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Indigenous Women's Activism in Preserving Native American Education in the Late 19th and Early 20th Centuries

Honors Program Thesis
Authored by Heather Foster
Advised by Meg Devlin and Asilia Franklin-Phipps
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Abstract:

This thesis examines Indigenous women who fought against federal Indian policies that aimed to eliminate Indigenous cultures and tribal sovereignty. At the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries, Sarah Winnemucca, Zitkala-Sa (Gertrude Simmons Bonin), and Laura Cornelius Kellogg fought to break down white assimilationist schooling and bring education back to Native nations. Their political work, writing, and leadership highlight how Native women, although seen as subsidiary in white society at the time because of both their race and gender, were at the forefront of Indian political issues.

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- Native
- Indigenous
- Sarah Winnemucca
- Zitkala-Sa
- Laura Cornelius Kellogg

Introduction:

"Ye have it in your power to say
Of what, and when a race shall be;
Ye spring from noble warrior blood,
As brave as Saxon, Roman, Greek…"[1]

This quote from Laura Cornelius Kellogg's *A Tribute to the Future of My Race* rings true for the preconceptions most settlers held about Indigeneity. Historically, white settlers believed that Native Americans were subsidiary and animalistic. However, before and since contact with white settlers, Native nations held unique educational practices which countered the perceived wisdom of settlers that Native Americans needed to adopt systems of Anglo-American education. During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Native women worked against white conformity and advocated for actions that would retain tribal education on their Native land. However, the federal government made a prominent effort to uphold federal Indian boarding schools and the policy of the Dawes Act which vigorously worked to strip Native education from sovereign land.

This essay focuses on three prominent Native women who countered that assimilationist narrative and worked as tribal activists. Sarah Winnemucca (Paiute), Zitkala-Sa (Yankton Sioux), and Laura Cornelius Kellogg (Oneida) strategically placed themselves into the conversations about educational assimilation policies and countered them. During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Zitkala-Sa, Sarah Winnemucca, and Laura Cornelius Kellogg emerged as critical leaders who produced lasting educational advancements that openly resisted white assimilationist schooling. Through their pedagogical activism and achievements, these Indigenous women dedicated their lives to the reclaiming of tribal education on Native land.

[1] Kellogg, Laura C. *A Tribute to the Future of My Race*. 1903. Lines 121-124.

Federal Indian Boarding Schools

From the beginning of first contact with settlers up to today, the disenfranchisement of Native education has been widely seen throughout history. When beginning this historical analysis, it is appropriate and imperative to first discuss the history of Indian education in the United States. The United States federal government made an intensive effort to assimilate Indigenous people into the dominant white society. Beginning with reservation day schools and eventually transforming into off-reservation industrial schools, the federal government, with the help of New England missionaries, attempted to dismantle any sort of cultural heritage of Native youth.[2] Through this tactic, the federal government understood that in order to conform Indians into white society, there had to be a sweeping erasure of Indigenous education, starting at their homelands. The movement of assimilationist education can be traced back to the mis-understanding of the makeup of Native societies. During this time period, Americans tried to push Anglo-American gender roles on to Indigenous cultures. Patriarchal gender roles dominated the late 19th and early 20th centuries social sphere. Thus, Americans viewed the gender relationship of Native culture as backwards and falsely believed that women were enslaved to their husbands. In Native culture, women and men's jobs were rather equitable, tilling land, farming, cutting wood, etc, were jobs both genders would partake in.[3] Therefore, it was a shock to white Americans at the time to see women doing the work of a man although there were no

[2] Trennert, Robert A. "Educating Indian Girls at Nonreservation Boarding Schools, 1878-1920." *The Western Historical Quarterly* 13, no. 3 (1982): 27.
[3] Trennert. "Educating Indian Girls at Nonreservation Boarding Schools." 272.

existing gender binaries present in Indigenous culture that delegated specific jobs. More specifically, while the men hunted, the women cleared land and tended to the farm land.[4]

The perpetual image of Indigenous people being portrayed as unintelligent was expressed by white Anglo-Americans. Because the framework of Native society did not fit the construct of white culture, Native Americans were consistently under the scrutinizing microscope of whites. Thus, the basic effort to save these people by "educating" them was created. 19th century missionaries and their white supporters believed that in order to progress successfully and away from destruction, saving the Indigenous "heathens" was crucial.[5] Because Americans erroneously believed that Native women were enslaved to their husbands and fathers, Anglo-American society wanted to create schools to save and educate Native women on how to do settler women's work. In the mid to late 19th century, a movement was created where New England missionaries worked diligently in gathering girls from their reservations to place them in domestic boarding schools. Through this endeavor and heightened nationalism, white schooling was a way to promote the spread of Christianity and civilization.[6] Missionary education was one of the numerous denomination organizations formed in order to educate. Held in their values:

> "as one missionary put it: 'This can only be effectively accomplished by taking them away from the demoralizing and enervating atmosphere of camp life and reservation surroundings and concomitants. Although bringing adults to knowledge of gospel truths was importants, it was the rising generation who provided hope for the salvation of the native population."[7]

Thus the schooling of Indian girls became essential. Settler society in the late 19th century set up an ideal surrounding gender roles and aimed to push their ideas on Native societies. In doing so,

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[4] Ibid
[5] Devens, Carol. "'If We Get the Girls, We Get the Race': Missionary Education of Native American Girls." *Journal of World History* 3, no. 2 (1992): 222.
[6] Devens. "'If We Get the Girls…" 221.
[7] Devens. "'If We Get the Girls…" 223.

assimilating Native girls became the prerogative. There was a commitment to educate Indian women in order to incorporate them in the white women's skills of domesticity.

