 1963, revealing the centrality of religion and Christian ritual. The hymnal “Soldiers of God” accompanied the processional of graduates, beginning the ceremony with strong symbolism indicating that Chemawa’s graduates were Christians. Next, the invocation was given in 1962 by Father Ambrose of St. Benedict College and in 1963 by Malvina Johnson, Chemawa’s Director of Religious Education.¹¹⁶ After the speeches and presentations of diplomas, the Girls’ Chorus sang “Bless Us, Oh Lord” in 1962 and “Climb Every Mountain” in 1963. The ceremony was then concluded with a benediction from the Director of Religious Education and “Soldiers of God” again accompanied the recessional.¹¹⁷ Not until 1966 did the *Chemawa American* again discuss the graduation

¹¹⁴ “Music Groups Give Programs” *Chemawa American* 63, no 1 (December 1966): 4; Jane Lind, “Christmas Program Presented,” *Chemawa American* 60, no 2 (January 1964): 1.

¹¹⁵ Andrew Tall and Wilfred Hoelscher, “Christmas Passes,” *Chemawa American* 66, no 3 (January 1970): 2.

¹¹⁶ In 1992, the Supreme Court would rule unconstitutional clergy-led prayers at graduations in *Lee v. Weisman*.

ceremony. The invocation and benediction were still present, but they were given by the senior class president and vice president, rather than by clergy members. The clearest sign of Christianity for this graduation ceremony was the Girls' Chorus performance of "I'll Walk With God."¹¹⁸ The following year, the *Chemawa American* discussed for the first time a Baccalaureate service for graduates, dedicated to the religious significance of the rite of passage that completing high school entailed. The main graduation ceremony still had prayers and a choral performance of "Now Let Every Tongue Adore Thee," but now there was a religious celebration apart from the required ceremony. While it is unclear whether the Baccalaureate was mandatory, in 1967 206 seniors attend the Baccalaureate and 205 seniors walked at the general ceremony.¹¹⁹

Speeches such as Father Nicolis Sanin's 1967 graduation address were thematically consistent with Chemawa's ceremonies and rituals. Sanin opened his speech with a strong pronouncement of Chemawa's service to Indian youth: "Today you are on the threshold of the New Life, or you rather came to the very curtain which separates you from the New Independent Life, free from those kind guiding souls, who for four or five years have taken care of you better than even your own folks at home." Sanin began his speech with a profound assumption that the quality of life was superior at Chemawa than it was in youth's homes. Father Sanin continued, "I assume that you all know by heart the psalm that says: 'Thou hast made man a little lower than the angels, and has crowned him with glory and honor.'" Father Sanin assumed Chemawa graduates would be versed

¹¹⁷ "Graduation Program," *Chemawa American* 58, no 4 (April 1962): 3; "Graduation Program," *Chemawa American* 59, no 4 (May 1963): 1.

¹¹⁸ "Chemawa Graduation Has Fifty," *Chemawa American* 62, no 4 (May 1966): 1.

¹¹⁹ "Graduation Largest in School's History," *Chemawa American* 63, no 3 (June 1967): 1; "Baccalaureate Services," *Chemawa American* 63, no 3 (June 1967): 2.

in the Biblical scriptures. He was not addressing himself to what he understood to be a religiously diverse audience, but rather one that had been schooled in the ideologies of Christianity. Truth and love, Father Sanin preached, would be the saviors of “the youth of America,” who were “being drowned in the shallow and polluted waters that are channeled into our land by dirty and malicious alien hands.” He encouraged Chemawa graduates to “open the faucets of the still waters of Christianity.” The Father closed his speech with what he called a so-called Indian Prayer: “Great Spirit—Grant that I may not criticize my neighbor until I have walked a mile in his moccasins.”¹²⁰

In the 1960s, Chemawa was an institution whose purpose was to inculcate in students standards for proper appearance, an efficient work ethic, and Christian moral and spiritual values. None of the fourteen desired outcomes Chemawa’s staff listed in 1961 included any reference to Native cultures. At Chemawa, students would learn to survive in a White world. In a White world, Native cultures were irrelevant. Native cultures, however, were not prohibited from Chemawa’s campus and students were allowed to express portions of their cultures at specific times and in certain settings. In their book *“To Remain an Indian,”* Lomawaima and McCarty introduce the concept of a cultural safety zone. Why, Lomawaima and McCarty ask, did boarding school staff sometimes allow students to express their cultures at a school constructed and maintained with the sole for the purpose of “cleansing” students of any Native culture? Schools, Lomawaima and McCarty theorize, allowed controlled cultural play precisely in order to pacify it. “We propose a theoretical model of the safety zone,” Lomawaima and McCarty write, “that traces the ‘swings’ of Indian policy—including educational policy—to an ongoing struggle over cultural difference and its perceived threat, or benefit, to a sense of shared

¹²⁰ Helen Mary Beaver, *From Point Barrow to Chemawa* (New York: Carlton Press, 1970): 37-39.

American identity.” The federal government has, they continue, “attempted to distinguish safe from dangerous Indigenous beliefs and practices” and allowed the limited expression of beliefs and practices deemed safe.¹²¹ Contained within the controlled environment of the boarding school, students had a small amount of freedom to occasionally express “innocuous” culture. From a more sinister perspective, safety zones actually worked with the boarding school agenda by trivializing Native cultures. Within the safety zone, culture was what could sometimes be engaged. It was a fun pastime. It was not dynamic and alive.

Inherent in the concept of a safety zone, however, is also the desire of Native American children to express their cultures whenever possible. Lomawaima and McCarty write, “Native communities have persistently and courageously fought for their continued existence as *peoples*,” both politically and, “culturally by their diverse governments, languages, land bases, religions, economies, education systems, and family organizations.”¹²² I will discuss three different ways in which students were allowed cultural expression within safety zones. First, at the biggest weekend of the school year students celebrated the school’s birthday by performing Native songs and dances for members of the greater Salem public. Particularly when Chemawa was composed of Alaskan and Navajo students, it was much more likely the performances were for a majority White audience, since students’ families and communities lived hundreds or even thousands of miles away. Second, students frequently went on field trips throughout the Salem community giving cultural presentations to community groups, schools, and churches. Third, Chemawa hosted up to three sales a year at which students

¹²¹ Lomawaima and McCarty, “*To Remain an Indian*,” 2 and 6.

¹²² Lomawaima and McCarty, “*To Remain an Indian*,” 7, emphasis Lomawaima and McCarty’s.

sold cultural commodities they had made in their free time. All these events were simultaneously exploitative to the students and an opportunity for genuine cultural expression.

On Birthday Pageant weekend, students and staff organized an elaborate celebration of Chemawa's founding. Whenever Chemawa's history was retold in the student newspaper or in other official school publications like the student handbook, the story usually included three to four basic elements of the founding. First, (Lieutenant) Melville Wilkinson founded Chemawa in 1880, making it the oldest operating boarding school in the United States. Second, eighteen (Puyallup) girls and boys composed Chemawa's first students and since then 35,000 Indians had been educated at Chemawa. Third, Chemawa means "happy home."¹²³ This simple history conveniently glossed over the less than savory aspects of Chemawa's founding, including the high death rates, the militarism, and the child labor, and sent the message that the boarding school had always been a happy home. On a deeper level, the message was that from its beginning Chemawa was founded by White community leaders for the benefit of Northwest Indians. The Birthday Pageant, however, was also a celebration of Native heritages. The celebration lasted three days on a weekend in February or March. The events varied from year to year, but there was always dancing, singing, storytelling, and feasting. The rhetoric of the Birthday events was that students were celebrating, not living cultures, but rather distant heritage. For example, student Bernice Gutler wrote of the importance of the pageants: "As Indians of our generation we look to the future and the new ways of

¹²³ For example, Maria Kay Agiak, "Student Briefs," *Chemawa American* 58, no 1 (October 1961): 7; "Chemawa—Then and Now," *Special Edition: This is Chemawa* in *Chemawa American* 60, no 4 (May 1964): 2; "Chemawa Student Handbook," 4. The words in parentheses are usually not mentioned.

life as the means of success in life, but we hope to preserve the beauty and pageantry of the past that has been handed down to us from our fathers.”¹²⁴ While the majority of the year was spent engaging “the new ways of life,” ways that many students and staff assumed were superior to so-called “old ways,” the Birthday Pageant was a chance to remember and “preserve” Indian heritages.

Most students eagerly took up the Birthday Pageant as an opportunity for cultural expression. Grace One expressed the sentiment of many students when she exclaimed, “I just can’t wait to see the students dance the Navajo and Native Alaskan dances at the birthday pageant... We also hear singers practicing. They sound good even though I don’t understand what they are singing about.”¹²⁵ For many of the students, time passed slowly the weeks and days before the pageant. Part of the enjoyment of the pageants came from support from the larger Salem community. Student Margaret Kittick wrote, “The enthusiasm of the audiences and continued interest, makes us feel that the Chemawa Indian School holds a valued place among Oregon people.”¹²⁶ The pageant gave Chemawa a special place in Salem and was something Salem citizens could be proud of. To advertise their celebration, staff and students put ads in the Salem newspapers and hung posters, “in stores, drug stores, and alleys and restaurants.”¹²⁷ On the weekend of the celebration, Chemawa’s parking lots and lawns were overflowing with cars. Government officials were usually among the honored guests and, likewise, pageant participants were occasionally honored guests in the Oregon legislature.¹²⁸ The pageant

¹²⁴ Bernice Gurtler, “Chemawa’s Eighty-Fifth Birthday,” *Chemawa American* 61, no 3 (March 1965): 3.

¹²⁵ Grace One, “Student Briefs,” *Chemawa American* 58, no 3 (March 1962): 7.

¹²⁶ Margaret Kittick, “Chemawa Celebrates 84th Birthday,” *Chemawa American* 60, no 3 (March 1964): 1.

¹²⁷ Stanley Custer, “Student Briefs,” *Chemawa American* 58, no 3 (March 1962): 7.

was even sometimes aired on Pacific Northwest television networks.¹²⁹ Students were very proud of these honors and school morale rose considerably every birthday season. The enjoyment of the weekend revealed the fulfillment students experienced from such cultural engagement and expression. But to what end were students allowed such extravagant, yet bounded cultural expression?

In 1965, the BIA prohibited Chemawa from making its Birthday Pageant public since it deemed the pageants, “inherently exploitative of the students.”¹³⁰ Historian Melissa Parkhurst has written on the history of music at Chemawa and argues that this administrative decision was unproductive for the students. “The repercussions of the school’s public exposure, while hard to quantify, were widespread and profound. New relationships were formed between the Chemawa community and the community at large, relationships that were often productive for the students.” She continued, “Families from local households and far-flung eastern Oregon ranches requested Chemawa students to live and work with them during the summer months, and social workers stepped forward to facilitate the increased popularity of this job program. Local churches sought to provide services to the Indian students. Public schools and civic organizations requested visits and performances from groups of Chemawa students.”¹³¹ According to this analysis, the public pageants were beneficial for the students primarily because they encouraged economic relations between the local community and the students. While this certainly was a tangible advantage of the pageants, this connection also underlies the

¹²⁸ Sinka Littlefish, “Students Commemorate Birthday,” *Chemawa American* 59, no 3 (March 1963): 1.

¹²⁹ Sinka Littlefish, “Students Commemorate Birthday,” *Chemawa American* 59, no 3 (March 1963): 1.

¹³⁰ Melissa Parkhurst, “To Win the Heart,” 230.

¹³¹ Melissa Parkhurst, “To Win the Heart,” 227.

exploitation of the pageants. Chemawa youth were allowed to express their culture, but only within bounded safety zones that benefited the White community not only through entertainment, but also through gaining White employers diligent and interesting workers in the summers and on the weekends.

Though the Birthday Pageant was the most celebrated event of the year, the school year was peppered with occasional small scale pageants in the Salem community. A couple times a month, a select number of students would visit churches, clubs, schools or government agencies in order to present their heritages to eager and curious White audiences. Students entertained with song and dance, showed artifacts or modeled clothes from their tribes, and answered questions from the audience. Sometimes the students had the opportunity to teach their audiences rather than just to present. For example, Chemawa's principal, Mrs. Brannon, invited a group of three Navajo students to present at Delta Kappa Gamma, a Salem club she belonged to:

First, the women pretended they were students learning the Navajo language. A few words were learned. Everyone seemed to have fun trying to say the words. Next, the school program was explained. Then a demonstration was given on how English is taught to beginning students. Mrs. Cordell's class gave a reading demonstration. Mrs. Matt's chorus sang a song. I think the ladies really enjoyed all of it. They said they were thrilled by the things we did.¹³²

Much of the time, however, the community pageants were more purely performative. When a group of students sang "Silent Night" in Navajo or when a girl dressed up "Indian" to help a business advertise its Golden Indian Braid bread, were students engaging their cultures?¹³³ Did they feel exploited by becoming human artifacts? Were

¹³² Mary Ann Allockeok, "Giving Mrs. Brannon a Program," *Chemawa American* 58, no 4 (March 1962): 4.

¹³³ "Guests of Women's Club," *Chemawa American* 58, no 2 (December 1961): 7; Photo, *Chemawa American* 68, no 5 (March 1972): 6.

they teenagers looking for an excuse to legitimately skip class? It is likely that all of these complex and contradictory themes were active for students during and after community pageants. It is significant, nevertheless, that in the 1970s, in an era of Native self-determination, the *Chemawa American* dramatically decreased discussion of such community pageants.

The third way in which Chemawa allowed students safety zones of cultural expression was through art. Up to three times a year—before Christmas, at the Birthday Pageant, and at the end of the school year, Chemawa hosted sales of student-made culture commodities. The list of items for the winter 1961 sale was typical: “Included were native-type dolls, tooled leather purses and belts, towels and bags with Indian designs, totem poles, footstools, Christmas cards and Nativity scenes.”¹³⁴ Often the sales yielded hundreds of dollars and the proceeds from the sales went to students for pocket money.¹³⁵ As with cultural pageants, commodity production allowed students to creatively explore expressions of their culture in the form of a controlled and contained commodity. It is unlikely students made commodities for the sales solely for the money, since many of these students had regular Saturday jobs and savings from summer jobs. Why go to the effort of producing commodities when students could have just worked longer hours at their jobs? There seems to be no question that students did get enjoyment out of making these items beyond the reward derived from monetary compensation and that they did

¹³⁴ “Arts and Crafts Sale,” *Chemawa American* 58, no 2 (December 1961): 7.

¹³⁵ Students would often note that the production of these cultural items was in order to make money. For example, Sinka Littlefish, “Arts and Crafts,” *Chemawa America* 59, no 3 (March 1963): 8; Earning Christmas money; “Arts and Crafts Sale,” *Chemawa American* 58, no 2 (December 1961): 7; Ester Pungowiyi, “Making Dolls Is Fun,” *Chemawa American* 62, no 3 (March 1966): 4.

engage the sales as opportunities to express their cultures.¹³⁶ As Lomawaima and McCarty suggest, the confinement of cultural expression to the safety zone trivialized cultural expression and froze culture into a mold that could be taken up and discarded at will. Nevertheless, many students engaged every possible opportunity for cultural expression.

