The Development of Chemawa: Analyzing the History and Purpose of Chemawa Indian School

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Chemawa Indian School is an intriguing example of United State’s governmental policy towards Native Americans*. Established in 1880, Chemawa has come to reflect the federal government’s desire of incorporating Native Americans into the mainstream of Euro-American life. Though this policy has had some minor success, it is the goal of this paper to examine the government’s performance through the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and Chemawa. It will be seen that the BIA’s inconsistencies and fluctuations throughout the 19th and 20th centuries have led to Chemawa’s current state of disarray. This is desired by the federal government for the single goal of controlling Native Americans. Therefore it is important to examine the history of Native American education in order to understand and preserve the student’s culture, educational needs and any tools necessary for them to be successful. Today, with approximately 40 percent of Native Americans are under the age of 20, this has never been more important.¹

For policy makers, the first priority was to create a legitimate and rational mechanism to legally remove Native Americans from their land. Because Native American ways were different from Euro-American ways, they were thought to be less civilized.

Indians were perceived as connected to their past, their superstitions, and their land. Liberalism

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* For this thesis the terms Native Americans and Euro-Americans will be used instead of generic terms like “whites” and “Indians”. In addition any terminology within this paper referring to the “government” or “policy makers” is that of the Federal government, unless otherwise stated.

insisted upon work, instinctual repression, and acquisitive behavior; men had to conquer and separate themselves from nature. Indians were seen as playful, violent, improvident, wild, and in harmony with nature. Private property underlay liberal society; Indians held land in common.²

For Native Americans civilization meant leading a simple life while being community oriented. Native American indifference to personal property and well-defined boundaries meant that they were missing the basic concepts of a competitive-economic society. This definition of civilization was a denial to the new "American identity". The competitive-economic society and new "American identity" was a result of the Jacksonian Age. During this time two concepts were greatly developed, an ideology of racial paternalism and one of assimilation.

The federal government believed that if Native Americans became assimilated then past treaties and obligations could be voided. The process of assimilation was not a policy to educate Native Americans on how to be Native, but how to be Euro-Americans. Native Americans were to become productive citizens in farming, cultivation, or through vocational employment. As assimilation became the process of the federal government, paternalism became the attitude. Euro-Americans understood that expansion would devour Native Americans, and without paternal (governmental) supervision the tribes faced extinction. By "devouring" the Native Americans it was assumed by policy makers that as "parents," Euro-Americans would eliminate the language, customs, and identity of the "sons of the forest." The goal was supposed to produce intelligent-industrious

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citizens, therefore, Native Americans had to merged into Euro-American culture.\textsuperscript{3} The training and education of Native Americans into the life of Euro-Americans would become the main mechanism of assimilation.

The federal government, through the Indian Administration, sought to educate the Native American youth into the new "American identity". As for the older generation, assimilation was thought to be too impractical.\textsuperscript{4} The federal government began to fund Native American education in 1819 with the "Civilization Fund." The fund appropriated $10,000 annually to missionary schools.\textsuperscript{5} In 1820, Congress increased the appropriated money to $11,833 for 21 schools that had religious orientated administrations.\textsuperscript{6} The Bureau of Indian Affairs was then established on March 11, 1824. Originally known as the Indian Affairs Office, the branch was transferred from the War Department to the Department of Interior in 1849.

The missionary schools emphasized the spiritual needs, or what they assumed to be the spiritual needs of Native Americans. One example of a missionary school with government appropriated funds was that of Jason and Daniel Lee's school founded in 1835. They established a Methodist Episcopal-multipurpose building, which had the first Native American school, church, and hospital within the Willamette valley. Its beginning

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{David Wallace Adams, \textit{Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928.} (University Press of Kansas), 5.}
\footnote{Burton Lemmon, "The Historical Development of Chemawa Indian School" (unpublished Master's thesis, Oregon State College, former name of Oregon State University, 1941), 6.}
\footnote{Ibid., 32.}
\end{footnotes}
years were turbulent as quoted in the *Oregon Historical Quarterly*. “During the first year, fourteen children were received; five died before the winter was over; five ran away; two died within the next two years, leaving two of the original fourteen to have their souls saved and their lives civilized.”\(^7\) Four years later Lee’s institution was educating thirty Native American youths. His school would eventually become Willamette University.