Despite this focus on girls and women, missionaries, officials, and the federal government understood that in order to reform Native cultures, they had to begin with all Indian children. Open enrollment of female Native Americans was low for the beginning missionary schools and often resulted in high dropout rates.[8] Thus, missionaries and the government understood that a more effective tactic in ensuring that Indians would assimilate into white culture was developed. There were many tactics that missionaries took to get Native children to their newly formed education schools, but coercion by luring them with false promises was the most common. To gain control and trust of a child that didn't speak English was extremely difficult. Thus, missionaries employed the use of food, singing, candy, or other approaches in order to gain trust.[9] Zitkala-Sa, also known by her missionary pen name, Gertrude Simmons Bonnin, recounts the memory she had with a missionary who came to her family's door, attempting to lure her to come to their school, "[he] had told me of the great tree where grew red, red apples; and how we could reach out our hands and pick all the red apples we could eat. I had never seen apple trees. I had never tasted more than a dozen red apples in my life…The missionaries smiled into my eyes and patted my head. I wondered how mother could say such hard words against him."[10]

Missionaries deliberately persuaded Native children and their parents by promising the education of new languages. However, the reluctance of Native parents to send their children off to schools hundreds of miles away from their homeland was understandable. Based on the

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[8] Devens. "If We Get the Girls…" 225.
[9] Devens. "If We Get the Girls…" 224.
[10] Zitkala-Sa Zitkala-Sa Cathy N Davidson and Ada Norris. 20062003. *American Indian Stories Legends and Other Writings*. New York etc: Kindle. The Big Red Apples.

premise that they knew education was a means to protect their children from the growing Anglo-American hatred of Indigeneity, Native parents like Bonnin's mother permitted her child to go to missionary school.[11] Bonnin's mother permitted her to board at the Indians school because she was told that her child would be given an adequate education. However, what Native parents like Bonnin's mother did not know was how her child would have to endure the falsification and dehumanization of her original culture. However, white conformity was so severe that the willingness of Native elders to allow Native children to attend a boarding school seemed like their only option in a world that would always be against them.

The story of Bonnin's beginning interaction with Christian missionaries demonstrates the eagerness Native children had when hearing about the missionary schools. However, Bonnin was a victim of these false promises offered by Christian missionaries during her childhood. Her account was thoroughly documented in her book *American Indian Stories, Legends, and Other Writing*s. Much of the information provided for the experience prior, during, and after missionary boarding schools can be provided by Bonnin's detailed narration.

For many Native children, the boarding schools were the first contact these children had with a world outside their own. Bonnin retold the story of the numerous stares, glares, and looks she received on the train Eastward from white people. Dressed in her traditional clothes, mothers allowed their children to stare closely at young Bonnin which kept her on the verge of tears her entire train ride.[12] Bonnin's account showcases how Native children, even during their transportation to the boarding schools, were quickly under the scrutinizing microscope of white Americans. The dehumanization and objectification provided by white families riding the train

[11] Devens. "If We Get the Girls…" 227.
[12] Zitkala-Sa Cathy N Davidson and Ada Norris. 20062003. *American Indian Stories Legends and Other Writings*. New York etc: Kindle. The Land of Red Apples.

served as the introduction for many Native girls on what they would experience in their new outside world.

In many Native cultures, the preservation of long hair was a necessity. Bonnin shared in her autobiographical writing how she was forcibly tied to a chair and violently ripped from a piece of her heritage and home: her long black hair. Bonnin shares, "I remember being dragged out, though I resisted by kicking and scratching wildly. In spite of myself, I was carried downstairs and tied fast in a chair. I cried aloud, shaking my head all the while until I felt the cold blades of the scissors against my neck, and heard them gnaw off one of my thick braids. Then I lost my spirit. Since the day I was taken from my mother I had suffered extreme indignities."[13]

Bonnin relates the erasure of her spirit through the forced removal of hair and other unique markings. Bonnin's story exhibits how boarding schools made sure, even as quickly as the day they arrived, to strip Native girls of their culture. Bonnin describes in her biography about her time at Quakers' Indiana Manual Labor Institute in Wabash. Many Native girls suffered from the total diminishment of their original culture. Swiftly, many were taught of the proper "Christian womanhood" and trained in girlhood. The traditional definition, as it was defined during this time period, was defined as being Christain, pious, domestic, submissive, and pure.[14]As it can be assumed, resistance and confusion.

This was a common experience for many girls. The culture and customs from their homeland and families were expected to be left behind in this new place. More so, missionaries believed, by their own standards, that Native women were "careless, dirty… and woefully unfamiliar with the lore, paraphernalia, and routines of female domesticity."[15]

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[13] Zitkala-Sa. *American Indian Stories.* Kindle. The Cutting of My Long Hair.
[14] Devens. "If We Get the Girls…" 228.
[15] Ibid

Native girls were quickly put into the category that they were to be saved from their own unknowing and damnation. These girls were regarded as unintelligent and unbecoming to traditional society due to their appearance, language, and the culture they come from. Thus, when they were seen fit enough and up to the standard intelligence, they were sent back to their Native land. Presumably, the state in which these girls went back into their Native nations were completely altered. Bonnin shares how the interpersonal relationships within her community and family were altered, "during this time I seemed to hang in the heart of chaos, beyond the touch or voice of human aid… My mother had never gone inside of a schoolhouse, and so she was not capable of comforting her daughter who could read and write. Even nature seemed to have no place for me. I was neither a wee girl nor a tall one; neither a wild Indian nor a tame one."[16] Where is the place for an Indian girl who's entire being has been remodeled and then sent forth back to her old Native land? Without a doubt, Bonnin and many other Native girls who went through the throes and demoralization of federally-run boarding schools felt like outsiders when they returned back to their homeland.

While Anglo-American society believed that these girls did not have the capacity or ability to create change and retaliation against the new system, the work that Bonnin produced showcases how Native girls took back their autonomy and cultures.

Zitkala-Sa Challenges Indian Schools

[16] Zitkala-Sa. *American Indian Stories.* Kindle. Four Strange Summers.