In 1970, for the first time in its history, Chemawa Indian School formed an Indian Advisory Board composed of parents and tribal members. At the assembly announcing its formation, Alaskan board member Nathan Toots gave a speech before the student body. Toots began, “The lack of education has hindered the social and economical progress of many aborigine natives of America...Many of our ancestors required no education to subsist and survive, but again situations have changed.” Toots continued, “Many of our native leaders are starting to be young and educated. The respect of elders is still with us, however, the elders who lack the education are starting to concede their positions, primarily due to the fact elders feel inferior to the abilities and knowledge of the younger race.” Tribal leadership was being defined according to United States educational standards. If youth wanted to lead their communities then they would not be able to find the necessary tools within their homes and cultures but through the education the US provided. Toots concluded his speech with a final appeal for the need to build Alaska with United States tools. “Alaska is unique in that it is still a place of great opportunities...With many challenges we have to face today, we cannot afford to remain

¹³⁶ As with many of Chemawa’s policies and practices during the 1960s the sale of “Indian” items had a history in the boarding schools. Adams discusses the history of Haskell Boarding School and shows how they allowed art for commodity making because celebration of history was not threatening to the present and also because of the valuation on money making. Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 317.

at our present level, to think of backsliding would be a big disaster. Forward you must go.”¹³⁷ Backward were Native cultures. Forward was United States education.

At the time of Nathan Toots’s speech, the definition of progress was beginning to undergo dramatic change across Native America as well as in boarding schools such as Chemawa. In a 1970 message to Congress, Richard Nixon strengthened Lyndon Johnson’s policy of Native self-determination, calling for “a fundamental realignment in the federal and tribal relationship.”¹³⁸ President Nixon’s policy ordered the federal government to stop controlling the lives of Native peoples while upholding treaty obligations such as properly funding schools that would be operated by Native peoples. Self-determination reversed termination and began to acknowledge the sovereignty of Native nations. Self-determination was also a powerful grassroots movement in which Native peoples across the United States fought for land rights, fishing rights, rights to self-govern, and the right to control the education of Native children and youth. In 1974, David Adams defined self-determination in education as the ideal that first, “the curriculum in the Indian schools should reflect traditional Indian cultural values” and second, “Indian schools should be responsive to the needs of the surrounding community; that where possible the community should take an active part in the school program.”¹³⁹ True self-determination in a boarding school such as Chemawa would take more than forming an Indian Advisory Board. Self-determination would require a drastic change in

¹³⁷ “Advisory Board Formed,” *Chemawa American* 66, no 4 (May 1970): 1.

¹³⁸ Quoted in Charles Wilkinson, *Blood Struggle: The Rise of Modern Indian Nations* (New York: Norton, 2005): 196.

¹³⁹ David Adams, “Self-Determination and Indian Education,” *Journal of American Indian Education* 13, no 2 (January 1974): 22-23.

policy and atmosphere to not only allow students the freedom to explore their cultures, but also to integrate Native cultures into the curriculum and student life.

CHAPTER III

STUDENT ACTIVISM AND SELF-DETERMINATION AT CHEMAWA IN THE 1970s

By the 1970s, Chemawa had reached a crisis. The boarding school's campus buildings were aging. Several buildings had been condemned, and the fire department had demolished buildings with controlled fires and bulldozers. Existing buildings were plagued with structural problems, and the railroad around which the campus had been built had only increasing traffic, with upwards of thirty trains daily rocking through campus. The cost for maintaining the school's aging infrastructure was becoming too great, and in 1972 Congress granted funds for the design of a new campus to be located deeper into Chemawa's 450 acres. Still near the railroads and interstate, some land would at least cushion the campus. Less than a year later, however, the government rescinded its promise of a new school. The 1973 recession had hit America, and with government stretched to its limit, it was not clear a new boarding school should be a priority. For much of the 1970s, Chemawa's students were forced to live and study out of temporary facilities the administration had leased in anticipation of the construction. Each summer, students left their school not knowing if they would be able to return in the fall. With no funding for a new school and with the old school falling apart, Chemawa's future looked bleak.

Not only was Chemawa's infrastructure dangerously outdated, the school's purpose was increasingly ambiguous. Over the last two decades, Chemawa had gone through many significant changes. In the early 1960s the boarding school was primarily

a vocational school with youth attending academic classes for only a half day.¹⁴⁰ In 1964, the school administration applied for high school accreditation, received temporary accreditation in 1971, and finally was granted full accreditation in 1974.¹⁴¹ From the start of the vocation program in 1961 to the rebuilding of the school in 1978, six different superintendents lead Chemawa. Four of the superintendents served from 1970-1978, averaging only two years each.¹⁴² The most significant changes occurred in the student body itself. In the 1950s, Chemawa served some Northwest Natives, but the school was geared for the Navajo Special Program in which youth received primary and secondary education in five years.¹⁴³ Beginning in 1961, the school started a vocational and junior high program and recruited Navajo students and youth from Alaska for whom public schools were not available. In the late 60s, the school administration started phasing out the Navajo program in favor of Alaskan students and some Northwest students. By the mid 1970s, Chemawa's students came primarily from Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and Alaska. One of the most dramatic changes at the boarding school, however, was its declining enrollment. Enrollment peaked in 1965 at 942, overfilling a boarding school meant to house only 600 students.¹⁴⁴ By the end of 1975, only 273 students remained

¹⁴⁰ "The Fast Moving Days of School," *Chemawa American* 58, no 2 (December 1961): 2.

¹⁴¹ "This is Chemawa," *Chemawa American* 61, no 1 (November 1964): 2; "Chemawa Accredited!" *Chemawa American* 68, no 4 (January 1972): 1; "Basics Explained," *Chemawa American* 71, no 2 (October 1974): 1.

¹⁴² Chemawa's superintendents during the 1960s and 70s: Max Penrod (1961-1962), Hallie O. Walters (1962-1969), Gordon W. Gunderson (1969-1971), Albert Ouchi (1971-1973), Edward Lonefight (1973-1976), Alan Ledford (1978-1979).

¹⁴³ Bonnell, "Chemawa Indian Boarding School," 87.

¹⁴⁴ Cyrus Savetilik, "More Students Are Enrolled," *Chemawa American* 62, no 1 (October 1965): 4; Terry Farrow and Gordon Oats, "Drop-Out Study of Chemawa Indian School," (Master of Social Work thesis, Portland State University 1975): 2.

enrolled in a 450-acre campus built for 600 students.¹⁴⁵ For a student starting school at Chemawa in the 1970s there was great uncertainty about the future make up of the student body and the purpose of the school.

The turbulence that characterized Chemawa's search for stability came from the basic questioning of the purpose of a BIA-operated Native American boarding school. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, as tribes across the US fought termination, Native America entered a new era of self-determination. While tribally operated schools such as Rough Rock Demonstration School and the tribal colleges movement have received a fair amount of scholarly attention, scholars have not thoroughly analyzed self-determination in the boarding schools. One reason for this lack of scholarship concerns the seeming contradiction of self-determination in a BIA-operated, historically tainted boarding school. Many boarding schools did close in the early 1980s after a decade of self-determination labeled these institutions archaic. Yet some select boarding schools remained open, because the schools had become valuable resources for the Native peoples utilizing them. Chemawa's story in the 1970s was fraught with controversy. Some Native nations supported the school and others wanted the school to be tribally operated if it were to be rebuilt. Some White communities supported Chemawa and others questioned the purpose of a Native only boarding school. Few adults who cared about Chemawa's future and purpose solicited the opinions of the school's students. Though they most intimately experienced both the problems and the benefits of their boarding school education and though they were most active in changing Chemawa to fit

¹⁴⁵ "O.S.A.A. Says 'No' to Chemawa Request," *Chemawa American* 71, no 2 (October 1974): 8; Ralph E. Wesemann, "Three Boarding Schools: Phoenix Indian School, Phoenix, Arizona; Theodore Roosevelt School, Fort Apache, Arizona; Chemawa Indian School, Salem, Oregon; Community Background Reports," *Educational Resources Information* (Washington, 1970): 3.

the needs of Native American youth, students were surprisingly absent from official discussion of the school's future. Students, however, were integral to changing the school's policies and practices. Throughout the 1970s, students transformed Chemawa to be an institution that emphasized Native cultures and without the changes students made to their school, Chemawa might not have been a school that communities would fight to rebuild.

I will begin this second section with a discussion of the national Native American student movement, focusing on the achievement of the Indian Student Bill of Rights that came out of boarding school activism. Though scholars have not researched in depth the movement that created the Bill of Rights, understanding this movement is key to understanding the challenges inherent in fighting for self-determination within the boarding schools. Students at Chemawa, like the students at Intermountain Indian School who wrote the Bill of Rights, made their school into an institution that recognized their needs and their rights by creating their own avenues for cultural exploration. Following my discussion of the Indian Student Bill of Rights, I will show how activism at Chemawa shaped the school into an institution determined by Native ideals of education. Finally, I will tell the story of Chemawa's rebuilding and how students were integral to the federal government's agreement to rebuild the school.

The Indian Student Bill of Rights

In the late 1940s, the federal government awarded Brigham City, Utah, \$3.75 million to remodel the Bushnell Army Hospital into an Indian boarding school. Since

there was a desperate lack of schools for Navajo youth and since Brigham City had an empty facility, the plan worked out well from the perspective of the federal government.¹⁴⁶ A *New York Times* article on the school, titled “US School Brings Navajo Liberation,” noted that on the reservation, “such facilities may be impossible to achieve because of the continued lack of culinary water.” Rather than invest in improving the quality of life on the reservation, the federal government gave Intermountain an \$8 million ten-year grant to provide schooling for 1,500-2,500 Navajo youth 700 miles away from their homes.¹⁴⁷ On April 30, 1971, Navajo students at Intermountain brought a lawsuit against their school and against the Bureau of Indian Affairs, arguing that Intermountain and the BIA had not upheld the agreement of the 1868 Navajo Treaty that “a house shall be provided, and a teacher competent to teach the elementary branches of an English education shall be furnished, who will reside among said Indians.” The lawsuit alleged that Intermountain could hardly qualify as “among said Indians,” and, since Intermountain teachers did not know the Navajo language, they were incompetent to teach “the elementary branches of an English education.”¹⁴⁸

Aside from the specific treaty violations, the plaintiffs listed particular policies and practices of Intermountain that they argued violated their basic rights. First, the students alleged that, “Thorazine, a powerful tranquilizing drug, is used on intoxicated students without the consent of either parents or the students.” The use of Thorazine on intoxicated individuals, as claimed by the manufacturing company itself, “can cause

¹⁴⁶ Kara Campbell and Katrina Brainard, “What Is That ‘I’?: Letter on Mountain from Navajo School,” *Utah Statesman*, February 26, 2003 (updated August 9, 2010), accessed April 6, 2011, <http://www.usustatesman.com/2.5354/what-is-that-i-1.570958>.

¹⁴⁷ “US School Brings Navajo Liberation,” *New York Times*, May 3, 1951, p.15.

¹⁴⁸ “Students File suit Against BIA School,” *Indian Education* 4, no 2 (1971): 52.

psychological and physical damage.” Second, the students claimed that the school limited their First Amendment rights by intimidating students who wanted to create a chapter of the National Indian Youth Council and by discouraging the Navajo students from seeing a talk by their own governmental leader Navajo Tribal Chairman, Peter McDonald. Further, school staff had discouraged Navajo religions, including the Native American Church, and had encouraged Mormonism. Third, students alleged that school staff had tampered with student mail by refusing to let the students open mail alone. Staff would instead confiscate the mail, open it in front of the student, note the sender, and sometimes withhold checks or money orders as a disciplinary measure. Fourth, the students stated that many policies of the school discouraged a positive learning environment. “A student’s grade may have little or no bearing upon his competency in that subject,” since the administration dropped grades for tardiness in returning from breaks and the students believed favoritism heavily factored into a student’s grade.¹⁴⁹ In suing their school, students hoped to change the Intermountain school system to acknowledge their rights and to create a more quality educational experience.

District Judge Aldon J. Anderson dismissed the case on March 10, 1972, arguing that the students had not exhausted all possible measures for redress. In response, the students reorganized their grievances into a bill of rights for Native American students and sought a Congressional audience to hear their proposal.¹⁵⁰ Presented before the Senate Appropriations Committee on April 11, 1972, the Indian Student Bill of Rights (ISBR) was sweeping. The Intermountain activists had borrowed from three high school

¹⁴⁹ “Students File suit Against BIA School,” 58; “The Intermountain Student Suit: Text of Judge’s Decision,” *Indian Historian* 5, no 2 (1972): 38.

¹⁵⁰ “The Intermountain Student Suit,” 40.

student bills of rights and had constructed a document detailing the rights of Native youth as students in mainstream public schools and boarding schools.¹⁵¹ The ISBR creators were not timid in denouncing trends of oppression against Native youth, and they proposed rights to protect students against further abuse. A bill of rights for Native students would require recognition of rights as well as recognition of abuses in order to truly protect Native students.

The first article of the ISBR began with a strong statement reaffirming Indian students' First Amendment rights and introducing the ways in which Indian students' speech had been particularly constrained. After restating the First Amendment rights, the authors elaborated, "It is recognized that 'religion' may and often does have a different meaning for Indians than for white Americans; traditional Indian religions are usually less concerned with buildings, denominations and creeds than with the ways in which Indians relate to each other and to the earth which sustains them." Native students required further protection against those who still sought to proselytize Christianity to students within federal schools. The Article continued, "Consequently, seemingly trivial things such as the way one dresses or wears his hair may be and often are as truly matters of 'religion' for the Indian as is the Bible to a white Christian."¹⁵² From their founding in the 1880s, boarding schools had attempted to control the minds of Native children

¹⁵¹ The Indian Student Bill of Rights, Section A, was adapted from "The Bill of Rights and Responsibilities for High School Students," in the school district of Philadelphia. The Philadelphia Board of Education adopted this Bill of Rights on December 21, 1970: Indian Student Bill of Rights, Section A, 3731. The Indian Student Code of Conduct, Section B, was based upon, "Some Educational Responsibilities and Rights in Arlington County Public Schools," adopted in Arlington, Virginia on June 30, 1971 and "Purposed Statement of Rights and Responsibilities of Senior High School Students," in Albuquerque, New Mexico on October 7, 1971: Indian Student Code of Conduct, Section B, 3740.

¹⁵² Indian Student Bill of Rights and Code of Conduct for BIA Secondary-Level Schools, Senate Committee on Appropriations, *Senate Hearings before the Committee on Appropriations, Department of the Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations*, 92nd Cong., 2d sess., April 11, 1972, Article A, no 1, 3728.

through shaping their bodies to conform to White standards and styles. These practices had continued through to the present and school policies remained overtly centered on transforming Native children into White children. If students were to truly be granted their First Amendment rights, it would be necessary for schools to stop trying to control both their minds and their bodies.¹⁵³

To ensure protection of a student's First Amendment rights, particularly in the boarding schools, the ISBR specified the meaning of the First Amendment for a school setting. First, students had a right to privacy. Personal privacy of student beliefs included, "freedom to hold, advocate, and defend beliefs on controversial issues, politics, government, education, religion, philosophy, and morals." Any issue of culture or personal belief then was protected under a student's right to privacy. The ISBR further stipulated that beliefs should be neither shared without the consent of the student nor should they be subject to judgment or grading.¹⁵⁴ Second, students had a right to be free from ridicule and punishment, "for speaking their native language, practicing their native religion, wearing their native dress, or in any way maintaining their native culture."¹⁵⁵ That the right to be free from punishment for exercising free speech and expression had to be stated in the ISBR showed the ubiquitous and continued abuse of this most basic right. Third, students had a right to assemble and form, "political, social, or other

¹⁵³ The specific mention of dress and hair length was in part a response to Justice Abe Fortas's statement in *Tinker v. Des Moines* (1969), "The problem posed by the present case does not relate to regulation of the length of skirts or the type of clothing, to hair style, or deportment. It does not concern aggressive, disruptive action or even group demonstrations. Our problem involves direct, primary First Amendment rights akin to 'pure speech.'" *Tinker v. Des Moines, Independent Community School District*, 393 U.S. 503 (1969): 507-8 (Fortas). The ISBR showed that in the case of Native students style and deportment did deal directly with "pure speech."