By 1848, there were 16 manual labor schools and 87 other government schools. These schools would become the models for a number of federal administrated institutions.\(^8\) With minority numbers growing the government needed more educational facilities. By the 1860s and 1870s the federal government began to seek their own administered institutions.

With the reconstruction after the Civil War the United States was faced with the emancipation of over four million African Americans. Suddenly Euro-Americans found themselves surrounded by several “backward” races. Like Native Americans, African American’s role had to be redefined in order to find legitimacy under their new citizenship was sought. Both Native and African Americans needed new bonds with the Euro-American society, one that allowed economic progress. Despite the country’s awareness of African American needs, the bare subsistence of these people became an accepted norm.\(^9\) Education needed for Native Americans and African Americans to become

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\(^8\) Ibid., 449.

economic contributors.

African Americans were disenfranchised from the postbellum America. School services were needed as growing impatience, lack of financial support, and missionaries began to limit their role.\textsuperscript{10} African Americans needed elementary and industrial education. This education had to give African Americans the ability to achieve some sort of autonomy. Several normal schools and collages were established in places such as Macon Georgia; Charleston, North Carolina; Louisville, Kentucky; and Hampton, Virginia. The Hampton Institute would eventually become the model for both Carlisle and Chemawa indian schools.

In 1867, Samuel Armstrong was asked to take the principalship of the Hampton Institute. Armstrong's goal was to address the basic needs of African Americans with the hope of creating gradual political, social, and economic progress. These goals were not far from those of Native Americans: both races needed to establish legitimate citizehnships, and they needed become economical contributors. Unlike most Native Americans, Hampton applicants were eager for admission. Despite African Americans' hope for a fulfilling education, Hampton's vocational education was a system based largely on exploitation. Hampton's students were severely disciplined with a regimented and militaristic lifestyle, while their education focused on manual labor, domesticated service, and general education. Hampton also faced a number of other difficulties, its students couldn't financially reimburse the school, while the school was running at full capacity.

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid., 69.
Furthermore, an emerging sophisticated alumni grew more critical of Hampton’s vocational status. This problem was increased as Armstrong continually ignored alumni’s criticisms. These criticisms, however, would subside as the institution began to receive a new student body by the end of the post-Civil War reconstruction. By 1878, westward expansion into various regions brought about conflict with Native Americans again.\textsuperscript{11}

Captain Richard H. Pratt, considered to be the “pioneer” in Native American boarding school education, would eventually bring several Native Americans to Hampton for instruction. Pratt escorted several Native Americans to a prison in St. Augustine, Florida, where as their warden, he imposed several customs on them. Pratt taught the Native prisoners English, citizenship training, and formal education while completely separating them from their tribal ties.\textsuperscript{12} Doing this, Pratt noticed a desire in the Native Americans to learn. Pratt then began to search for any eastern school willing to accept them. The Hampton Institute was the only school willing to take them. For one year 22 Native Americas attended the Hampton Institute. There was, however, some animosity between Pratt and Armstrong, and their education of minorities. Pratt in contrast to Armstrong, believed that African Americans were inferior to Native and Euro-Americans. Pratt developed this belief claiming African Americans were lazy in regards to education, and required intense manual labor. With this objection, Pratt appealed to Carl Schultz, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs. Pratt claimed that Native Americans were different in

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., 84-89.
several ways. Native Americans spoke little English, had a communal ideal and still held firm to their traditional dress and tribal institutions.\(^{13}\) Pratt was not alone in his views,

Indians are essentially conservative and cling to old customs and hate all changes. Therefore the government should force them to scatter out on farms, break up their tribal organization, dances, ceremonies, and tomfoolery; take from them their hundreds of useless ponies which afford them the means of indulging in their nomadic habits, and give them cattle in exchange, and compel them to labor or accept the alternative of starvation.\(^{14}\)

An establishment for the purpose of removing the “Indian” out of the man was well supported by policy makers and Euro-Americans. In 1879, Captain Pratt, under the administration of the Department of Interior, became the first superintendent of Carlisle Indian School.