Bonnin showed tremendous pedagogical resistance to the regime of the federally-run boarding schools. Bonnin was an example of a little Indian girl turned "educationally civilized." She was thrusted out of the program and left wondering what to do next. When Bonnin graduated from the Manual Labor Institute, she knew she had excelled in her studies in both music and literature. Thus, Bonnin was presented with the opportunity to bring her talents to Carlise, an Indian boarding school.[17] Carlisle was the first federal Indian boarding school and was located in Pennsylvania. Carlisle was yet another stark location of the displacement and deculturation of Indian children, like the missionary schools that predated it. Bonnin was an exemplary student by the time she graduated from the Manual Labor School. In 1887, Bonnin moved to Carlisle, Pennsylvania where she willingly took a teacher position at Carlisle.[18] However, as time went on, Bonnin began to realize her decision was woefully made, "Alone in my room, I sat like the petrified Indian woman of whom my mother used to tell me. I wished my heart's burdens would turn me to unfeeling stone…For the white man's papers I had given up my faith in the Great Spirit. For these same papers I had forgotten the healing in trees and brooks. On account of my mother's simple view of life, and my lack of any, I gave her up, also."[19] Up alone at night and throughout her days, Bonnin understood that she had made the wrong choice. While in one of her classes, an idea came to her mind to resign her position as a teacher and follow the course that has been deeply rooted in her since her childhood days at her boarding school: fight against white assimilationist education.

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[17] Enoch, Jessica. "Resisting the Script of Indian Education: Zitkala Ša and the Carlisle Indian School." *College English* 65, no. 2 (2002): 117–41. https://doi.org/10.2307/3250759. 119.
[18] Ibid
[19] Zitkala-Sa. *American Indian Stories.* Kindle. Retrospection.

Once Bonnin escaped the oppression and exploitation of Carlisle, she moved to Boston to pursue her literary career and musical talents. Bonnin quickly used her proficient skills in writing to openly combat the silent erasure of Indian voices.

Displayed in figure 1, is a photograph of Bonnin taken in 1898, just one year after her departure from Carlisle.[20] Clearly shown in this image, her long black hair is draped down her neck and back. Bonnin openly challenged the idea of how missionary educators made an effort to quickly cut long hair from Indian children, severing their physical and spiritual ties to their family, heritage, and culture. Bonnin made a statement to the boarding schools she previously attended and belonged to. She employed both femininity and her Native heritage. Bonnin deliberately demonstrated in this photo by holding the violin how she openly took the education of her musical talents from her time at Indiana Manual Labor Institute and was able to blend it into her Native culture. More so, a major part of her aim after leaving the federal boarding system was to "convince [Eastern society] that Indian peoples possessed abilities equal to those of whites."[21] She attempted to bridge the gap between Anglo and Native culture, implying them as equal. Bonnin aimed to prove to white Americans how Native Americans were able to become highly educated while still retaining their original culture and heritage.

Furthermore, Bonin began writing about her disdain and opposition to anti-Indian educational principles. Bonin's exemplary writings in her autobiographical essays showcase how

[20] "Zitkala-Ša (Red Bird / Gertrude Simmons Bonnin) (U.S. National Park Service)." NPS.gov (U.S. National Park Service). Last modified September 1, 2022. https://www.nps.gov/people/zitkala-sa.htm.
[21] Susag, Dorothea M. "Zitkala-Sa (Gertrude Simmons Bonnin): A Power(Full) Literary Voice." *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 5, no. 4 (1993): 3–24. http://www.jstor.org/stable/20736763. 5-6.

she was able to transform her experience at the Manual Labor institute and Carlisle and intellectually transform it to regain autonomy as an Indian woman. Her writings in *American Indian Stories and Legends* exemplified the experience, alienation, and total erasure of culture many Indian children felt at these institutions. Bonnin's way to communicate her lived experiences and the reconciliation between two polarized cultures demonstrates how Native women were remodeling their understanding of their culture coupled with white assimilation tactics. More importantly, Bonnin's writing and activism did more than openly resist assimilationist policies. Due to her rhetoric and pedagogical resistance, Bonnin refused to remain a victim and a byproduct of what could come out of the "glorious" system of off-reservation schools. Instead, she was an educated Yankton Sioux woman who condemned the erasure and assimilation of Indian voices.

Part of Bonnin's prerogative in condemning Carlisle, was first calling out the school's most basic premises: "(1) The 'savage' must be civilized; (2) that tribal barriers must be broken down to allow the Indian to become an individual; and (3) that the English language is the ticket to success."[22] Moreover, she rebelled against founder Richard Henry Pratt's refrain on killing the savage, and saving the man within them.[23]A portion of the ongoing educational debate in her literature, Bonnin fought for educational sovereignty that was opposite to the style displayed by Pratt. Shown in her writing style, the reader can feel the disdain, disgust, and exhaustion in her letter to fellow activist Carlos Montezuma:

> "History of the pale-faced races shows that to be true–Today is the product of twenty centuries of recorded time & no one knows how much unwritten ages! I resent Carlisle's talking of you as it does. Its talk– boast of you as a savage Apache and now an honorable physician in Chicago– the result of Education!! I guess if the character was not in you– savage or otherwise– Education could not make you the man you are today. It was not

[22] Enoch."Resisting the Script of Indian Education." 124
[23] "Richard Henry Pratt Carlisle Indian School." Carlisle Indian School Project. Last modified June 17, 2020. https://carlisleindianschoolproject.com/past/.

> that you were Indian– not that civilization was an irresistible power– but because {in an unusual measure} the Spirit of a Universal God was {& is} in you!"[24]

During a time when the erasure of Indian cultures and thus tribal sovereignty was the primary goal of the United States federal government in relation to Native people, Bonnin's radical writing and open opposition to the administration of Indian education was both revolutionary and progressive. Her activism highlighted how the attempted erasure of Indian voices, culture, and political identity did not work. More so, her pioneering work laid the groundwork for many other reformist Native women to resist Anglo-Western culture. Her claim for educational sovereignty illustrated that pedagogical resistance through writing was possible and certainly effective in gaining the attention of fellow Native Americans and the federal government. Through her various memoirs and autobiographical essays, Bonnin continues to be a prominent and influential figure in the history of Native American education.