¹⁵⁴ Indian Student Code of Conduct, Section B, Article 8b, 3735.

¹⁵⁵ Indian Student Bill of Rights, Section A, Article 11, 3730.

organizations as they see fit.” As long as the activities of the organization remained legal, students should be allowed to get together for activities including cultural or religious activities.¹⁵⁶ Finally, the ISBR put the burden of proof on school staff if they assumed the First Amendment did not protect a belief or activity.¹⁵⁷

The Intermountain students made another central tenet of the ISBR the right to be free from excessive control. In order to safely exercise their First Amendment rights, students needed to be free from fear by knowing they would not be punished excessively. The ISBR stated, “Students shall not be subjected to unreasonable restraints or excessive punishment, nor shall they be subjected to involuntary servitude.” The ISBR continued that warlike terminology and actions no longer applied to Native children and youth. Students who were late in returning to school should not be termed AWOL and students should not be required to always carry passes on campus.¹⁵⁸ Referencing the Fourth Amendment right against searches and seizures, the ISBR stated, “Because many Indian students must attend boarding schools where they cannot readily communicate with their parents, it is especially important that those students’ living quarters be treated as their homes and that school officials be apprised of the sanctity of students’ living quarters and lockers.”¹⁵⁹ The ISBR listed the right to a locked room and locker as an especially

¹⁵⁶ Indian Student Code of Conduct, Section B, Article 4c, 3733.

¹⁵⁷ Indian Student Code of Conduct, Section B, Article 4d, 3734.

¹⁵⁸ Indian Student Bill of Rights, Section A, Article 9, 3729. The article following specifically stated that there should be no corporeal punishment in the schools. Also, as late as 1973 the Chemawa Student Handbook continued to refer to students returning late to campus as AWOL, “Chemawa Student Handbook,” 9.

¹⁵⁹ Indian Student Bill of Rights, Section A, Article 2, 3728.

important right on a boarding school campus.¹⁶⁰ More than many of the rights articulated in the ISBR, the right to private space reveals the contradictions of a boarding school childhood. Does a child in her family's home have an inherent right to private space? Not necessarily. If access to private space is a privilege rather than a right at home, does a child have more or less of a right to private space at boarding school? Who owns boarding school spaces? The Intermountain students argued that the boarding school was a shared space where both administration and students had a right to privacy.

The last major set of rights detailed in the ISBR concerned the right to a “relevant, high-quality education without disruption.”¹⁶¹ Like all young US citizens, Navajo youth deserved an education equal to that of their peers. Specifically, “The federal government shall provide Indian students with teachers, educational materials, and physical facilities equal in quality and quantity to those found in the best public schools in the United States.”¹⁶² It was important that the students specify that the school quality should be compared to the best schools since it could have been argued that a school like Intermountain was at or above the level of the nation's worst public schools. In order to provide a quality education, it was necessary that the policies and practices of individual schools be held to a high standard. The ISBR included articles stating that grades should reflect only academic performance, that students should be required to evaluate teachers, and that students should be treated differently according to age.¹⁶³ The ISBR authors also

¹⁶⁰ Indian Student Code of Conduct, Section B, Article 8b, 3735.

¹⁶¹ Indian Student Code of Conduct, Section B, Article 1, 3731.

¹⁶² Indian Student Bill of Rights, Section A, Article 12, 3730.

¹⁶³ Indian Student Bill of Rights, Section A, Articles 8, 13, and 14, 3729 and 3730.

noted the importance of keeping campus free from intrusive visitors.¹⁶⁴ At Chemawa, community members and tourists, particularly international visitors, would often visit the school. Yet in such a context tourists were voyeurs intruding upon the educational process in order, perhaps, to see what an Indian school looked like. The quality of education would benefit from stricter rules on allowing such visitors.

The authors of the ISBR included many outlets for grievance and redress, knowing that merely stating student rights would be insufficient to ensure them. First, the fairly elected student government would have meaningful, rather than token, responsibilities. The student government was to be involved in decision-making concerning curriculum content, teacher qualifications and performance, rules of student conduct, and educational materials.¹⁶⁵ Second, the ISBR included the election of student ombudsmen who would both hear student complaints and would be “trained to offer counsel as to students’ rights.”¹⁶⁶ Finally, the ISBR reinforced the right of parents and tribes to be involved in the educational processes of their children throughout the years of schooling. Parents had the right to serve on school boards with a majority of parents who currently had children attending the school. The school board would be given “maximum control over school policies and practices permitted by federal law.”¹⁶⁷ The ISBR concluded its first section with as strong a statement as possible within US law in favor of Native self-determination: “All powers not conferred upon the federal government by

¹⁶⁴ Indian Student Code of Conduct, Section B, Article 16, 3739.

¹⁶⁵ Indian Student Code of Conduct, Section B, Article 2, 3732; Indian Student Bill of Rights, Section A, Articles 3, 6, and 7, 3728 and 3729.

¹⁶⁶ Indian Student Bill of Rights, Section A, Article 4, 3729.

¹⁶⁷ Indian Student Code of Conduct, Section B, Article 3, 3732 and Indian Student Bill of Rights, Section A, Article 15, 3730.

express provisions of the Constitution or acts of Congress of the United States are reserved to the tribes and to the Indian people.”¹⁶⁸

The Indian Student Bill of Rights became BIA official policy in 1974. The *Chemawa American* celebrated this achievement for all Native students in a long article dedicated to discussing its passage. The article quoted the Commissioner of Indian Affairs Morris Thompson: “Years ago it was accepted that school officials exercised a rather autocratic authority. Our increased consciousness of the rights of minority groups has changed this—and I think it is for the better.” Commissioner Thompson continued, “We cannot effectively teach democracy in a dictatorial school setting. Maintaining needed discipline within a framework of freedom is a challenge, but one that we must and will meet.” There are several things that are important about this comment from a BIA official. First, Commissioner Thompson noted that the historic and current treatment of minorities required the government to pay special attention to their rights. In this new era, Native children were no longer targets of federal assimilation campaigns. Rather it was the government’s duty to protect the civil rights of Native children as minorities. Second, he noted that the schools could be dictatorial and that students, therefore, could be wronged by schools limiting their rights. Foreshadowing BIA Assistant Secretary Kevin Gover’s profound remarks, “never again will we seize your children,” Commissioner Thompson admitted to the potential evils that can infest a school’s structure and ideology.¹⁶⁹ Finally, Commissioner Thomas openly stated that making schools more supportive of student freedoms was a goal of the BIA. Because of Native

¹⁶⁸ Indian Student Bill of Rights, Section A, Article 17, 3731.

¹⁶⁹ Kevin Gover, “Remarks of Kevin Gover at the Ceremony Acknowledging the 175th Anniversary of the BIA,” September 8, 2000, http://www.tribal-institute.org/lists/kevin_gover.htm and <http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=2422472857184820917#>.

student grievances and activism, the BIA was starting to change to better meet the needs of students. Students at Chemawa welcomed such changes.¹⁷⁰

Student Activism at Chemawa

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, students at Chemawa began significantly changing their school to better suit their needs. Though students still attended boarding school to learn skills for functioning in White society, they also attended Chemawa in order to grow up in an all-Indian environment. Whereas boarding schools had historically been institutions of assimilation, it was now that in the public schools youth became lost and alienated in the sea of White students. For example, Robert Bennett, a Lakota college student reflected on his identity and his heritage after finishing secondary school in the public schools. He writes, “Before I came to New Hampshire, a former Boston school teacher told me that many New Englanders think that ‘all Indians are dead.’ In a frightening sense, so did I. At Dartmouth, I was shocked to realize two important truths: I am an Indian and I am indeed alive.”¹⁷¹ At Chemawa, even when the curriculum deemphasized Indian cultures, students organized to explore their heritages and cultures. Students were empowered to engage their peer group in learning when their schooling lacked what they desired to know and explore.

There were many reasons why students engaged Chemawa as an institution they wanted to keep relevant and improve. First, Chemawa was a resource for families who

¹⁷⁰ “Students Get Bill of Rights,” *Chemawa American* 71, no 1 (September 1974): 2.

¹⁷¹ Andrew Garrod and Colleen Larimore, eds., *First Person, First People: Native American College Graduates Tell Their Stories* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997): 137.

were struggling economically. In their report on public school education for Indian children, the NAACP found that for families eligible for free school lunches, the process to actually get free lunches was difficult and humiliating. For example:

In Tuba City, Ariz., needy Indian children must declare their poverty daily although the district is reimbursed for all their lunches. The procedure for obtaining a lunch is that each morning students are asked if they will be eating lunch and if they brought their own money. Students who wish to eat but who have no money then receive different colored lunch tickets. In previous years, all students were charged 25 cents for lunch, and if parents were unable to pay, they had to 'come to school to explain their situation,' according to the principal. In some instances, bills were sent home and parents were forced to sell sheep or pawn jewelry to pay for lunches. A trader in Gap, Ariz., was reportedly taking money out of welfare checks at the request of school officials to pay for school lunches.

The situation in Tuba City was just one example among many abuses of impoverished Native Americans across the West that the NAACP listed. Widespread poverty and malnutrition met with racism to make a difficult situation impossible for many Native families. Boarding schools, despite their drawbacks, were in many cases a safe alternative for families in desperate need of aid.¹⁷²

Second, Chemawa offered an alternative to public schools. When there was no public school system reasonably near youth (as was often the case in 1960s and 1970s Alaska), Native youth could receive federal funding for education in boarding schools such as Chemawa.¹⁷³ While public schools could allow for youth to be closer to home, many public school students were minorities in worlds dominated by racist attitudes and ideologies. In discussing the low reading levels of Chemawa's entering students, one *Chemawa American* editorial article noted, "Many of Chemawa's students have histories

¹⁷² NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund, *An Even Chance: A Report on Federal Funds for Indian Children in Public School Districts* (New York: NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund, 1971): 18-20.

¹⁷³ Carol Colley, "Student Perceptions of the Chemawa Alcohol Education Center," (Master of Social Work thesis, Portland State University, 1973): 55.

of poor treatment in public schools.”¹⁷⁴ The student writers perceived that it was not as though students struggled in public schools because of their own deficiencies. Rather it was the general treatment of Indian students in public schools that turned many students towards other options such as Chemawa. Likewise, in a study of Chemawa’s dropout problem, Terry Farrow and Gordon Oats showed that in 1975 25% of a sample of students came to Chemawa because they “didn’t like public schools or had problems there.”¹⁷⁵ During the 1975-1976 school year, the *Chemawa American* featured individual students asking questions such as where they were from and their favorite hobbies. When asked why they came to Chemawa, a quarter of these students replied they wanted “to get out of the public schools.”¹⁷⁶ Summing up many of these expressions of discontent with the public schools, student Ladene Finger wrote, “Chemawa is also for those who didn’t get along in public places like white schools. Chemawa is also for those who like to be around their own kind of people so they won’t be ashamed to stand up.”¹⁷⁷ While Native students were bullied and treated poorly in public schools, boarding school offered a rare opportunity to not be a minority and to grow up with other Indians often from across the West.

Chemawa’s most unique and valuable asset for Native American youth in the West was that it was one of the only secondary schools that provided an all-Indian

¹⁷⁴ “The Small Miracle that Happens Here,” *Chemawa American* 71, no 3 (February 1975): 2.

¹⁷⁵ Terry Farrow and Gordon Oats, “Drop-Out Study of Chemawa Indian School,” (Master of Social Work thesis, Portland State University 1975): 20.

¹⁷⁶ Donna Penn, “Let’s Get Acquainted,” *Chemawa American* 72, no 1 (September 1975): 6; Donna Penn, “Let’s Get Acquainted,” *Chemawa American* 72, no 2 (October 1975): 6; “Let’s Get Acquainted,” *Chemawa American* (November 1975): 8; “Let’s Get Acquainted,” *Chemawa American* 72, no 4 (December 1975): 3; Oliver Pimms, “Let’s Get Acquainted,” *Chemawa American* 72, no 5 (February 1976): 3; Debbie Smith, “Let’s Get Acquainted,” *Chemawa American* 72, no 9 (July 1976): 6.

¹⁷⁷ Ladene Finger, “Chemawa Indian School,” *Chemawa American* 73, no 6 (March 1977): 3.

educational and social environment. Even when Chemawa's curriculum remained overtly assimilationist, Chemawa was valuable for Native youth as a place to be with hundreds of other Native youth. Though there were sometimes tensions between youth from different tribes, particularly when Chemawa was bifurcated into Alaskan Natives and Navajos, students celebrated the chance to go to an all-Indian school.¹⁷⁸ As the 1960s progressed and Native nations fought against termination policies and ideologies, Native American youth in schools across the country started to organize to achieve greater freedoms of cultural expression. At Chemawa, students were beginning to successfully challenge century-long policies rooted in militant assimilationist ideologies, fighting for their right to wear their hair long, to learn and use their Native languages, and to explore and express their religions. Policies, curriculum, and extracurricular activities were slowly changing to meet student demands. Chemawa, therefore, attracted students not only because it allowed youth to come of age among other Indians, but also because Chemawa was increasingly becoming an institution at which students could express themselves culturally.

In the early 1970s, students for the first time used the *Chemawa American* to openly question and criticize White assumptions and prejudices. For example, in March 1969 student Larry Earl Lewis published an article titled, "Eskimos Don't Live in Igloos." Lewis began, "'No,' the Alaskans don't live in igloos, as I used to think and read from books. I believed that they did, until I got to talking with the students from

¹⁷⁸ For discussion of tensions between Alaskan and Navajo students see for example, "Chemawa Has Changed," *Chemawa American* 69, no 3 (Jan 1973): 2. There were also many examples from the *Chemawa American* of students celebrating their different heritages and cultures. For example: "Alaskan Visit Thrills Navajos," *Chemawa American* 63, no 2 (May 1967): 1; Ella Weyapuk, "Different Languages Spoken at Chemawa," *Chemawa American* 59, no 2 (January 1963): 9; Rita Rose Joe, "The Twain Shall Meet," *Chemawa American* 58, no 1 (October 1961): 2.