Carlisle Indian School was one of the first boarding schools that were supposed to begin the social change of transforming Native Americans into Euro-America. As Boarding schools now became another imposition on Native American communities. The treaty and reservation systems, the Indian Removal Act, and other policies had begun to create a perpetual dependency of Native Americans.\(^{15}\)

Despite this goal of transformation, Native Americans became neither assimilated nor extinct. This was largely due to the social structure created by the treaty system within the United. It was a continuation of a tradition that was carried over from the crown.\(^{16}\) Despite the treaties intent they were often violated, neglected, or voided through loop holes. The Indian Removal Act of 1830 initially addressed the relocation of the Five

\(^{13}\) Engs, *Educating the Disenfranchised*, 119.
\(^{14}\) Ibid., 120.
\(^{15}\) Perry, *Inside Ethnic America*, 44.
\(^{16}\) S. Lyman Tyler, *A History of Indian Policy* (Washington DC: Bureau of Indian Affairs, 1973), 11.
Civilized Tribes; Creeks, Choctaws, Cherokees, Chickasaws, and Seminoles. By relocating Native Americans west of the Mississippi policy makers felt that Euro-Americans would be free to settle the southeast. However, with expansion continuously imposing on Native American lands, the government resorted to the reservation system. With Native and Euro-Americans intermixing the reservation system became an accepted policy (with Euro-Americans) to contain Native Americans.\textsuperscript{17} Despite the federal government's efforts these policies had neither assimilated nor eliminated Native Americans.

Without any promising return, the government began to oversee and administrate directly over Native American schools. The new policy had only one intent, to destroy Native American culture and create a legal claim to lands. The federal government had to indoctrinate, civilize, and teach Native Americans how to become like Euro-Americans.\textsuperscript{18} Thus schools like Carlisle showed the intensified educational system. Despite the new school's conception, many debates were made as to what types of schools should be emphasized.

These schools ranged from day schools to missionary, public, and off/on reservation boarding schools. Missionary schools were advantageous in that they did not have to be directly administered by the federal government. However, missionary schools were beginning to receive harsh criticisms because of their religious orientation and federal funding. As for reservation day schools, they provided cheap and accessible education,

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 72.
\textsuperscript{18} Bonnel, "Chemawa Indian Boarding School", 21.
but by being positioned so close to home, several policy makers argued that what was learned under a teacher’s care in four to five hours was lost when they returned home. If Native American youth were to be indoctrinated into Euro-American culture then Native Americans needed to be removed. Off-reservation schools were then seen as the best way to civilize students.

The “civilized education” was to be founded on the English language. The schools would teach writing, speech, and reading as the primary subjects. Afterwards they would begin to implement other subject areas like math, science, and history. Next, the schools would teach individualism to the Native-youth. They would emphasize individual wealth and their ability to accumulate it. These new schools would also teach with a foundation of Christianity. Through Christian morality it was possible for an individual to gain economic and spiritual wealth. Last was the goal of citizen training. Native American youth were taught the processes of Euro-American life, government, and dress.¹⁹

In contrast Native American education placed a great role on empowerment and collective education. The Native American approach emphasized the communal idea of empowerment through collective teaching and learning.²⁰ Meanwhile Euro-American education focused on the individual. Native education also emphasized the coexistence of man and nature as well as knowledge being integrated and dependant on one another. Traditionally, education was only passed down orally and in a “circular” pattern. Quite different was the Euro-American belief in their ability to dominate nature.

¹⁹ Perry, Inside Ethnic America, 45.
²⁰ Ibid., 45-47.
Americans also emphasized education in segmented areas like math, science and history.\textsuperscript{21} Comparing these two forms of education, it’s obvious that not only did Native American youth have to learn the culture of the Euro-American but also how to learn like Euro-Americans. It was even harder for Native American youth to try to learn in this new community because of the different ways the cultures defined community.