Sarah Winnemucca

Prior to the beginning of missionary schools, Native women in the early 19th century were actively fighting against assimilation policies that were directly designed to silence and erase any remnant of Nativism. Sarah Winnemucca was a prolific interpreter, educator, author, and activist who used her multilingualism as a source of power among her people to fight against educational assimilation.[25] Born somewhere around 1844, Winnemucca was a part of the Paiute Nation with her grandfather being the chief of the entire tribe across Nevada.[26] Detailed in her autobiographical book *Life Among the Piutes: Their Wrongs and Claims*, Winnemucca explains

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[24] Lewandowski, Tadeusz, ed. *Zitkala-Sa : Letters, Speeches, and Unpublished Writings, 1898-1929*. Boston: BRILL, 2017. Accessed November 1, 2022. ProQuest Ebook Central. 31.
[25] Sorisio, Carolyn. "Sarah Winnemucca, Translation, and US Colonialism and Imperialism." *MELUS* 37, no. 1 (2012): 35–60. http://www.jstor.org/stable/41440712. 35.
[26] Winnemucca Sarah. 1994. *Life among the Piutes : Their Wrongs and Claims*. Reno: University of Nevada Press. Kindle. First Meeting of Piutes and Whites.

her fear and disdain of white settlers as a child and how she transformed those feelings into resistance against colonialism. It is important to consider Sarah Winnemucca's pedagogical resistance and representational strategies as an Indigineous woman because her activism displays how Native women were present in the early conversations surrounding Native education in the early 19th century. Although Winnemucca is classified under the early nineteenth century, her use of literary and presentational tactics in the colonial context were known transnationally due to her writing, convention hearings, and prolific relationship with white settlers. Thus, allowing her a place in the conversation of Native women who pushed the boundaries of Indigenous conformity.

Prior to her years of political activism, Winnemucca and her nation were involved in colonial relations due to her position as interpreter between the Paiute people and the federal government.[27] During their relationship with white outsiders who strategically and continuously encroached on the Northern Paiute land, Winnemucca witnessed the beginning of reservation systems which were designed to "bring Indian people within the bounds of American national domesticity."[28] She observed the interactions between her people, white settlers, and the U.S. army. Winnemucca writes in *Life Among the Piutes: Their Wrongs and Claims* about the various consistent conflicts her nation had with the whites, "In 1865 we had another trouble with our white brothers. It was early in the spring, and we were then living at Dayton, Nevada, when a company of soldiers came through the place and stopped and spoke to some of my people, and said, 'You have been stealing cattle from the white people at Harney Lake.'"[29] Winnemucca goes on to explain that her people had nothing to do with the allegations against them. As a result of

[27] Sorisio. "Sarah Winnemucca…" 37.
[28] Ibid
[29] Winnemucca. *Life among the Piutes.* Kindle. Reservation of Pyramid and Muddy Lakes.

the white's accusations against her native tribe, white soldiers opened fire into an unexpecting camp of Paiute people who had nothing to do with the situation.[30]

I use the story of white soldiers killing dozens of innocent Paiute people from Winnemucca's autobiographical novel to showcase how this story is just one of many. This story, along with many more, served as the catalyst for Winnemucca's pivotal role against assimilation policies. Due to the stain that the U.S. government left upon her and the Paiute people, Winnemucca took her proficient multi-linguistic skills as an interpreter between the U.S. government and Native people and transformed it. Winnemucca was keenly aware of the interpretations white settlers gave about Inidgenous people, particularly Native women. Joanna Scherer comments on the stereotypical beliefs Americans had about Indigenous women:

> "The imagery of the Native American Indian Princess was firmly established by the 1860's. In the iconography of of the New World from the 16th century, 'America' was represented by the image of a Native American woman, a 'princess' or 'queen…' [in the] allegorical figure of a young woman in regal pose with long dark hair, and often wearing quasi-Caribbean feathered headdress and skirt…"[31]

Portrayed in figure 2, Sarah Winnemucca strategically used the stereotypical portrayal of "Indian Princess" as her drawing card.[32] Moreover, Winnemucca dressed in a traditional style that was not at all akin to the custom of Paiute culture.[33] Showcased at conventions and other discussions to make purposeful statements on subjects she wanted to be known, Winnemucca was seen in this formal style and was frequently photographed. Unfortunately, yet intelligently, Winnemucca knew that wearing elaborately decorated nontraditional costumes and portraying herself as the "Indian Princess" model would effectively allow her to lobby as an Indian activist in a period

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[30] Ibid
[31] Scherer, Joanna Cohan. "The Public Faces of Sarah Winnemucca." *Cultural Anthropology* 3, no. 2 (1988): 178–204. http://www.jstor.org/stable/656350. 187.
[32] "Sarah Winnemucca." National Portrait Gallery. Accessed September 25, 2022. https://npg.si.edu/object/npg_NPG.82.137.
[33] Scherer. "The Public Faces of Sarah Winnemucca." 179.

when women in general did not have particular power in the male dominated sphere. Yet again exemplified is an Indigenous woman who used her Indigeneity and gender to fight against Anglo-American culture in ways that did not allow her to be a victim of the United States' regime. Instead, she made a place for herself as both a woman and Indian who did not conform to the white standard. Winnemucca lobbied and fought for various types of reform policies not just for her home nation of the Paiutes, but for all Indigenous nations. Winnemucca understood her role and power not just as an Indigenous woman, but one that was highly educated and was capable of creating reform. Winnemucca recognized how she could take her unique private education experience and the knowledge of the attempted assimilation of Native Americans and be the change Indiginous Nations needed.

One of the issues that Winnemucca diligently challenged was the concept of education. Although Winnemucca was never sent to an off-reservation school like the ones described thoroughly by Zitkala-Sa, she spent much time with a white family under Major William Ormsby at Mormon Station where she was taught "formal" education. When her family attempted to enroll her in a white dominated public school, she was denied due to being Indian.[34] Arguably, this had a profound effect on her interpretation of white people and education. While in her adult life, Winnemucca's activism for Native issues followed her. During a convention in Washington D.C. in January of 1880, Winnemucca met Elizabeth Peabody.[35] Peabody was a sensationally prominent writer, educator, editor, publisher, and bookseller.[36] Peabody's prior work in the educational field was of substantial importance as she was the founder of the American

[34] Krumm, Bernita "Journal of Women in Educational Leadership," Vol. 4, No. 4---October 2006 ISSN: 1541-6224. https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/jwel/205/. 3.
[35] Krumm. "Journal of Women…" 4.
[36] Marshall, Megan. "Elizabeth Palmer Peabody: The First Transcendentalist?" *Massachusetts Historical Review* 8 (2006): 1–15. http://www.jstor.org/stable/25081202. 1.