Alaska.” Lewis was then surprised to learn about the assumptions Alaskan students had about Navajos, “But as we talked, they, in turn, asked me if we lived in a teepee. ‘No’ was my answer. You know it is really funny how a person thinks only by what he reads.” After discussing the ways in which Chemawa brought people together, Lewis concluded, “People, don’t really believe [what] you read until you talk to the people you are reading about.” Lewis realized the power stereotypes about Native peoples and lifestyles could have over anyone who did not question the written word. In writing such an article for the *Chemawa American*, Lewis sought to create a new atmosphere amongst his peers of curiosity and understanding.¹⁷⁹

Articles questioning the stereotypes and assumptions students faced in White society became more frequent and bolder as the 1970s progressed. In an article titled, “Not All The Braves Are Real Braves,” the *Chemawa American* staff studied Oregon high school mascots. Introducing the article, the students listed the Oregon schools that had an Indian stereotype as their mascot: “Chemawa is one of three Oregon high schools to nickname its team the Braves.” The article continued, “Six of Oregon’s 243 high schools call their teams the Indians, but none of them have more than a handful of real Indians in their student bodies. ‘Warriors’ is used eight times, ‘Savages’ twice and ‘Chiefs’ and ‘Chieftains’ once each.” After noting the range of animal mascots, the article listed the historically mythical mascots, “There are nine Pirates and seven Vikings, most of them stuck off in the wheatfields and forests far from the ocean. From out of the myths of ancient Greece come six Spartans and four Trojans. There are five Loggers against only four Pioneers, and some assorted Crusaders, Lancers, Rangers, Raiders and Devils (Red and Blue).” Saving the best for last, the article listed the most ridiculous

¹⁷⁹ Larry Earl Lewis, “Eskimos Don’t Live in Igloos,” *Chemawa American* 65, no 5 (March 1969): 3.

mascots, “For absolutely unique nicknames, how about the Cheesemakers, or the Boomers? Then we have the Locomotives, Quakers, Minutemen, Roughriders, Colonials, Democrats, Apollos, Fishermen, Gophers, Cavemen, Tornados, Olympians, Honkers, Cobras, and Billies.” The article concluded, “At least when Chemawa takes the field, its players look like Braves and act like Braves. How do you look like a Locomotive?”¹⁸⁰ The point of the article was not only to poke fun at the mascots of other schools, but also to boost school spirit and racial pride through Chemawa’s legitimate mascot. But on a deeper level, the students were commenting on the ridiculousness of White society. Chemawa students did not need stereotypes to falsely embody strength and fortitude.

The critiques of White assumptions slowly started to become more explicit. In January 1971 a South Eugene High School student sent a lengthy letter to the editor of the *Chemawa American* discussing her reactions from her weeklong exchange at Chemawa. “I want to say right now,” Molly McMillan began her letter, “that I’m really confused about everything. I have so many mixed up feelings. I talked to so many people at Chemawa, and my head got so full, and I got really confused.” She confessed that before she came to Chemawa she had “not really quite believed” prejudice existed. But after talking to Chemawa students, she realized her mistake, “Here are these really great people saying something quietly about ‘feeling like dirt’ in the public schools.” Her Chemawa peers told her that South Eugene students acted superior to Chemawa students. McMillan’s conclusion was that this sense of superiority came from ignorance about “the whole Indian situation, knowing only ‘book words’ about it.” McMillan was frustrated by the ways in which she perceived Chemawa students treated her. “Even after I had found

¹⁸⁰ “Not All the Braves Are Real Braves,” *Chemawa American* 71, no 1 (September 1974): 2.

out what the Indians had faced at public schools, I was a little resentful when one girl said that she ‘didn’t want no white prejudiced person’ for a temporary roommate.” McMillan felt the girl had been unjust in her reaction. “Maybe I shouldn’t be resentful, but she was prejudiced against me before she even saw me.” She then expressed hope that the mistakes of her South Eugene peers in acting superior would be understood by the Chemawa students to have come from a place of ignorance.¹⁸¹

For the last half of her letter, McMillan felt entitled to comment on her supposed understanding of her new Chemawa friends and she felt empowered to suggest to the administration the ways in which they could improve the school. She sympathized that Chemawa students “don’t quite fit in” with “our white society” (“our” potentially meaning hers and the majority of the school staff?). Yet, she stated, “It’s too late to go back to their own culture.” Assuming Native cultures were backwards, forever in the past, McMillan pitied them for also not being allowed to “progress.” McMillan suggested that one of the biggest ways school staff could help Chemawa students would be to relax the restrictions on students and allow them some privacy. She wrote, “One of the Chemawa girls, after going AWOL one night, said that, ‘When something goes wrong, you just have to get out...’ I just wish things could be opened up, and kids could go in and out and around and not be AWOL.” She also voiced the suggestion of a Chemawa student she talked to who desired more opportunities for students to have open discussions with staff members, individually and as a group. McMillan concluded that

¹⁸¹ Molly McMillan, “Letter from Eugene Visitor Comments on Exchange,” *Chemawa American* 67, no 4 (January 1971): 2.

since returning to Eugene her questions had compounded. She concluded, “I kept putting this letter off because I really don’t know what’s what right now.”¹⁸²

What this letter reveals is a growing discontent among Chemawa’s student body. Students were openly sharing their bad experiences in the public schools and with White students. Native students were peacefully but forcefully conveying to White youth such as McMillan that she was both ignorant and biased. Students were taking it into their own hands to disobey the school rules to go “AWOL,” when they knew they needed space from the atmosphere of constant supervision. Students were also actively making suggestions for changing the structure of the school to better meet their needs. When a student had requested a more open situation for discussions between students and staff, the student had proposed the school install a curtain in the cafeteria for alternating between public and private meetings. The cafeteria staff had, according to McMillan, objected to the inconvenience such reorganization would cause them. When McMillan condescendingly noted the “big difference” between White student desire to study and her perception that “school just didn’t seem to be that important” to Chemawa students, she may have been noting the discontent Chemawa students felt for the quality and type of education Chemawa offered Native youth.¹⁸³

In the same issue as the letter from the South Eugene high school student, the *Chemawa American* published a creative writing supplement highlighting student poetry and short stories. A significant number of the writing pieces discussed and critiqued relations between Native Americans and White Americans. Victoria Brunette’s poem,

¹⁸² Molly McMillan, “Letter from Eugene Visitor Comments on Exchange,” *Chemawa American* 67, no 4 (January 1971): 2.

¹⁸³ Molly McMillan, “Letter from Eugene Visitor Comments on Exchange,” *Chemawa American* 67, no 4 (January 1971): 2.

“Broken and Bent,” expressed frustration and anger at the violence committed against Native nations and the subsequent economic and cultural oppression of Native peoples: “From the great beautiful grassy hill, Where there was health, freedom, love and content, From this peaceful happy life they were sent To the reservations, where they are still, Where sickness and disease in numbers kill, And made to sign treaties, broken and bent... This, I believe, is far from care and love.”¹⁸⁴ Other students discussed the connections between the oppressions of different minorities. Student Mildred Quaempts expressed the more aggressive activism of the late 1960s and early 1970s, “Pride—oh I have it—My race, yes, I’m proud of it. Black, Indian, Mexican—they Belong, as a group—so don’t Cut them down. I represent them all!”¹⁸⁵ Rita George, on the other hand, evoked Martin Luther King Jr. to call for the unity of all people: “People, All people have a dream, To be born free, To love, For peace and security. People, Some can really scream, For their right to be, So they pull and shove, Just no peace, Why can’t they see? People...”¹⁸⁶ The *Chemawa American* had never published such strong statements of discontent with the United States and with the situations of Native peoples.

The creative writing supplement highlighted works of student Charlene Bearcub, and in every piece of writing Bearcub analyzed the situation of Native Americans within the United States. Her first poem, “A Loss,” was direct in its message: “Listen!...a lone sorrowful cry in the night. The mother wolf has lost her only child to the great white hunter who kills for kicks...”¹⁸⁷ Never had the student newspaper published anything so

¹⁸⁴ Victoria Brunette, “Broken and Bent,” *Bits & Pieces* in *Chemawa American* 67, no 4 (January 1971): 3.

¹⁸⁵ Mildred Quaempts, “Untitled,” *Bits & Pieces* in *Chemawa American* 67, no 4 (January 1971): 3.

¹⁸⁶ Rita George, *Bits & Pieces* in *Chemawa American* 67, no 4 (January 1971): 3.

¹⁸⁷ Charlene Bearcub, “A Loss,” *Bits & Pieces* in *Chemawa American* 67, no 4 (January 1971): 5.

bluntly critical of White politics and White people. Her second poem, “Pride and Prejudice,” expressed solidarity with minority movements around the nation: “Multitudes of minorities, Each face reflecting another’s sorrows. Each voice meeting his own. A melting pot of races Once discarded and ignored A struggle for pride [...] Take my hair and pull it. Take my sight so I may not see. Take my heart and shatter it. Take my bones and break them. Take my soul and condemn it [...] but I beg you, Leave my heritage.” Though Bearcub empathized with other oppressed American minorities, she ended “Pride and Prejudice” with a bold claim to the uniqueness of Native American struggles. Her third poem though humorous, contrasted with “Pride and Prejudice” to emphasize the particular situation of Native Americans. Titled, “This Man,” Bearcub wrote, “He sits under the hot sun, Sweating, but feeling relaxed, Clad in an old shirt, colorful beads, faded levis, worn moccasins, and long hair with a funny hat. Is he a hippie?...Hell no! He’s my grandpa!”¹⁸⁸ Bearcub’s final poem expressed dismay at the oppression of her people: “The food is eaten, The fires are cold, The drums have ceased, The songs have ended, The dance is over. The dancers are gone, My people, where are they?”¹⁸⁹ That Bearcub and her radical poetry were so highlighted in the *Chemawa American* speaks to the drastic changes at Chemawa in the 1970s.

Since the mid 1960s, students had organized official school extracurricular clubs exploring Native cultures and heritages. The Indian Heritage Club, usually called the Indian Club, was the first long lasting such club. Founded in 1965, students and staff together organized the Indian Club to “preserve old ways.” The Indian Club engaged

¹⁸⁸ Charlene Bearcub, “This Man,” *Bits & Pieces* in *Chemawa American* 67, no 4 (January 1971): 5.

¹⁸⁹ Charlene Bearcub, “Sleeping Paradise,” *Bits & Pieces* in *Chemawa American* 67, no 4 (January 1971): 5.

students in learning about “different traditions and practices of their ancestral cultures.”

The advisor for the club, a Mr. Hipple, told the *Chemawa American*, “The old ways should not be forgotten.” One of the goals of the Indian Club was to learn the histories behind the dances for the annual pageants so that students could understand the cultural meanings and significances behind the dances they performed. In learning about their heritages the performance of culture became more meaningful and more alive.¹⁹⁰

Another goal of the Indian Club was to, “teach the public about the heritage of the different Indian tribes.”¹⁹¹ When students traveled throughout the Salem community to teach the public about their cultures and to show off Indian cultural items and outfits, students were often amazed at the ignorance and the ubiquitous stereotypes the White public had about Native Americans. For example, an article discussing a presentation to a group of fourth graders concluded, “Both Sharon and James were amazed at some of the strange concepts and ideas that these students had about Indian people.”¹⁹²

Sometimes the *Chemawa American* provided personal stories that students had with White Oregonians. Student Nellie Barbone recounted a trip to Lake Oswego, “When my hostess and I got to her home her little brother, two years old, asked me if I was an Indian girl. I said, ‘I am a Navajo girl.’ He said, ‘If you are an Indian girl, how come you don’t have a feather in your hair?’”¹⁹³ The Indian Club had much to teach the public.

¹⁹⁰ Martha Mishakoff, “Indian Club to Preserve Old Ways,” *Chemawa American* 62, no 1 (October 1965): 1.

¹⁹¹ Charlotte Albert, “Indian Heritage Club,” *Chemawa American* 62, no 1 (October 1965): 2.

¹⁹² Sharon Valarde, “Chemawa Students Are Good Ambassadors,” *Chemawa American* 61, no 1 (November 1964): 1.

¹⁹³ Nellie Barbone, “Trip to Oswego,” *Chemawa American* 59, no 4 (May 1963): 5.

The popularity of the Indian Club was limited in part because the club continued to celebrate culture within the bounds of the safety zone of heritage. At the Indian Club's first public demonstration of student Native heritages, the students demonstrated "sign language, Eskimo yo-yo, and told about Eskimo legends and superstitions, and the traditional Navaho dress and hair styling."¹⁹⁴ The students told "legends and superstitions." To a White audience "legends" would connote stories that were untrue, but were nevertheless fun. Legends were exciting to listen to and engage, but not to be taken as reality. Superstitions could frighten and excite a White audience, yet the audience would know the ultimate falseness of the stories and ideas. In such a context, Eskimo heritage was not to be taken too seriously. Demonstrating sign language, showing artifacts, and modeling styles would allow Chemawa students and White audience members to engage Navajo and Alaskan heritages, but only on a superficial and safe level. Heritage, after all, was different from culture in that it was not alive. Heritage was something to be studied and preserved, not something that could be lived and could morph and shift as it is lived. While the students could learn from their heritage, they could not experience their heritage. The Indian Club continued in the background of Chemawa life with members occasionally participating in events such as the Homecoming parade or the Birthday Pageant into the late 1960s.¹⁹⁵

Students who desired a more active approach to studying and engaging Native cultures than the Indian Heritage Club could provide, founded in 1970 the Native and Indian Culture Explorers (NICE). NICE was originally founded as a performance club,

¹⁹⁴Charlotte Albert, "Indian Heritage Club," *Chemawa American* 62, no 1 (October 1965) 2.

¹⁹⁵"Homecoming 1969," *Chemawa American* 66, no 2 (December 1969): 1; Eddie Lee, "Students Perform in Native Costume," *Chemawa American* 65, no 5 (March 1969): 4.

focusing on Alaskan, Navajo, and Northwest Indian dances to coordinate for the upcoming spring birthday pageant and also for “performances or programs in neighboring towns and schools.”¹⁹⁶ NICE membership quickly soared with fifty members signing up in the fall of 1971 and membership doubling to one hundred regular and associate members in the winter of 1972.¹⁹⁷ Students were clearly yearning to learn about their cultures and their school curriculum was not satisfying this need. From its inception NICE had a stronger focus on learning, reviving, and engaging student cultures than had any other formal club in Chemawa’s history. Operating from a democratic ethic, NICE members wrote and voted on a constitution, bylaws, and a code of ethics. In opposition to the top down approach to culture that had pervaded Chemawa in previous decades, NICE members were dedicated to egalitarian exploration of cultures. They elicited help from more than the original two advisors, electing a head advisor as well as eight teachers and staff members to advise NICE’s committees.¹⁹⁸ NICE had refocused from emphasizing performance and the enjoyment others derived from student cultures to student enjoyment of cultural activities. NICE’s committees in 1971 included, “war dancing, singing and drumming, leathercrafts and carving.” Students could join as many committees as they desired.¹⁹⁹ NICE’s committees continued to expand along with its popularity and in 1972 NICE had four committees. “The Northwest Committee works

¹⁹⁶ “N.I.C.E. Working on Organization Program,” *Chemawa American* 67, no 3 (December 1970): 3.

¹⁹⁷ “N.I.C.E. Reorganizes,” *Chemawa American* 68, no 2 (November 1971): 3; “N.I.C.E. Expands,” *Chemawa American* 69, no 2 (November 1972): 3.

¹⁹⁸ “N.I.C.E. Reorganizes,” *Chemawa American* 68, no 2 (November 1971): 3. The article provides no explanation to how teachers were “elected,” but this terminology shows that many Chemawa staff members were equally eager to emphasize Native cultures at Chemawa. Since this study focuses on students at Chemawa I do not have the space to address the very important issue of staff members at Chemawa and their relationships to Chemawa’s policies and practices.

¹⁹⁹ “N.I.C.E. Reorganizes,” *Chemawa American* 68, no 2 (November 1971): 3.

mainly on drumming, dancing and beadworking. The Athabascan Committee is concentrating on singing, dancing and telling folk legends. The Northern Slopes Committee is planning an Eskimo Olympics, and a Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Committee is just organizing.” With NICE receiving daily requests to perform in Oregon and across the Pacific Northwest, members were also in the process of forming an executive committee to organize performances.²⁰⁰

NICE’s biggest annual events at Chemawa were the Eskimo Olympics in mid winter and the pow-wow at Chemawa’s spring birthday pageant. Both events were already traditions at Chemawa, and when NICE took over organization the club’s good status in the school encouraged more students to participate. The Eskimo Olympics had been an activity teachers put on for students who could not afford to go home on Christmas breaks. The most anticipated event was the Eskimo High Kick (ill. 1 in Appendix B) and students also enjoyed the impressive demonstration of the “Body Lift,” the Handwalk race, and the Hand Broom Pull.²⁰¹ For the dances NICE performed at the Birthday Pow-wow, members designed elaborately decorated “formal wear that etiquette books never dreamed of” read one photo caption (ill. 2). NICE choreographed two or three group dances and individual members also performed. The importance of the pow-wow was conveyed in a caption of a photo from the event, “How do you tell the dancer from the dance?”²⁰² (ill. 3). Culture was not an entity outside of students that they

²⁰⁰ “N.I.C.E. Expands,” *Chemawa American* 69, no 2 (November 1972): 3.

²⁰¹ “Muscles Shown at Eskimo Olympics,” *Chemawa American* 66, no 3 (January 1970): 4; “Eskimo Olympics Set,” *Chemawa American* 68, no 3 (November 1971): 5.

²⁰² *Chemawa American* 69, no 2 (November 1972): 4.

engaged at will. Rather, in expressing their cultures, students were finally allowed to openly express themselves.

In 1974, a group of eight NICE singers formed the Chemiwai Singers. Significantly, the Chemiwai Singers took their name from what they understood to be a more accurate transliteration of Chemawa, “The Chemiwai Singers take their name from the original ‘Chem-ah-wah’ or ‘Chem-i-wai’ which means ‘the gathering place for peace and happiness.’” In SuAnn Reddick’s study of the origins of “chemawa,” she found both the original word and the meaning of the word to be contested. She writes that it is possible that “chemawa” comes from the Chemeketa word meaning “happy home,” as the Chemawa administration often repeated. It could also come from the Calapooia word meaning “a place where no one lives,” quite the opposite of “happy home.” Finally, “chemawa” could come from the Chinook “che” meaning new and “wawa” meaning language.²⁰³ The Chemiwai Singers, therefore, were beginning the task of relearning the history of their school and taking back ownership of Chemawa Indian School from historic administrations who passed down a certain story of Chemawa’s origins back to the students who grew up at Chemawa. The Chemiwai Singers were able to make a record with Canyon Records, becoming one of the first groups to record music from Northwest Indians.²⁰⁴

In early 1972, poet and alumnus of Chemawa from the 1940s Leroy Selam joined NICE as an honorary advisor. That January, Selam had been invited to several English

²⁰³ SuAnn Reddick, “The Evolution of Chemawa Indian School: From Red River to Salem, 1825-1885,” *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 101, no 4 (Fall 2000): 445.

²⁰⁴ “N.I.C.E.’s Chemiwai Singers Set (And Make) A Record,” *Chemawa American* 71, no 2 (October 1974): 3.

classes to speak about his poem, “What Is This Upon My Land?”²⁰⁵ Published in the activist and academic journal, *The Indian Historian*, Selam’s poem had a strong message. The poem began with a description of past utopia, of appreciation of and connection with the land, of an unpolluted and beautiful earth. Then, “Like a crushing rushing wave they came, Hurling the years aside.” The second half of the poem describes the dystopia brought by the European immigrants.

On tiny plots of land
We float in a kind of unreality,
Uncertain of our grip upon the present
Weak in our hopes for the future.

We know full well the stories of our people,
As they lived in the old life
The grand old stories of our people...
When there was dignity,
A feeling of worth...
Unspoken confidence
And certain knowledge of the paths
They walked upon.

Let none forget
We are a people with special rights
Guaranteed to us by promises...
Treaties

We did not beg for these rights
We do not thank you that we have them.
We have paid for them
With our lives, our dignity, our self respect.
Shall we remain today
A beaten race...
Impoverished, conquered?²⁰⁶

²⁰⁵ “Native Poet Speaks,” *Chemawa American* 68, no 4 (January 1972): 3.

²⁰⁶ Leroy B. Selam, “What Is This Upon My Land?”: The Poetry of a Yakima Man, Suwaptsa, *Indian Historian* 4, no 1(1971): 19.

NICE would gain in Selam a strong advocate for the right to cultural expression. It was Selam who secured a record for the Chemiwai Singers and Selam's connections with American Indian Dance and Exhibition landed NICE the opportunity to tour in Europe.²⁰⁷

Leroy Selam was also a strong critic of Chemawa's administration. In 1975, a Portland, Oregon newspaper journalist, Paul Jacobs, interviewed Selam and published his scathing opinions of Chemawa's structure. Selam, who never earned a high school diploma but was in the process of earning his doctorate, began the interview recounting his experiences as a student at Chemawa. "If we talked in Indian in front of the staff, we were made to wash our mouths out with soap. That was 25 years ago, and they haven't changed that school one damn bit." Jacobs continued, "Although he speaks quietly, Selam delivers a nonetheless blistering criticism of Chemawa...Selam accuses the school of 'cultural genocide' and a 'military modus operandi.'" Even as late as 1975, Selam stated, Chemawa had refused to fund the popular and important Indian culture club, NICE. Selam recounted corporal punishment in the school, such as when a teacher punched a student in the face when the student refused to turn off a television while doing a detail. Selam argued that administrators expelled students far too easily and that "expelling a student is a sign that the system is failing." Finally, he said, "I don't see any reason why they [the students] shouldn't riot."²⁰⁸ It is not clear if Selam continued working with NICE after this interview.

The closest the *Chemawa American* came to publishing critiques of Chemawa came in the form of single panel comics usually illustrating an unsavory aspect of life at

²⁰⁷ "N.I.C.E.'s Chemiwai Singers Set (And Make) A Record," *Chemawa American* (October 1974): 3; "N.I.C.E. Plans London Trip," *Chemawa American* 70, no 5 (March 1974): 3.

²⁰⁸ Paul Jacobs, "Chemawa 'Product' Raps the System," *Capital Journal* (March 7, 1975): p. 3, Sec 1.

Chemawa. One comic showing a muscular Indian man mopping has the caption, “Well, back to the same old grind again!”²⁰⁹ The man hardly fits in the miniature hallway with doors as a head shorter than the man. Perhaps the message is that some students felt the details were childish, simple, or irrelevant (ill. 4). Another comic, commenting on the unpopular annual shots and vaccines, shows a student getting a shot from a White doctor and Indian nurse. Both adults are holding needles as long as their torsos and the frightened student shakes uncontrollably as he approaches the adults. The caption reads, “Sonny, it’s only a little shot”²¹⁰ (ill. 5). Some comics had meanings that critiqued Chemawa more subtly and more seriously. For example, one comic pictures an Indian man standing in front of a carnival tent with a large enter sign pointing to the entrance. A sign on the side of the tent reads, “Carnival, October 25, 1970.” The flag on top of the tent says “Chemawa.” The comic’s caption reads, “Come one, come all. See the fascinating mysteries of Chemawa!!!”²¹¹ (ill. 6). This comic could be commenting on the annual carnival at Chemawa. The carnival was a closed event open only to Chemawa students and staff. Because the man is gesturing and calling out to the area outside of the tent, it is also possible the comic was commenting on the concept of Chemawa as a “fish bowl school” where tourists came to tour what an “Indian school” looked like.

The *Chemawa American* in the late 1960s and early 1970s regularly published comics with the subjects of the comics sad or unmotivated. One student cartoonist, Oliver Kirk, created a series for the *Chemawa American* called “The Sad Indian.”

²⁰⁹ Oliver Kirk, *The Sad Indian* in *Chemawa American* 67, no 1 (September 1970): 3.

²¹⁰ Unknown author, *Snyder’s World* in *Chemawa American* 69, no 2 (November 1972): 2.

²¹¹ Oliver Kirk, Untitled, *The Sad Indian* in *Chemawa American* 67, no 2 (November 1970): 2.

Sometimes the Indian in Kirk's comics found no motivation to go to school. "On certain days it is best not even to get out of bed," read one comic, picturing a downcast Indian boy plopped on the floor with a blanket wrapped around his body (ill. 7).²¹² Another comic's caption read, "Strange! How ill I feel on school mornings and how fast I recover on weekends"²¹³ (ill. 8). Kirk's self portrait shows a strong man standing on a hill, elegant clothes blowing in the heavy wind and rain. Next to the man is a small perhaps dying, perhaps newly growing leafless tree. On the man's cheek is a single tear (ill. 9).²¹⁴ The Sad Indian could be sad about any number of things. We find out the cause of his sadness, however, on the day he finally becomes happy. Titled "The Graduate" the sad Indian grins broadly, dressed in graduate robes and long feathers, proudly holding a rolled parchment. The caption reads, "The time has come for me to be sad no more. Saysh-suva-yak, sooni-nuna-hodoy...sho-ban"²¹⁵ (ill. 10).

Student activism at Chemawa led to some significant changes in the policies and practices at Chemawa. One of the most meaningful activist movements came from Chemawa's boys who argued that the school had no right to regulate their hair length. In the 1960s and 1970s, high school boys around the United States had been fighting for the right to regulate their own hair length. US courts tried hundreds of cases in which schools had suspended or expelled students for refusing to cut their hair. Though the courts were divided over whether schools had a right to dictate dress codes or whether students had a right to express themselves through their appearance, the Supreme Court

²¹² Oliver Kirk, *The Sad Indian* in *Chemawa American* 65, no 2 (November 1968): 4.

²¹³ Oliver Kirk, *The Sad Indian* in *Chemawa American* 65, no 4 (February 1969): 4.

²¹⁴ Oliver Kirk, "That's Oliver Kirk," *The Sad Indian* in *Chemawa American* 67, no 3 (December 1970): 3.

²¹⁵ Oliver Kirk, *Chemawa American* 66, no 5 (May 1970): 4.

refused to hear any appeal.²¹⁶ In fact, Justice Abe Fortas explicitly declared hair regulations unprotected by free speech rights in *Tinker v. Des Moines* (1969), which protected students who wore armbands to school, protesting the Vietnam War. He wrote, "The problem posed by the present case does not relate to regulation of the length of skirts or the type of clothing, to hair style, or deportment. It does not concern aggressive, disruptive action or even group demonstrations. Our problem involves direct, primary First Amendment rights akin to 'pure speech.'"²¹⁷ While Fortas famously declared students did not lose their freedoms at the "schoolhouse gate," what constituted a freedom needing protection was vehemently debated. Gael Graham argues that the debate over high school boys' hair concerned generational definitions of propriety and cleanliness as well as boundaries of gender identity.²¹⁸ Though Fortas spoke for the majority of the Warren Court when he denounced hair regulations as trivial, Justice William Douglas voted in favor of granting certiorari every time a case came to the Court. In one of his dissents to the majority opinion to deny certiorari, Justice Douglas wrote sarcastically,

It comes as a surprise that in a country where the States are restrained by an Equal Protection Clause, a person can be denied education in a public school because of the length of his hair. I suppose that a nation bent on turning out robots might insist that every male have a crew cut and every female wear pigtails. But the ideas of 'life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness,' expressed in the Declaration of Independence, later found specific definition in the Constitution itself, including of course freedom of expression and a wide zone of privacy. I had supposed those guarantees permitted idiosyncrasies to flourish, especially when

²¹⁶ David E. Shelton, "The Legal Aspects of Male Students' Hair Grooming Policies," (Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina, 1980).

²¹⁷ *Tinker v. Des Moines, Independent Community School District*, 393 U.S. 503 (1969): 507-8 (Fortas).

²¹⁸ Gael Graham, "Flaunting the Freak Flag: *Karr v. Schmidt* and the Great Hair Debate in American High Schools, 1965-1975," *Journal of American History* 91, no 2 (Sept. 2004): 522-543.

they concern the image of one's personality and his philosophy toward government and his fellow man.²¹⁹

Graham writes, "Americans could not agree on what long hair meant, how much it mattered, of *if* it mattered (although paradoxically some of them expended considerable energy and passion on a matter they proclaimed trivial)."²²⁰

Like US public schools, Native American boarding schools also had a history of restrictive dress codes. Looking just at the 1950s and 1960s both Chemawa and mainstream public schools associated short hair cuts for boys with Anglo cultural ideals of bodily cleanliness, an organized and controlled private life, and appropriate gender behaviors. Both school systems also experienced activism that led to more liberal dress codes, even in cases where school districts initially maintained a rigid dress code. On the other hand, the history of restrictive dress codes in Native American boarding schools was much more dramatically associated with forced and coerced cultural change of entire peoples. When Native American youth fought for their right to keep their hair long, they were fighting against more than a century of oppression. When the authors of the Indian Student Bill of Rights addressed the right to long hair as a religious freedom they were confronting a battle that had been fought for generations. In 1971, a graduate student at New Mexico State University, Gene Lietka, published an article in the *Journal of American Indian Education* discussing the right of Native American boys to grow their hair long. The most common form of activism for Native American youth was, Leitka wrote, "the return of their ancestral heritage of sporting long hair."²²¹ While many

²¹⁹ *Ferrell et al v. Dallas Independent School District et al.*, 393 U.S. 856 (1968) (Douglas).

²²⁰ Graham, "Flaunting the Freak Flag," 540.

²²¹ Gene Leitka, "Search for Identity Creates Problems for Indian Students," *Journal of American Indian Education* 11, no 1 (1971): 7.

schools were altering their dress codes in response to the changing cultural climate, other school administrations were resisting caving in to student demand. For example, Leitka discussed the mass expulsions at Jones Academy, a boarding school in Oklahoma, because students refused to choose between the options of “haircut” or “paddling.”²²²

While student activism was not as militant or as disruptive at Chemawa as it was on other high school campuses, students did lobby the school administration and student government for change. In March 1970, students challenged the dress code the student council had approved earlier in the school year. In its response, the student council initially upheld parts of the old ideals by still forcing girls to wear skirts and dress in all off campus activities. The *Chemawa American* wrote of the council’s decision, “They decided to uphold the rule that pants for girls may not be worn on some of the educational trips.” While girls could wear pants to school, the pants still had to fall within the council’s definition of proper pants, “It was also brought out that girls should not wear t-shirts or faded blue jeans or for that matter any faded pants at all.”²²³ In an article three years later, the *Chemawa American* noted the significant changes the student council and school administration eventually made in the dress code later that year. The authors noted, “Three years ago the boys couldn’t have their hair below the collar, and their shirts had to be buttoned.” But times were a’changin’ and in 1973, “students can feel to dress the way they choose and not as they are ‘supposed’ to—as long as they dress neatly.”²²⁴ Three years had made a significant difference at Chemawa. As one *Chemawa American* journalist pointed out, “This year the wrestlers are easy to spot. O.S.A.A.