Kindergarten.[37] The status and educational history of Peabody coupled with Winnemucca's aspirations of a school absolutely harmonized.

With the financial help of Elizabeth Peabody and the determination of Sarah Winnemucca, the two were able to successfully publish her autobiographical work that discussed Indigenous issues. Noteably, Winnemucca's activism towards gaining educational sovereignty was expressed through various tactics. In a petition to the U.S. government, "Sarah collected thousands of signatures on a petition calling on the government to return to the Piutes some of their native lands, to make them U.S. citizens, and to allow them to govern themselves."[38] This direct attack and holding the government accountable showcases how Sarah Winnemucca openly fought for issues regarding Native sovereignty. Although a bill was created and passed to allow land to be delegated back to the Paiutes, it would not see the light of day. However, Winnemucca's determination did not end.

The Peabody Indian School

During a time when federally-run boarding schools for educating Indians were regimented as the "norm," the concept and creation of an Indian education school run by Native Americans was countercultural. The goal of the school was simple: protect the rights of the Indian and coexist within the white world.[39] Elizabeth Peabody played a key role in providing the funding as a white representative for the creation of the Peabody Institute. The 160 acres of land on which the institution was built was given to Winnemucca's brother, Natchez, from a railroad

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[37] Ibid
[38] Lascarides, Celia V. "Sarah Winnemucca and Her School." November 2000. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED474140. 12.
[39] Ibid

builder sometime around 1884. The school would go on to be built with various rooms including one for a teacher, cooking, and eating.

Benefactor Elizabeth Peabody described in her memoirs her outstanding support for Sarah Winnemucca and her school, “inasmuch as it goes far to demonstrate that the only vital education that can be given to Indians must be given by Indians themselves who have spoken both languages from childhood, and are able to ground their methods, as she does, upon their own inherited natural religion and family moralities.”[40] Winnemucca’s role in creating a school for Indians highlighted the strength many Indigenous women had to resist the United States’ attempted subjugation. Creating an Indigenous education system run by Native Americans was difficult, but why did Sarah Winnemucca fundamentally believe The Peabody Indian School was crucial? Fundamentally, Winnemucca believed that education was the only way the Paiutes could advance in the world that white settlers had created. Moreso, providing an education to Native children by Native teachers was her revolutionary way in protecting these children.[41] Winnemucca knew the strategic set up of the federally run boarding schools and their calculated placement hundreds of miles away from Native reservations. Thus, she openly defied the construct the federal government created surrounding Indian education and operated the Peabody school so that Native children could attend school while still being immersed in their culture and in the care of their families.[42] Winnemucca voiced the importance of cultural education within families arguing, “our children are very carefully taught to be good. Their parents tell them stories, traditions of old times, even of the first mother of the human race; and love stories, stories of giants, fables… we are taught to love everybody. We don’t need to be taught to love

[40] Peabody, Elizabeth P. *The Piutes : Second report of the model school of Sarah Winnemucca, 1886-87*. Cambridge: J. Wilson and son, 1887. 3.
[41] Lascarides. "Sarah Winnemucca and Her School." 12.
[42] Ibid

our fathers and mothers. We love them without being told to."[43] This quote from *Life Among the Paiutes* clearly showcases the value Indigenous people held around their family and heritage. Thus, it is clear as to why Winnemucca stressed the significance of placing a school close to her reservation. Moreover, it is even more evident as to why Winnemucca stressed the importance of teaching culture and stories in her school.

Winnemucca was extremely resourceful and a gifted teacher; her self determination and resistance against the native education pipeline was remarkable. Demonstrated in her teaching style, Winnemucca began teaching twenty-six Paiute children word by word on how to speak English. Patiently, she would write a word on the blackboard and demonstrate to the children how to write the English spelling in their notebooks. Finally, they would say the word aloud in English.[44] There were many other subjects and ways in which Winnemucca educated her students. More or less, Winnemucca attempted to ensure that her students would be prepared for a white world that would always be against them. Although she focused on teaching Paiute children academics and the fundamentals of their culture and heritage, she understood the importance of farming, housework, and cooking.[45] To Winnemucca, these basic fundamentals were important in coexisting in a new world that was fundamentally against them. Winnemucca's determination in collaboration with Peabody's funding allowed the school to flourish and even spark acclamation and praise from local whites in the Nevada area.

While the school was open, Winnemucca attempted to gain some additional funding from the federal government. Although her school was of remarkable success in the Nevada area with the commendation of local whites, the United States government refused to give her funding and

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[43] Winnemucca. *Life among the Piutes*. Kindle. War and Their Causes.
[44] Lascarides. "Sarah Winnemucca and Her School." 14.
[45] Lascarides. "Sarah Winnemucca and Her School." 15.

demanded instead that Winnemucca give up her directorship of the school.[46] The response of the federal government was absolutely on par with their attitude at this historic moment. The federal government witnessed Winnemucca, an Indian woman, prosper within a school system that was the complete opposite of their federally-run boarding schools. Moreover, the federal government was likely threatened with the attitudes and confidence Winnemucca was creating within her school dynamic. The federal government strategically refused funding and demanded the closure of The Peabody Institute because it went against the white narrative of what an education should look like. The federal government did not like how Winnemucca was able to blend Native culture and heritage meticulously with mainstream academics. More importantly, the federal government and white officials did not appreciate how Winnemucca and the advancement of her school single handedly dismantled and refuted the white conception of Native education. Although this may be true and her school would eventually be closed in 1886, the federal government was not able to take away the advancements that *did* happen for Native education. Although the federal government took away her school, they did not take away the success she as both a woman and an Indian has made. Her work in the mere establishment of an Indian school run by Native Americans is a testament to the advancements Indigenous women were making for education.