²²² Leitka, “Search for Identity,” 8.

²²³ “Student Council Report,” *Chemawa American* 67, no 5 (March 1971): 7.

²²⁴ “Chemawa Has Changed,” *Chemawa American* 69, no 3 (January 1973): 2.

regulations prohibit long hair on wrestlers, so the entire team has been trimmed of several pounds of hair.”²²⁵ Those few boys who cut their hair stood out in an environment in which boys could finally express themselves and their cultures. In the Appendix, illustration 11 compares photos of the cross country team in 1970 and then in 1972 after boys were allowed to grow their hair out.

Also in 1970 Chemawa began offering art for class credit for the first time in its history. The article announcing the new art classes emphasized, “There is no attempt to force students to work in areas that do not interest them.” Instructor Mr. Averette continued, “We are trying to keep the course on a basis where the students can use their heritage as a background for their work.”²²⁶ Art was being offered for the benefit of the students’ educational lives and not for their direct economic benefit. When students created art for educational, personal, or political purposes, they needed to have the freedom to explore all areas of artistic expression. Crediting art as a part of the educational process allowed students more creative freedom. Art students also worked on group projects, such as murals painted around campus each representing “a traditional tribal design, each telling a tribal story behind the picture.”²²⁷ This reveals a shift not only in the empowerment of youth to cultural expression, but also an acceptance among school authorities that youth came to school with cultural knowledge that could flourish if encouraged. Though Chemawa had long valued art as a commodity, students now created art as educational achievement.

²²⁵ “Grapplers Begin Another Season,” *Chemawa American* 69, no 3 (January 1973): 4.

²²⁶ “Art Classes This Year,” *Chemawa American* 67, no 2 (November 1970): 3.

²²⁷ “Chemawa Art Show Scheduled,” *Chemawa American* 69, no 4 (February 1973): 1.

In the 1970s, students actively organized to make change at Chemawa. For the first time in the student newspaper's history, students regularly used the *Chemawa American* to voice their concerns and frustrations with White society and relations between Native Americans and White Americans. Students also organized groups and clubs to explore and express Native cultures and heritages. Further, students petitioned their school to change policies that had historically limited student cultural expression. Despite these historic changes in student life, after nearly one hundred years of continuous operation Chemawa was on the verge of closure.

Rebuilding Chemawa

Though students were finally changing Chemawa to be an institution that more closely reflected their needs, the school's closure seemed imminent. Chemawa needed a new campus because its buildings were deteriorating. In 1972, the federal government offered to rebuild the boarding school partly in exchange for 72 acres of land the Highway Department would use for the widening of Interstate-5 and for the construction of Interstate-305 into downtown Salem.²²⁸ With a starting grant of \$750,000 for the initial planning stages of a new campus, Chemawa's administration agreed to sell the land. But as had often been the case in the history of relations between the US government and Native nations, the US did not keep up its end of the deal. As construction machines drilled into what was formerly Chemawa's earth, the recession of 1973 hit America and Congress cut \$28 million from the BIA's budget. In order to compensate for this loss, the BIA cut the \$11-15 million new boarding school from its

²²⁸ "Chemawa Gains in Land Trade," *Chemawa American* 69, no 1 (October 1972): 1.

budget.²²⁹ For much of the 1970s, students and staff waited for the federal government to grant the school funds. In 1974, two buildings were condemned and torn down. In early 1976, the auditorium and parts of the gym were likewise condemned and closed. The operating buildings on campus were plagued with “dry rot, leaking roofs, and structural weaknesses.”²³⁰ In late 1976, Mitchell Hall burned down, and though the cause was ruled to be arson, the old dormitory’s dry rot allowed the building to be quickly razed.²³¹ There seemed to be little hope for Chemawa’s future.

Introducing an interview with Superintendent Edward Lonefight, a student reporter for the *Chemawa American* commented, “It may seem like we are in this boat all by ourselves, just us, Chemawa, fighting against the whole world to get a new school.” Lonefight, however, reassured the student body that, “all the tribes back home are pushing for us.” He continued, “this is part of the federal government’s duty with the special relationship it has with the native [sic] Americans and the provisions of treaties.”²³² Though it perhaps should have been the case that the tribes of Chemawa youth supported the school, and though it most definitely should have been the case that the federal government upheld treaty provisions, neither the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians (ATNI) nor the federal government had at that time pledged their support for a new school. Three months after the interview with Superintendent

²²⁹ “Freeze Hits,” *Chemawa American* 69, no 4 (February 1973): 1.

²³⁰ Andrew Leckey, “Chamber Members Take Study Tour of Chemawa,” *Oregon Statesman* (Jan. 30, 1976): 3.

²³¹ Alan Guggenheim, “Indian Affairs Bureau Criticized over Loss of Chemawa Building,” *Oregon Statesman* (Oct 26, 1976): p. 1D; Alan Guggenheim, “Arson guards posted at 5 Chemawa buildings,” *Oregon Statesman* (Oct 26, 1976): 1A.

²³² “Lonefight--Not Fighting Alone,” *Chemawa American* 72, no 4 (December 1975): 1.

Lonefight, Chemawa prepared for a highly anticipated meeting with the ATNI.²³³ Their support would be essential for presenting a more powerful united front to the federal government. Though by constitutional law the federal government was required to uphold treaties, the US had a legal tradition of unconstitutionally asserting plenary power over tribes and discarding treaty provisions.²³⁴ Three months after their analysis of Chemawa, ATNI issued a report stating that the school was “essential” for “the 42 Northwest reservations and urban areas.” They had unanimously voted to support Chemawa and had created a task force to lobby the government on behalf of the current generation of students as well as many generations of students to come. The *Chemawa American* responded with gratitude that “because public schools do not meet our needs as Indian people” the leaders had shown such “positive and united” support for Chemawa.²³⁵

Though the ATNI presented a united front, not all Northwest tribes agreed with the need to rebuild Chemawa. Tribal leaders from the Colville Tribe in Northeastern Washington, for example, had different ideas for Chemawa. Though the Colville Tribe was a part of the Northwest, it was not a member of the ATNI. In the mid-1950s, Senator Henry “Scoop” Jackson had threatened the Colville Tribe with termination. Until the mid-1960s, tribal leaders had done everything possible to fight termination. When a pro-termination tribal council came to power, however, the Colville Tribe pulled out of the anti-termination ATNI. With termination seeming inevitable, one of the Colville Tribes

²³³ "Northwest Affiliated Tribes Meet," *Chemawa American* 72, 5 (February 1976): 2.

²³⁴ David E. Wilkins and Tsianina Lomawaima, *Uneven Ground: American Indian Sovereignty and Federal Law* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001), pp. 98-116.

²³⁵ Vicki Penn, "Continuance of Chemawa Says Affiliated Northwest Tribes," *Chemawa American* 72, no 7 (May 1976): 2.

leading community members, Lucy Covington, sold her cattle and lobbied Congress to save her people's land. Garnering support for an anti-termination council, Covington led the way to a more secure future for her people.²³⁶

Two years prior to ATNI's show of support for Chemawa, Colville leaders had paid the school a surprise visit.²³⁷ The physical conditions of the campus horrified the leaders. One visitor called the dorms unsafe, some with no fire escapes (a particularly dangerous problem considering the Mitchell Hall fire five years later). Another leader noted that the local jail was better furnished than Chemawa. Besides the physical conditions, however, were the cultural conditions at the boarding school. The tribal leaders' first complaint was the lack of Indian staff. They reported that only 16% of the staff was Indian, only one counselor was Native, and the Indian Advisory Board they claimed to be only a "figurehead."²³⁸ Many students used textbooks from earlier grades in the public schools. Not only were these textbooks sub-par; they also were likely intended for a majority White readership. Superintendent Gordon Gunderson noted that while Chemawa did in fact teach "Indian history and culture," (the use of the singular is significant since as of 1969 ten tribes were represented at the school²³⁹) Chemawa probably needed to emphasize history and culture more. Finally, the critique of the boarding school included a story about a boy who brought his tribal regalia to Chemawa

²³⁶ Charles Wilkinson, *Blood Struggle: The Rise of Modern Indian Nations* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2005): 178-182.

²³⁷ Youth from the Colville Tribe made up 5% of the student population of 800.

²³⁸ The Advisory Board, however, had only been formed a year prior. The complaint could be invalidated since they could have still been in the process of setting up. It could also be said that it was despicable Chemawa had taken 90 years to create an Indian advisory board. "Advisory Board Formed," *Chemawa American* 66, no 4 (May 1970): 1.

²³⁹ "Chemawa's Different Tribes," *Chemawa American* 65, no 4 (February 1969): 4.

only to realize he would not need it.²⁴⁰ Chemawa, it seemed, was not an institution for learning about and celebrating tribal cultures and histories.²⁴¹

Chemawa made many changes following the Colville delegation criticisms. Chemawa's central office hired a new superintendent, opened a student center, and refashioned the curriculum to better meet students' cultural needs. Could these changes, substantial though they may have been, change the fundamental nature of Chemawa? Certainly, the changes could not alter its history. In 1973, Colville leaders went before the House Appropriations Committee to propose that Chemawa be moved to the Colville Reservation. In such an uncertain time for Chemawa, the Colville reservation could oversee the building and running of this historic school. In an era of self-determination, they argued, a boarding school run on a reservation could provide the stability for struggling families and youth and yet the youth would not be culturally distanced from their families and nations.²⁴² Lucy Covington of the Colville Tribe argued, "Boarding schools are the savior of many children." She continued, "If you are a Blackfoot Indian regardless of whether you have all those public schools, you have to send some of those children to a boarding school for several reasons, because maybe they want to mingle with just Indian students from different cultures." She concluded, "They have lost their Indianness. They are trying to look and act Indian and yet they are not really reaching,

²⁴⁰ It is striking to find similarities between experiences at Chemawa in the 1970s and anecdotes from memoirs such as Francis La Flesche's from a Presbyterian mission school in the 1860s. La Flesche wrote of a boy who happily brought his Indian costume to school with him, only to have it sent back to his father. Francis La Flesche, *The Middle Five: Indian Schoolboys of the Omaha Tribe* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1963): 26-28. Also, "costume" is the word used in both the *Statesman* article and in La Flesche's book.

²⁴¹ Neil Parse, "Upgrading of Chemawa is Asked by Indians," *Statesman* (March 25, 1971): Sec II p. 15.

²⁴² Department of the Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations for 1974, Hearings before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations House of Representatives, 93rd Cong., 1 sess., May 10, 1973, p. 583-591.

and it frustrates them and then they do the things they are doing today.”²⁴³ In a boarding school located on and operated by the reservation community, Indian youth could most securely and successfully come of age. For these Colville leaders, a boarding school located off a reservation and run by the BIA would remain an institution of assimilation. Building Chemawa a new structure would not fundamentally change the problems inherent in the institution.

When word got out to Oregon’s White communities that Washington residents were hoping to relocate Chemawa, public debate flared about the purpose of an all-Indian boarding school. Five years before the pivotal 1973 decisions regarding Chemawa’s future, Washington state’s Representative Julia Butler Hansen proposed to Commissioner of Indian Affairs Robert Bennett a dramatic change to the boarding school’s structure and purpose. Rather than providing boarding and schooling for Native youth, Chemawa would be rebuilt solely as a dormitory facility. The boarding school’s charges would be educated in the Salem school district and the federal government would compensate the state of Oregon for its services. The obvious question reporters asked Hansen was why would Native youth travel the long distance from their homes to attend public schools in Salem? One of the advantages Hansen listed was that this system would still provide a home for youth in “unhealthy homes.” It would also allow Oregon Natives who had to travel to Oklahoma for boarding school when Chemawa was full a greater chance of living closer to home. More pointedly, however, this program “would begin to put [Native youth] into the mainstream.”²⁴⁴ In another newspaper article, she rephrased,

²⁴³ Department of the Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations for 1974, Hearings before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations House of Representatives, 93rd Cong., 1 sess., May 10, 1973, p. 590.

²⁴⁴ A. Robert Smith, “Chemawa School Struggle Shaping,” *Oregon Statesman* (March 13, 1968): 4.

“Main purpose of the proposal...is to integrate Indian students with non-Indian youngsters.”²⁴⁵ It is not clear if Hansen meant for integration to entail multicultural commingling or if she meant integration to be a euphemism for assimilation. Whatever her meaning, it remains significant that after nearly a century of assimilation-oriented school programs, many US governmental officials still lauded integration with the White community to be a primary goal of education for Native youth. If Hansen equated integration with assimilation it is significant that she saw understood assimilation to be achieved not in the boarding schools, but rather in the public schools.

Five years later, when Chemawa was on the verge of being either closed or rebuilt in Washington, White Oregonians were still ambivalent about the Native American boarding school. In an anonymous editorial in Salem’s *Capital Journal* titled, “Junk Indian School?” the author wrote, “Chemawa is segregated. It rips kids out of their society and culture and drops them in what amounts to a foreign land, among people who don’t understand them and don’t talk to them. It gives them a shot of education—maybe just enough to give them rising expectations—and then puts them right back into the frigid or parched ghettos they came from.” In this short passage, the author revealed many different biases about Native lives. First, the author stated that Chemawa is segregated, but for Americans in the 1970s the term “segregation” had negative connotations. While Native Americans are oppressed peoples, they seek sovereignty and not integration. David Wilkins writes Native Americans are nations, not minorities, so the same principles of equality in integration do not necessarily apply.²⁴⁶ Forcefully

²⁴⁵ “Solon Asks Salem Schools Educate Chemawa Indians,” *Oregon Statesman* (March 14, 1968).

²⁴⁶ David Wilkins, *American Indian Politics and the American Political System* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002): 41-62.

integrating Native peoples into White society is not a liberating equalizer. Rather it can be a nullification of sovereignty. Understanding this distinction is tantamount to understanding the right to separate education for Native youth. Second, the author understood there to be a great divide between Native and White “territory.” The author’s idea revealed that the youth were coming from a familiar and comfortable home to a place that was both confusing and more advanced betrayed an old idea that Native cultures represented backwardness and White cultures represented progress, even if a difficult progress to grasp. As Philip Deloria writes, “Indian country was always to be seen as anachronistic space.”²⁴⁷ Also, the author seemed to assume the majority of entering students would not have a full grasp of English. A 1975 study showed, however, that about seventy percent of Chemawa students spoke little or none of their tribal language.²⁴⁸ Third, the author assumed that going back to the reservation is for the youth to regress. This last assumption is in some ways the most profound. The author values the “frigid or parched ghettos they came from,” as a place where youth could not pursue their dreams and ambitions. The article argued begrudgingly for reforming the problematic school rather than relocating it.²⁴⁹

Though many of its members remained ambivalent about the purpose and policies of Chemawa, the Oregon legislature moved to support the rebuilding of the school at its present campus. White Oregonians, misunderstanding the proposal to move as coming from Representative Julia Hansen instead of from the Colville Tribe, interpreted the

²⁴⁷ Philip J. Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004): 145.

²⁴⁸ Farrow and Oats, “Drop-Out Study of Chemawa Indian School,” 28.

²⁴⁹ “Junk Indian School?” *Capital Journal* (Feb 10, 1973): Section 1, page 4.

proposal as a “threat” to Oregon. In the eyes of White Oregonians, the battle over Chemawa’s future was a territorial battle. Salem senator Keith Burbidge drafted a memorial to Congress asking for funds to rebuild Chemawa on its present location. Stating the “very real threat” that the school would be moved, he sought support for his cause from other Oregon legislators.²⁵⁰ The approved memorial was a clear and strong signal of support for Chemawa from Oregon politicians. Not all politicians, however, supported Chemawa or the idea of Native boarding schools. In an interview with an *Oregon Statesman* journalist, state senator Tom Hartung stated, “I really believe we have done wrong with the Indians...Chemawa is archaic and I hate to see more money spent on it.” The *Statesman* journalist continued, “Hartung added that he disagrees with the idea of ‘segregating Indian students in schools like Chemawa. He called institutions like Chemawa ‘counter-productive’ and suggested instead that the students be allowed to attend schools in more natural setting.”²⁵¹ It is unclear in this article what Hartung meant by the terms “segregated” and “natural.” Did he mean that Native students should not be segregated from White students or that they should not be segregated from their families? A different article quoted Hartung as saying, “money should be spent to improve Indian education in home communities.”²⁵² In the first article, Hartung could have meant that segregating children from their families was unnatural. The term, particularly directly following the Civil Rights Movement, would more likely connote segregation from White students. For Native students, these two types of segregations would not be equivalent. For many White Oregonians, a Native boarding school was perhaps out of

²⁵⁰ “‘Threat’ seen to Chemawa,” *Statesman* (Feb 21, 1973): Section, p. 14.

²⁵¹ “‘Threat’ seen to Chemawa,” *Statesman* (Feb 21, 1973): Section, p. 14.

²⁵² “State Acts to Keep Chemawa,” *Statesman* (Feb 21, 1973): p. 6, section 1.

place in a newly “integrated” world. Oregonians, however, would do all they could to support the school if another state threatened to take it away. Not only were construction and staff jobs at stake, but a sense of ownership was also tied up in the move to support Chemawa.

Despite Chemawa’s history of militant assimilationism, a history that was disturbing for Natives and uncomfortable for Whites, many different groups of adults united to secure the boarding school’s future. In his study of Chemawa in the early 1970s, Ralph Wesemann wrote, “Despite the long history of criticism leveled at boarding schools, there is prevalent in the Northwest the feeling that Indians should, ‘recapture Chemawa for the Northwest,’ to have it provide all that has been viewed as valuable, eliminate all that has been disturbing, and add much of what should or could have been.”²⁵³ The Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians endorsed Chemawa as a positive resource for Native peoples. The Colville Tribe valued the school as an all-Indian boarding school, but argued that Native nations, not the BIA, should operate the school. White politicians and journalists ambivalently supported the boarding school, a school they saw as providing needed services though with flawed methodologies.

Largely absent from state, regional, and national discussions of Chemawa’s future were the voices of students. Though their very futures were tied up in decisions regarding the school and though students most intimately could evaluate the positives and negatives of life at Chemawa, the broader and likely more educated perspectives of adults were consulted more often and more authoritatively than youth opinion. Yet if the school had such strong support from Native nations and White communities, why was the school on the verge of closure? Partly, the campus’s crumbling structure made it unfit for

²⁵³ Ralph E. Wesemann, “Three Boarding Schools,” 2.

occupation. Further, the boarding school was experiencing decreased enrollment on the one hand and increased drop out rates on the other hand. Student opinion, then, was key to the future of Chemawa. Without youth support, the school struggled to enroll and maintain students. Without students, Chemawa remained that empty Indian school located on the periphery of Oregon's capital city.

Many students rallied to support their school and second home, as the funds freeze risked the future of the boarding school. Hundreds of students and alumni wrote letters to politicians and gathered signatures for petitions.²⁵⁴ In the mid 1970s the Graphic Arts classes created a pamphlet advertising the school and explaining why Chemawa needed continued investment. Introducing the pamphlet was a snapshot of Chemawa's proud history: "Over 35,000 students have received a significant part of their basic education and training at this old, yet proud, institution that has met the school needs of several generations of Indian families in many tribal areas." The pamphlet authors continued to discuss the traffic and structural problems of the campus: "The present campus is divided by a railroad and an increasingly heavier traveled country road. Amtrak will increase service and compound the problems of safety and noise pollution. Another railroad has the western boundary restricted."²⁵⁵ A new campus, the students argued, would more safely and healthfully train, "the responsible citizens and leaders of our immediate future."²⁵⁶ Other students showed their love of their school through

²⁵⁴ Donna Penn, "Have Your Say," *Chemawa American* 72, 5 (February 1976): 1; "Petitions Circulated," *Chemawa American* 72, 5 (February 1976): 1; "Comments from Former Students," *Chemawa American* 72, no 6 (March 1976): 4.

²⁵⁵ Graphics Arts classes, "The New Chemawa," in Chemawa Indian School vertical file at Oregon State Library (Salem, OR: 1975).

²⁵⁶ Graphics Arts classes, "The New Chemawa."

reminiscing about old buildings that were scheduled to be razed.²⁵⁷ In school surveys, students unanimously desired a new school and felt betrayed that they could be left in such a precarious situation.²⁵⁸ Frustrated by the lack of transparency regarding their own futures, students called for clarity and understanding concerning a problem that seemed to put the needs of the students, for which the school supposedly existed, last.²⁵⁹

Student Vicki Penn was one of the biggest advocates for rebuilding Chemawa. Representing an action team formed to keep the school functioning, Penn wrote, “If we all work together, there will always be a Chemawa for our children and our children’s children. Chemawa is a part of our Indian heritage. We cannot let it go.” She concluded strongly, “They took our land, now don’t let them take our school!”²⁶⁰ Part of her activism came from the understanding that the US government owed education to Indian children through the provisions of treaties. She wrote, “We’ve stuck it out this far and we’ll make it the rest of the way. We have got to for the future of our Indian people. I read somewhere that the Federal Government will educate the Indians as long as the river flows and the grass grows. Well, we still got a lot of grass left.”²⁶¹ Since the *Chemawa American* was sent to nearly thirty states at this time, Penn addressed a large and diverse audience when she reminded readers of the special relationship between the US government and Native nations. Students such as Penn chose to remain hopeful.

²⁵⁷ “What’s Coming Down?” 72, no 2 (October 1975): 3-5.

²⁵⁸ “Students Favor New School,” *Chemawa American* 72, no 4 (December 1975): 1.

²⁵⁹ Chopper, “Student Doubt,” *Chemawa American* 72, no 4 (December 1975): 6.

²⁶⁰ Vicki Penn, “SOS,” *Chemawa American* 72, no 6 (March 1976): 1.

²⁶¹ Vicki Penn, “School to Use New Units Next Year,” *Chemawa American* 72, no 8 (May 1976): 3.

Penn, however, was not always successful in winning the support of her fellow students in her fight to rebuild the school. A poem Penn published in the *Chemawa American* titled “A Voice from the Past” revealed the complicated views students had of Chemawa:

Once my walls were drenched with tears
because many children died
Now my mind is overcome with fears,
for many people I have cried,

For those who deserve an education
but none they will receive
Because of one person’s discrimination
who people would believe

Why don’t my children take a stand?
Because they have betrayed me
They do not really understand
It’s very hard for them to see what’s plain to see

They’ve taken to tearing down my homes
and throwing beer bottles on my campus
They’ve started smoking in my rooms
and causing a great big rumpus.

But one day in my place they’ll see
under the tallest maple
On a huge stone there’ll be,
Here Lies Chemawa and the Indian People.

Somebody help me help Chemawa.²⁶²

Penn begins her poem with an understanding of the boarding school’s abusive past towards its students. More than was commonly allowed in the *Chemawa American*, Penn showed that she sympathized with students who saw the school as an assimilationist institution. The disrespect and frustration some students showed towards the campus, Penn argued, would only end up hurting Native Americans in the Pacific Northwest.

²⁶² Vicki Penn, “A Voice from the Past,” *Chemawa American* 72, no 3 (November 1975): 9.

Chemawa, despite its history, had become a positive resource worth valuing and maintaining.

Student support for Chemawa was not unanimous, despite *Chemawa American* surveys. Enrollment was dropping at least in part because more schools were being built in Alaska. It is also likely that youth and families understood the school to be a less viable option for a secure alternative living situation, since the school was in fact on the verge of closure. Certainly Chemawa's legacy of aggressive assimilation still tainted the institution. Throughout the eras of termination and self-determination, the *Chemawa American* revealed traces of anti-boarding school sentiment. In an article called "Abide by the Rules," student Anna Melovidov wrote, "Former students who did not like Chemawa have spread some bad stories and exaggerations about the school. I know because before I came here students told me about it, saying it was a bad place to go."²⁶³ Community members had warned her against attending a boarding school because of their experiences at the school. In her article Melovidov argued that students were responsible for making a good experience at Chemawa, but clearly some of her peers disagreed. Perhaps some youth did not support Chemawa because of its lack of clear educational purpose over the prior two decades. Perhaps some youth saw Chemawa as remaining an assimilationist or authoritarian institution. Whatever the case, Chemawa did not always have support from alumni and other Northwest youth.

Some students who wanted Chemawa to remain open took it on themselves to convince other youth to enroll. In an article titled, "United We Stand, Divided We Fall," the newspaper staff highlighted the enrollment problem and urged students to become activists in keeping the school operating. "Chemawa Indian School's enrollment has

²⁶³ Anna Melovidov, "Abide by the Rules," *Chemawa American* 68, no 6 (May 1972): 2.

dropped from 699 in 1971-1972 to 250. We are in danger of being closed down because of the lack of students. In this article we are asking for help.” In just five years time, Chemawa had experienced a dramatic 65% student population decrease (during which it is possible that a student could have started and completed their high school education). The article continued with discussion of the school’s long and proud history. But, the authors warned, the dropping enrollment could mean a reduction in staff. A nearly 50% staff reduction was being proposed.²⁶⁴ The authors worried that if such a reduction took place, not only would Chemawa struggle to efficiently operate, but also recruitment would be an even more difficult task. In order to help alleviate this problem, the authors encouraged students to talk to friends and family about coming to Chemawa. Students had also made a poster advertising their school that they planned to send all over the Northwest. “If Chemawa is to stay open,” the article concluded, “we need more students. We are pulling at our end, so give us a hand at yours.” Chemawa’s future, these students argued, depended on youth opinion of the school.²⁶⁵

Not only was Chemawa recruiting far fewer students than its capacity, but also the dropout rate was atrociously high. For example, in the 1974-1975 school year the student population declined from a total of 488 students to 273 students, a 44% drop. In their 1975 Portland State Masters of Social Work program students Terry Farrow and Gordon Oats studied the reasons for the school’s dropout problem (Table 1). In order to understand why students were dropping out of Chemawa, Farrow and Oats first sought to

²⁶⁴ The article stated that the staff would be reduced from 116 staff members to 63 staff members.

²⁶⁵ "United We Stand, Divided We Fall," *Chemawa American* 72, 5 (February 1976): 1. Though the study only includes a fraction (57 of 273-488) of the school population, for my purposes this study remains significant for its analysis of a still relatively large student population. The student newspaper after all, also gauges only a limited student population.

understand why students came to the school. In their findings they stated, “A majority of Indian children attend boarding schools not for an academic education but because of social problems at home.” Interviews with students who had dropped out, “Leavers,” and students who had continued their education at Chemawa, “Stayers,” revealed that students came to Chemawa primarily for social reasons.

Table 1. Students’ Reasons for Attending Chemawa ^a

<u>Reason</u>	<u>Number</u>
Relative suggest it	4
Didn’t like public schools or had problems there	15
To see what it was like at Chemawa	5
No choice (not able to attend another boarding school)	3
For an education (get diploma and/or said to be easy)	9
To be with other Indian students	9
To be with friends or relatives	6
To get away from home	6

^a Chart from Farrow and Oats, “Drop-out Study,” 20. “Number” represents the number of students who responded to the questionnaire.

Twenty-six percent of the students involved in the study said that they applied to Chemawa to get out of the public schools. Other students desired to study and live with Indian peers, whether because they were Indian, because they already knew their peers, or out of curiosity. Farrow and Oats also concluded that there was sufficient evidence for their first hypothesis in light of statistics concerning the home lives of the students at Chemawa. A staggering 40.5% of students in the study had fathers who were deceased and 14.4% had mothers who were deceased.²⁶⁶

²⁶⁶ Farrow and Oats, “Drop-out Study,” 20.

Farrow and Oats argued, “Students drop out of school not because of scholastic inability but because they are unable to tolerate behavioral restrictions.”²⁶⁷ Of the 215 students who left Chemawa in the 1974-1975 school year, 24% were for disciplinary reasons and 76% were for other reasons.²⁶⁸ Farrow and Oats found, however, that three-fourths of the students in the study were involved in “delinquent behavior,” and that “it may be concluded that the Indian students feel a great antagonism between themselves and the school. They therefore rebel through resistance and delinquency.”²⁶⁹ The conclusion that delinquency was closely related to resistance to the school and its power structures came in part from the students themselves. Farrow and Oats quoted opinions of Chemawa from the students who had dropped out. “They don’t notice you until you do something wrong,” stated one student. Other students said that the staff did not understand the students, and even on the rare occasion that staff elicited student opinion, staff did not intend on really listening to student responses. One student bluntly declared, “It shouldn’t be run like a jail...you’re locked in around here. The only thing missing is the bars.”²⁷⁰ Farrow and Oats concluded, “There is definitely a conflict between student interests and the disciplinarian atmosphere within the halls of Chemawa. Since all of the students are aware that their behavior is closely monitored and yet continue to participate in delinquent activities, we believe that the students require something more or different than a custodial kind of situation at school.”²⁷¹

²⁶⁷ Farrow and Oats, “Drop-out Study,” 21.

²⁶⁸ Farrow and Oats, “Drop-Out Study,” 68.

²⁶⁹ Farrow and Oats, “Drop-out Study,” 31.

²⁷⁰ Farrow and Oats, “Drop-out Study,” 32.

²⁷¹ Farrow and Oats, “Drop-out Study,” 23.