Winnemucca's educational story was one that was out of the "norm" for many Native little girls; she was a self-educated woman. Winnemucca understood that her story was unique as opposed to many children forced into assimilation schools. She wished that Native children could be educated within their nation, not at federally-run assimilationist boarding schools. Winnemucca witnessed the conflict between Native Americans and officials of the white

[46] Lascarides. "Sarah Winnemucca and Her School." 15.

government. She yearned to have the Paiutes and all Native Americans live in peace.[47] The prevailing historic attitude of whites and federal officials showcased how they hoped and planned for Winnemucca's subsequent closure of her Native school. Although she experienced obstacles along the way in the creation of her school, Winnemucca's optimism and determination to repute the educational system of the federally run boarding schools reveals how Winnemucca refused to conform. Sarah Winnemucca knew the strengths and capabilities of herself and her people. The mere creation, flourishment, and advancements of The Peabody Institute illustrates how Sarah Winnemucca helped drive the conversation about Indigenous education; she made it her life's effort to bring education back to her homeland.

Laura Cornelius Kellogg

Laura Cornelius Kellogg, or Minnie as her pen name, was a prolific author, visionary, and activist against federal reform policies that were striking Indian nations during her historic time. Kellogg was born on the Oneida reservation in Wisconsin in 1879. Kellogg came from a long line of Haudenosaunee women who were a part of the Iroquois confederacy that were displaced from New York State.[48] Kellogg's family experienced a tremendous amount of land loss due to the Dawes Act in which the Oneida land base shrunk to less than ninety acres by 1934.[49] With hundreds of families located on the Wisconsin Oneida reservation alone, the concept that they were living on such a miniscule size of land is unfathomable and inhumane. From a young age

[47] Krumm. "Journal of Women…" 7.
[48] Cristina Stanciu. "An Indian Woman of Many Hats: Laura Cornelius Kellogg's Embattled Search for an Indigenous Voice." *American Indian Quarterly* 37, no. 3 (2013): 87.
[49] Ibid

viewing her family and nation's tireless fight and efforts to make sense of their relationship with the federal government, Kellogg fought incessantly to hold the government accountable for its actions. Kellogg was able to escape the traditional route of federally-run boarding schools and instead was educated on the primary level at a privately run institution.[50] Because she was the granddaughter of a well-known Pine Tree chief, her lineage beheld her with a unique education that would prepare her with a path that she would follow to refute assimilationist education. In an effort to combat the tactics created by the federal government to erase and assimilate Indigenous people, Kellogg created the Lolomi Plan.

The Lolomi Plan

Laura Cornelius Kellogg repeatedly wrote on the issues of education facing her people, "There are old Indians who have never seen the inside of a classroom whom I consider far more educated than the young Indian with his knowledge of Latin and Algebra. There is something behind the superb dignity and composure of the old bringing up; there is something in the discipline of the Red Man which has given him a place in the literature and art of this country, there to remain separate and distinct in his proud active bearing against all time, all change."[51] Kellogg knew the successes and capabilities of her people. Completely countering the narrative and portrayal of Indian education, Kellogg created a plan in which she believed was the correct way to educate Indigenous children. Because of her unique education, Kellogg believed her

[50] Penelope M. Kelsey. "Legible Natives: Making Native Women Visible in the Literary Arts." *Legacy* 34, no. 1 (2017): 198–211. https://doi.org/10.5250/legacy.34.1.0198. 200.
[51] Kellogg, Laura C. "Some Facts and Figures on Indian Education," *The Quarterly Journal of the Society of American Indians*. 1913. https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015013515617&view=2up&seq=46. 36.

success should be the story for all Indigenous children. Based on the German industrial village model, which centered around self-sufficiency and community, while also holding Native values in its creation, the Lolomi Plan would be a self-governed education system.[52]

Kellogg's take on educating Native children utterly resisted the regime of the United State's Native education system. More specifically, the principles of the plan rested in the complete dismantling of the historic Indian education system, rallied for self-governance, and resisted boarding school education.[53] Countering Native stereotypes during her time, Kellogg methodically undercutted questioners of her plan by citing numerous examples of Native achievements. Written methodically in her autobiography about the historic experiences of her people,

> "The Lolomi policy is diametrically opposed to Bureaucracy in all things. It carries an order of protected self-government by means of a Federal incorporation into industrial communities. The first essential [way] in which it differs from the present policy is in the very nature of its origin. The Bureau came into existence with the idea of centralizing all power unto itself…as absolute despots over the reservations, they had the right to seize children away from their parents, to dispose of all questions pertaining to health and education…"[54]

Fundamentally, the Lolomi Plan resisted the adoption of sending Native children to off reservation boarding schools. More uniquely, the Lolomi would have funding that allowed the Indian child to stay on reservation with their parents. In advocating for the adoption of the Lolomi plan, Kellogg presented her plan to the United States Senate. Kellogg argued forcefully for funding for the Lolomi plan. The plan required finances for communally held lands, resources, day schools, and funds for college.[55] Additionally, she provided a cited example of a

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[52] Penelope."Legible Natives: Making Native Women Visible in the Literary Arts." 201.
[53] Ibid
[54] Kellog. *Our Democracy and the American Indian*. Kindle. The Lolomi Program of Self-Government.
[55] Kellogg. *Our Democracy and the American Indian*. Kindle. Testimony during Hearings on H.R. 1917.

non-Native business that hired exclusively Native employees for their work ethic.[56] By employing this, Kellogg fought to represent Native Americans in the way that she knew were true. Kellogg wanted the United States to recognize the achievements made by Indians and that they were capable of taking care of their own people. One of the theories the Bureau rested upon was that an Indigenous child was not to be educated beyond the sixth grade. In and of itself, the United States did not want an Indian to be educated to the standard of that of a white child who went beyond a sixth grade education level. Thus, Kellogg made the argument and highlighted how she visited thirty-six different tribes and various schools and found that "the powers of imitation, imagination, and abstraction exceeded those of the Paleface children with whom" she had gone to school outside her reservation grounds.[57] In her book, Kellogg dismantled the teaching methods given by the federally-run schools. Kellogg uplifted the Lolomi Plan by citing evidence of Native achievement on the educational level and proved that uniformal standard schooling lacked efficiency and barred Native children from actually advancing.