Studies such as Oats and Farrow's can hide the complexities of the reasons that individual Chemawa students dropped out of school. For example, one particularly turbulent weekend at Chemawa had roots in many different problems at the school. Late in the 1975-1976 school year, one of the staff in charge of campus security, a Mr. Lewis, informed the student population that he would be increasing pressure on student parties. "A firm hand is the way to handle these things," he said, "and a little persuading could put an end to it all." School authorities would be cracking down on rule infractions more than they had in the past. The *Chemawa American* reported the student response, "Right after a speech by Mr. Louis, we had the worst weekend of this year's history. As a result 18 students have been dropped or just gave up and went home." While there was a certain amount of triumph that students had not merely listened to the demands of the school authorities, the quiet aftermath left students despondent. Student Isaac Jack wrote, "Without some of our best friends around, this place has lost its old school spirit...Our big pow-wow circles on the lawns have been cut off. The alternative is only to be bored." Some students may have interpreted the administration's decision to cut off student pow-wow circles as prohibiting their cultural activities. Many students felt alienated from the school. Student journalist Isaac Jack ended his report of the weekend with a plea to students to suggest more activities sanctioned by school authorities. "Who knows," he concluded, "you could be happy to be here and not regret it after all."²⁷²

Though students seemed to have little power in the bureaucratic decisions regarding Chemawa's rebuilding, students worked to make their voices heard through their actions to make their boarding school into an institution that accommodated their needs. Students started speaking out about the valuation of White culture over Native

²⁷² Isaac Jack, "Stricter Rules Enforcement: The Boot," *Chemawa American* 72, no 7 (May 1976): 3.

cultures and they formed organizations to make up for the lack of relevant curriculum. Students also worked to change school rules and policies to make Chemawa's atmosphere more conducive to their rights. When the school was on the verge of closure, some students fought for the future of their boarding school, while other students pushed school policies and administrative decisions to the limit. Student transformation of Chemawa had simultaneously played a significant part in bringing the school to the brink of closure and had been key actors in making the school a relevant and vibrant place for Native cultural expression.

In March 1976, Commissioner of Indian Affairs Morris Thompson was called before the Senate Subcommittee on Interior Relations to account for the deteriorating boarding school in Oregon. Why, the Committee demanded to know, had Chemawa not been rebuilt? Senator Mark Hatfield of Oregon began what quickly turned into an intense interrogation of Commissioner Thompson. Hatfield opened the hearing by reviewing the history of Chemawa's efforts to rebuild the school. First, in 1972 the Appropriations Committee had granted nearly \$1 million for the design of a new school and medical facility. Second, in 1975, the Appropriations Committee directed the BIA to request funding from the Committee as soon as the designs for the school had been completed. Third, earlier in 1976, the Committee had ordered the BIA, "to include necessary funds to construct the new facility in its next regular budget estimates."²⁷³ Repeatedly over the last four years, the Senate Appropriations Committee had pushed the BIA to improve the situation at Chemawa.

²⁷³ Department of the Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations for 1977, Senate Subcommittee on Interior Appropriations, 94th Cong., 2 sess., March 2, 1976, p. 696.

Commissioner Thompson had been called before the Committee because the BIA had once again not included rebuilding funds for Chemawa in its budget. In response to Senator Hatfield's inquiry about BIA inaction, Thompson noted that because the school was in disrepair and "not to be habitable by students," emergency funds had been granted for temporary facilities. Thus, action was being taken. Thompson continued that though he was working with the ATNI, the Committee of Concerned Parents, and the school board to come up with "long range plans" for Chemawa, he had also been ordered by the Indian Education Subcommittee to "phase out all off-reservation boarding schools," indicating that he had not granted funds to Chemawa because the school was in fact supposed to be on the slow road to closure.²⁷⁴ Hatfield promptly cut off Thompson saying, "We have been down that road. Do not raise that as an excuse at this point." After Thompson tried to again state he had not appropriated funds because of orders from the Indian Education Subcommittee, Hatfield reminded him that six years ago the BIA had received direct orders from the Senate Appropriations Committee to fund a new school for Chemawa. Fed up with Thompson's evasive answers, Hatfield retorted,

This is an utter disgrace. This is a scandal. This is a public scandal. The BIA has really, I think deserved about all the criticism it is getting and continues to get for its inaction. Committee report after committee report have given you instructions, and you have totally ignored them. You have totally ignored them. We not only have to close two buildings, Mr. Chairman, but we have buildings that are 80 and 90 years old that these Indian students are supposed to be trying to get some kind of an education in...Let me also indicate to you that you obviously have not put very high priority on the instructions of the committees of Congress, or even within your own agency. I have understood that you have low numbers of students there, but the low numbers of course are because a lot of these people do not want to send their youngsters there under such conditions.²⁷⁵

²⁷⁴ Senate Subcommittee on Interior Appropriations, 94th Cong., 2 sess., March 2, 1976, p. 696.

²⁷⁵ Senate Subcommittee on Interior Appropriations, 94th Cong., 2 sess., March 2, 1976, p. 697-698.

Hatfield then asked why the BIA, “in its wisdom,” continued to refuse Chemawa funds when the ATNI, the peoples the BIA purported to represent, fully supported a new school.²⁷⁶ Finally, Hatfield asked Thompson directly, “Would you send your children to that school?” Thompson responded, “No. But I might, if I may—” Hatfield cut off Thompson stating, “I would not send my children to that school.”²⁷⁷ After Thompson continued to try to provide reasons for neither funding nor closing Chemawa, Senator James Abourezk seconded Hatfield’s worries, “Apparently, as Senator Hatfield has said, it is the same hogwash I have been hearing for an awful long time. I am curious to know why it is you cannot make a decision so that these people can find some kind of relief for themselves?”²⁷⁸ Students, alumni, school staff and administration, the Oregon legislature, and the ATNI had dedicated years fighting for a new school. Hatfield in particular had pushed the BIA to support his constituents, yet the BIA had continually evaded action.

Relief, however, was finally on its way. Though the majority of the BIA’s boarding schools would eventually be closed, Chemawa was one of only a few boarding schools that continued to operate. Later in 1976, after the Congressional representatives of Northwest states had strengthened their stance in support of Chemawa, the BIA finally appropriated funds to rebuild Chemawa Indian School. The new campus would be built in three phases. Phase one included academic buildings, kitchen and dining facilities, and the gymnasium. In phase two the dormitories, the auditorium, and the swimming pool were to be built. Finally, in phase three extra dormitories would be built if they were

²⁷⁶ Senate Subcommittee on Interior Appropriations, 94th Cong., 2 sess., March 2, 1976, p. 700.

²⁷⁷ Senate Subcommittee on Interior Appropriations, 94th Cong., 2 sess., March 2, 1976, p. 700.

²⁷⁸ Senate Subcommittee on Interior Appropriations, 94th Cong., 2 sess., March 2, 1976, p. 703.

determined to be necessary.²⁷⁹ In December 1979, Student Body President Sharon White Bear and former School Board Chairman James McKay officiated at the Ribbon Cutting Ceremony for Chemawa's new school.²⁸⁰ Finally in January 1980 students and staff made the final move into the new facilities.²⁸¹ As the *Oregonian* proclaimed, Chemawa was realizing a dream after a long fight.²⁸²

²⁷⁹ Department of the Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations for 1978, Supplemental Appropriation Bill for the Subcommittee on Interior Appropriations of the Senate, 95th Cong., 1 sess., September 12, 1977, p. 59.

²⁸⁰ "New Chemawa School Dedicated," *Chemawa American* 75, no 2 (December 1979): 1, 2, and 5.

²⁸¹ "The Big Move," *Chemawa American* 75, no 3 (February 1980): 1-2.

²⁸² Kathie Durbin, "Chemawa School Realizing Dream after Long Fight," *Oregonian* (June 11, 1979): B1.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

In the late 1970s, the *Journal of Native American Education* published an article declaring boarding schools to be at a crossroads. Most Native Americans, author William Benham stated, supported boarding schools and it was non-Indians leading the fight against boarding schools, mostly arguing that they were too costly. Despite dropping enrollment, many boarding school remained important resources for Natives peoples across the United States. Benham continued, “We do not hear enough about the students who attend them, their needs and what they do with the education they gain at the residential school.” He further stated that, “no study of the cost of the operation of a school can be valid without some serious consideration of the educational needs of the students.”²⁸³ Without input from students, decisions regarding schools would remain uninformed.

At Chemawa, more than merely making their opinions known, students came together to transform their school into an institution that was more responsive to their needs. By the late 1970s, when tractors were breaking Chemawa’s ground to build a new campus, the school had undergone enormous change. Less than two decades before, in the early 1960s, Chemawa had been an institution whose purpose was to bring Native youth from “backwardness” into “modernity.” Chemawa’s staff and much of its student body proclaimed Chemawa’s vocational program the necessary “modern” education for Native youth. Christian clergy and churches worked closely with school programs and policies to mold youth into Christian adults, and staff relegated Native cultures to safety

²⁸³ William J. Benham, “Residential Schools at the Crossroads,” *Journal of American Indian Education* 16, no 2 (January 1977): 23.

zones of controlled and contained events. Influenced by national movements for self-determination and students rights, Chemawa students in the 1970s started organizing to bring change to their school. Students formed clubs to explore and engage Alaskan, Navajo, and Northwest Indian cultures and heritages. Artists and writers used the student newspaper to express discontent, concern, and hope for the situations of Native American peoples. Students lobbied the school administration and the student council to make policy changes such as allowing boys to grow their hair long and including Native art classes in the accredited curriculum. In response to student actions and community demand, Chemawa administration changed the school's curriculum to emphasize tribal cultures, featuring "classes on Indian history, literature, language, art, food, and clothing."²⁸⁴ Led by student efforts, Chemawa had become a boarding school for cultural discovery and expression.²⁸⁵ Chemawa had entered a new era.

²⁸⁴ John Furey, "A Period of Adjustment," *Statesman-Journal* (April 4, 1982): 1B and 5B.

²⁸⁵ Sally Bly, "As a New Chemawa Looms, Indians Debate the Old," *Capital Journal* (February 24, 1978): 5A; "New Chemawa School Dedicated," *Chemawa American* 75, no 2 (December 1979): 1.

APPENDIX A

OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES STAFF WORKSHOPS, 1961

From: "May and August Workshops," *Chemawa American* 58, no 1 (October 1961): 3.

The theme of May and August all-staff workshops was "A Quest for Quality." The school administration stated the general problems needing attention. These were uniformity in procedures, communications, evaluation of past workshops, and updating or upgrading course outlines.

Each department planned for the coming year with these objectives in mind:

1. To equip the student through general and special training with the skills necessary for satisfactory living.
2. To prepare him for the responsibilities and privileges of family life as a contributing member of our American society.
3. To develop the ability and desire to evaluate and improve his own standards of behavior.

As a result of the planning done in the workshops, we hope to achieve the following outcomes this year:

- a. Maximum use of English
- b. Good health, proper posture, physical fitness, and suitable clothing.
- c. Skills, good work habits, and proper attitudes toward work.
- d. Understanding of high moral and spiritual standards and values in the application to daily living.
- e. Appreciation and skill in recreational activities for use in leisure time.
- f. Good personality, and attitude toward helping others.
- g. Social acceptance by others both in personal habits and in living and working areas.
- h. Patriotism and loyalty to the school, community, and country in teaching and practicing democracy.
- i. Consistency and perseverance toward acceptable improvement.
- j. Thrift; concepts of spending and saving; use of time; conservation of materials, supplies, equipment, clothing.
- k. Taking and following directions.
- l. Care and respect for property.
- m. Good sportsmanship and elimination of fighting.
- n. Standards and values—honesty, dependability, punctuality, accuracy, reliability, judgment, stability, friendliness, tact, enthusiasm, initiative, sincerity, confidence, courtesy, ability to take criticism, consideration for others, etc.

APPENDIX B

ILLUSTRATIONS FROM THE *CHEMAWA AMERICAN*

Illustration 1



Max Adams, a sophomore from Barrow, Alaska, demonstrates the Eskimo high kick during an N.I.C.E. visit to Oregon College of Education.

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²⁸⁶ *Chemawa American* 69, no 2 (November 1972): 3.

Illustration 2



This is formal wear that the etiquette books never dreamed of. Bobby Tomaskin is the dancing brave.

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²⁸⁷ *Chemawa American* 69, no 2 (November 1972): 4.

Illustration 3

How do you tell the dancer from the
dance?



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²⁸⁸ *Chemawa American* 69, no 2 (November 1972): 4.

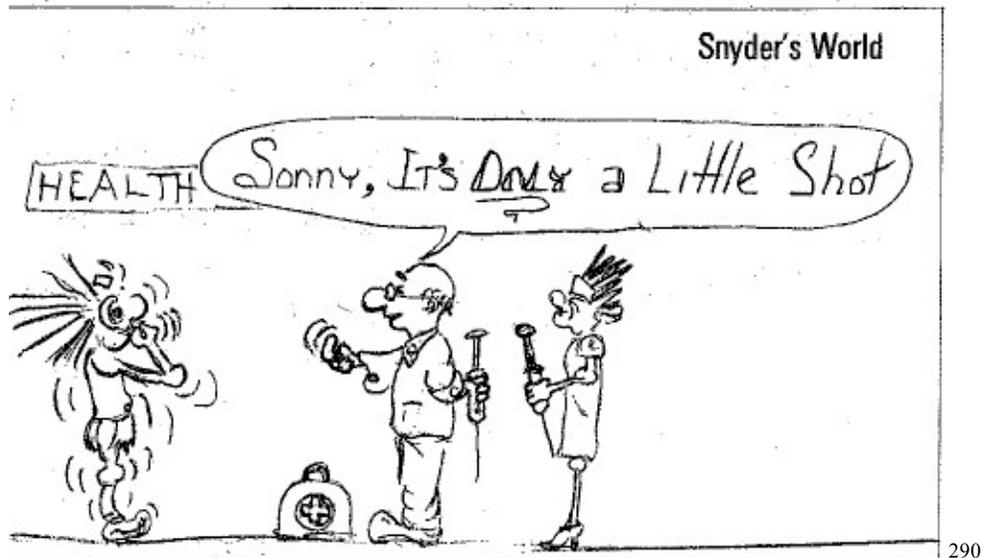
Illustration 4

THE SAD INDIAN



Well, back to the same old grind again! 289

Illustration 5



²⁸⁹ Oliver Kirk, *The Sad Indian* in *Chemawa American* 67, no 1 (September 1970): 3.

²⁹⁰ Unknown author, *Snyder's World* in *Chemawa American* 69, no 2 (November 1972): 2.

Illustration 6

THE SAD INDIAN



COME ONE, COME ALL. SEE THE FASCINATING MYSTERIES OF CHEMAWA!!!

Illustration 7

THE SAD INDIAN



ON CERTAIN DAYS IT IS BEST
NOT EVEN TO GET OUT OF BED 291

²⁹¹ Oliver Kirk, *The Sad Indian* in *Chemawa American* 65, no 2 (November 1968): 4.

Illustration 8

THE SAD INDIAN



STRANGE! HOW ILL I FEEL ON
SCHOOL MORNINGS AND HOW FAST
I RECOVER ON WEEKENDS.

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²⁹² Oliver Kirk, *The Sad Indian* in *Chemawa American* 65, no 4 (February 1969): 4.

Illustration 9

THE SAD INDIAN



**That's Oliver Kirk
'The Sad Indian'**

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²⁹³ Oliver Kirk, "That's Oliver Kirk," *The Sad Indian* in *Chemawa American* 67, no 3 (December 1970): 3.

Illustration 10

THE GRADUATE



The time has come for me to be sad no more. BAYSH-SUYA-YAK, SOONI-NUNAL, HODOY ... SHO-BAN. 294

Illustration 11



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²⁹⁴ Oliver Kirk, *Chemawa American* 66, no 5 (May 1970): 4.

²⁹⁵ "Braves Take C. C. Victory," *Chemawa American* 67, no 1 (September 1970): 3 and "State Champions Head for Kansas," *Chemawa American* 69, no 2 (November 1972): 1.

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