Shown in figure 3 is an image of Laura Cornelius Kellog who was certain that assaults on self-determination and sovereignty were the biggest threats to Native society.[58] Additionally, the enormous land loss and boarding school education were prominent issues that Kellogg fought against. Written in *Our Democracy and the American Indian*, Kellogg questions white ideology against Native Americans, "have you not robbed my people of a real god for your million 'golden calves' of hypocrisy? Have you not pauperized and debauched a whole people who were not only the richest in possessions, but whose native character has inspired those of your arts and

[56] Penelope."Legible Natives: Making Native Women Visible in the Literary Arts." 201.
[57] Kellog. *Our Democracy and the American Indian*. Kindle. How the Lolomi Handles the Social Side of the Problem.
[58] "Women's History Month - Laura Cornelius Kellogg." Rematriation. Last modified March 18, 2022. https://rematriation.com/womens-history-month-laura-cornelius-kellogg/.

literature which contain national distinction?"[59] Laura Cornelius Kellog's activism against the federal Native education system demonstrated how Indigenous women critiqued assimilationist education and offered alternatives. Kellogg understood the value in education and despised how the federal government repeatedly tried to strip it from Native land. With the attempted implementation of the Lolomi Plan, Kellogg's articulated plan reinforced what Native Americans already knew: they were autonomous peoples who deserved to have a say in their own education. Her plan replenished, nourished, and reinforced the ideals and thinkings of Indigenous people and their placemaking. Kellogg's fundamental role in creating the Lolomi Plan sought to link education back to the homeland.[60]

The Society of American Indians

On February 8th, 1887 the United States Federal government instituted an act that would completely change the makeup of Native land and education. As shown, the United States wanted complete control over the narrative of Native education. The Dawes Act was strategically designed to deal with the "Indian problem." More so, this act created a system in which individual land holding by male Natives would be given, or allotted, 160 acres of land in which he would have full control.[61] The period in which the Dawes Act is classified is known as the allotment period. In a broad understanding, the act provided the complete divisionment of sovereign Native land and attempted to integrate Indians into agricultural society. Interestingly,

[59] Kellogg, Laura C. *Our Democracy and the American Indian: A Comprehensive Presentation of the Indian Situation as it is Today*. 1920. Kindle. To the American People.
[60] Ackley, Kristina. "Laura Cornelius Kellogg, Lolomi, and Modern Oneida Placemaking." *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 25, no. 2 (2013): 121.
[61] Cotroneo, Ross R., and Jack Dozier. "A Time of Disintegration: The Coeur d'Alene and the Dawes Act." *The Western Historical Quarterly* 5, no. 4 (1974): 452.

within the agreement of the Dawes Act was the fund equaling $30,000 for the construction of schools and mills on Indian lands.[62] However, the money promised to the Native nations who were forcibly removed from their sovereign land by white settlers to their allotted acreage would not hold its promise. The subsequent creation of off-reservation assimilation schools and the prevailing racist attitudes of white settlers did not allow a space for the development of on reservation Indigenous schools.

The separation of families and the relocation of Native nations was another part of the federal government's attempted assimilation tactics to strip Indigenous peoples of their heritage. Additionally, this act would only further ignite the disenfranchisement of Native education, mobilizing it to an even greater extent. Laura Cornelius Kellogg was a part of the complete subdivision of her family's relocation to allotted land. Arguably, what Kellogg experienced during allotment served as her incitement into Native activism.

On April 4th, 1911, six Native Americans met at Ohio State University to discuss the tragedies, confusions, and future of their race in the aftermath of the Allotment policy. During their meeting, they discussed the necessity for an organization that would represent a people whose genocidal devastation and sovereign concerns had been long ignored. The creation of the Society of American Indians (SAI) marked the beginning of an Indian rights group that was conceived, developed, and run by Native Americans.[63] The early leaders of the SAI were highly educated and many of founding members were men and women who had attended Carlisle or other assimilation educating institutions.[64] As a result, many of the founding members understood the regime and inner workings of the federally run boarding schools. The goal of this

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[62] Stuart, Paul. "United States Indian Policy: From the Dawes Act to the American Indian Policy Review Commission." *Social Service Review* 51, no. 3 (1977): 408.
[63] Chadwick Allen. "Introduction: Locating the Society of American Indians." *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 25, no. 2 (2013): https://doi.org/10.5250/studamerindilite.25.2.0003. 3.
[64] Chadwick. "Locating the Society of American Indians." 4.

progressive organization was to discuss the pressing issues of their historical time while hoping for the sovereignty of Native nations to be respected.

Like the women this thesis examines, the Society of American Indians directly defied the white assimilationist narrative of the time. Moreover, with the aid of prominent leaders like Zitkala-Sa and Kellogg, this was an organization that was not fearful of repercussions from a government that openly protested their cultures and placement in the United States. After long correspondences and deciding on what their platform would focus on, the SAI adopted objectives including:

> "1st. To promote the good citizenship of Indians of this country, and to help in all progressive movements of the North American Indians. 2nd. To promote all efforts looking to the advancement of the Indian enlightenment which makes him free… 6th. It is the sense of the Committee that every member of the Association should exert his influence in every legitimate way to bring before each member of the race…"[65]

Outlined through only a few of their objectives, members of the SAI attempted to create objectives that openly defied and opposed white assimilation. Their progressivism was displayed when the early SAI members timed their first conference on the four-hundredth anniversary of Columbus Day at the Ohio State campus.[66] Directly, the SAI deliberately chose a day that is known in history as the beginning and discovery of "new" land. By choosing to hold their first national conference on this day with speeches, debates, and meetings, they ensured that their voice would not be lost within yet another colonial holiday.

Shown in figure 4 is an image from the first conference of the Society of American Indians.[67] Pictured as the seventh person from the left, Laura Cornelius Kellogg is represented

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[65] Society of American Indians. *Report of the Executive Council on the Proceedings of the First Annual Conference of the Society of American Indians.* Washington dc: 1912. Print. 7-8.
[66]Chadwick. "Locating the Society of American Indians." 4.
[67] "SAI Centennial Symposium Archive." American Indian Studies. https://americanindianstudies.osu.edu/symposium.

proudly as one of the women who attended the conference. More so, she was a founding member that made a tremendous impact within the organization. As previously discussed, her dedication to Native education and resistance to white absorptivity was displayed in her activism within the organization. In 1912, Kellogg wrote about the issues of public education for Native children. More specifically written in her book *Our Democracy and the American Indian*, she explained the financial expenditures that would go into placing an Indian child in public schooling.[68] Additionally, Kellogg highlighted the difference between a white education and a Native one. Although historically represented as a well oiled machine, the federally run boarding schools provided that of an industrial education that required the Native children to work half of their school day.[69] In contrast, white children were not required to work tedious, laborious tasks during their school day. In her writing, Kellogg questioned and picked away at the construct of Native education. Through her writings on Native education, Kellogg openly placed herself within the conversation and issues surrounding Native education. Laura Cornelius Kellogg continued to use her platform within the Society of American Indians to voice her outrage surrounding Native assimilationist education and the federally run boarding schools.

During the second meeting of the Society of American Indians at Ohio State University in October 1912, Kellogg once again used her radical voice to platform the topic of education. During her speech, Kellogg openly criticized Congressional leaders and white officials in charge of local public and off-reservation schools in a speech about self-determination. At the end of her speech, she shared, "our future is in the hands of the educational system of today. Those of us who have come thus far know how our youth have longed to reach the summit of the mountain…Let us climb the highest mountain, without looking back till we have reached the

[68] Kellogg. *Our Democracy and the American Indian.* Kindle. Some Facts and Figures on Indian Education.
[69] Kellogg. *Our Democracy and the American Indian.* Kindle. Some Facts and Figures on Indian Education.

top."[70] Sharing her numerous speeches, campaigns, and educational views on sovereignty, Laura Cornelius Kellogg stood out in comparison to her peers in the Society of American Indians as she was not afraid to voice her radical propositions surrounding sovereignty and Native education.[71] Perpetually, Kellogg placed herself within an educational conversational sphere that was not welcoming of both her race and gender. Her work was revolutionary.

Worth noting, Gertrude Simmons Bonnin served as secretary and editor of the SAI's journal.[72] Bonnin fiercely served and contributed to the issues facing her race during her time in the SAI. As previously noted as a prolific writer and highly knowledgeable, her scholarship was certainly reflected in her work in the SAI. Native self-government and educational sovereignty was always at the heart and forefront of Bonnin's vision for Indians. Thus, Bonnin wrote about the possibility for "communal governance: district offices across reservations [that] would represent their communities on a Reservation Executive Council…All levels would be filled with Native leaders educated by competent teachers with standardized courses on law, US government, and Indian treaties."[73] Bonnin placed the conversation of self-determination and educational sovereignty hand in hand. Both Kellogg and Bonnin challenged the narrative and emerged as pivotal figures in the layered conversation of Native education. Their visions, writings, and speeches, influenced future generations and potentially influenced laws and regulations surrounding Indian rights today. Their politics and activism remind us how Indigenous women, both in and outside their communities, drove political agendas and

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[70] Kellogg. *Our Democracy and the American Indian.* Kindle. Some Facts and Figures on Indian Education.
[71] K. Tsianina Lomawaima. "The Mutuality of *Citizenship* and *Sovereignty*: The Society of American Indians and the Battle to Inherit America." *American Indian Quarterly* 37, no. 3 (2013): 333–51. https://doi.org/10.5250/amerindiquar.37.3.0333. 342.
[72] Cahill, Cathleen D. "'Our Democracy and the American Indian': Citizenship, Sovereignty, and the Native Vote in the 1920s." *Journal of Women's History* 32, no. 1 https://libdatabase.newpaltz.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/our-democracy-american-indian-citizenship/docview/2368695602/se-2. 43.
[73] Cahill. "'Our Democracy…'" 46.

educational reforms at a time when the dominant culture's sexism and racism made such work challenging.

Conclusion

The laborious fight of Indigenous women's activism in preserving Native education should not be misunderstood. Most Americans lack the understanding and historical framework between white settlers and Indigenous peoples. Represented in crude holidays and misinformed interactions, the federal government has attempted to uphold the system of assimilationist education and the policies of the Dawes Act. Although modern education displays the disadvantages and sorrows of Indigenous erasure, the construct of these systems were continuously eroded by popular activists of their time: Zitkala-Sa, Sarah Winnemucca, and Laura Cornelius Kellogg. Their activism showcases how Indigenous women made a spot for themselves in a conversation that attempted to silence them. Present on the frontline, Zitkala-Sa, Sarah Winnemucca, and Laura Cornelius Kellogg worked to bring education controlled by Native Americans back to Native land. This thesis provides a historical snapshot of Indigenous women's history and displays the importance of an accurate overview of Indian education. At present, Indigenous education has been historically associated with cultural and identity erasure that showcases Native Americans as if they lost the battle. However, educators should challenge their preconceptions and accurately present Indigenous women as agents in their own right. Certainly, Native women made choices, mobilized their efforts, refuted victimization, and created change. Educational teaching methods, like that of Winnemucca's Institute, Kellogg's educational plans, and Zitkala-Sa's opposition to white assimilation can still be shown today

through the various tribally-controlled school districts who make it their mission to teach Indian culture and history, just as these three women actively fought for.[74] A preservation of Native culture and empowerment is exhibited today through organizations like the Bureau of Indian Education who strive to do justice to the historical groundwork laid by Winnemucca, Kellogg, and Zitkala-Sa. Their regard in educating Native children through empowerment of their culture and quality education demonstrates how the historical activism of refuting education assimilation absolutely played a role in Native education today.[75]

[74] "Tribally-Controlled Schools." U.S. Department of the Interior | Bureau of Indian Education. Accessed December 14, 2022. https://www.bie.edu/topic-page/tribally-controlled-schools.
[75] Ibid

Appendix A

Figure 1:

Figure 2:

Figure 3:

Figure 4:

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