Native Americans focused their community on nature which included death, past, present, animals, and plants. Basically anything that contained life was a part of their community. Within this community, education came from nature. Native Americans also emphasized the ability to explore the subconscious world, which allowed them to see and learn what was not always physically there.\textsuperscript{22} To the federal government this communal life was regarded as the greatest hindrance to their acculturation.

What we can and should do is, in general terms, to fit the Indians, as much as possible, for the habits and occupations of civilized life, by work and education; to individualize them in their possession and appreciation of property...\textsuperscript{23}

With federal education concepts like citizenship, land as a commodity, and degrading of Native American culture, schools like Carlisle, and later Chemawa, became the hybrid of perennial isolation and Euro-American educational ideals.

Carlisle School, directed by Captain Richard Pratt, was the first off-reservation boarding school that was deemed successful by the federal government. It was “successful” because of its basic training curriculum. “Nothing so quickly erased the

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 48.

\textsuperscript{22} Francis Paul Prucha, ed. \textit{Americanizing the American Indians: Writings by the “Friends of Indians” 1880-1900} (Harvard University Press, 1973), 74.

\textsuperscript{23} Mary Jo Garnett, \textit{Eradicate, Assimilate, Educate: Off-Reservation Boarding Schools For American Indians}. Senior Project (California Polytechnic State University, 200), 20.
image of the 'savage' in the white mind as a haircut, a uniform, and the abilities to stand at attention and march step."

By having a militaristic curriculum the school was able to do two things: maintain physical control and introduce lessons like promptness, cleanliness, and self-discipline. Students signed up for three to five year long contracts, binding them with terms like enlistment, desertion, and breach of honor. The other "successful" aspect of Carlisle was its range of vocational training programs.

Vocational and academic programs became essential in the off-reservation boarding school. In the morning students attended the academic school, while the afternoon was reserved for vocational training. Pratt and his success with the school were due largely to his formula of the "outing system.” This system allowed students to be hired out to the school’s surrounding families where they worked and lived within the Euro-American culture. They would cook, clean, and perform various tasks in exchange for the education they gained from living with a Euro-American family. With this success Secretary of the Interior Carl Shultz appropriated funds for more schools. Non-reservation boarding schools would pattern themselves after the Carlisle model.

Believing that the Carlisle off-reservation boarding school had several benefits, Captain Melville Cary Wilkinson founded and became the superintendent for the Forest Grove Indian Training School. Located in Forest Grove, Oregon, the federal government appropriated $5,000 and four acres of land on loan from Pacific University. Wilkinson, Like Pratt, believed in a regimented and stern labor-intensive curriculum.

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24 Ibid.
I should greatly deprecate any feeling among them {students} that they ought to be paid for learning a trade, tilling the ground, or in building...they eat heartily into this view, and exploring early to their work...and this inspiration is worth far more to them in character building than any money that could be put into their hands. I count this culture, next to English speaking and cleanliness, the strongest element in this school.25

The first class of the Forest Grove School, 1880, consisted of 18 Puyallups', fourteen boys and four girls.

Wilkinson increased enrolment by recruiting students from reservations in Oregon, Idaho, Washington and Northern California. He was able to persuade parents to send their children often by them visiting the school. Unfortunately, like Jason Lee’s Methodist school, Forest Grove’s first years were marked with a high fatality rate. Forty-three students died at the school, most of whom were women.26 Despite the alarming death rate, tribes still sent their children to these schools. Wilkinson, needing to ensure his enrollment and his funding, made several payments to families who would send their children. According to a recent article by Cary Collins, “The Broken Crucible of Assimilation,” Native Americans were searching for any answer to what they saw as the “white problem.” For Native Americans the “white” population kept growing which led to the renegotiation of boundaries and treaties, and the removal of many Native American tribes.

Wilkinson would soon be transferred. His erratic and zealous methods had brought about criticism amongst policy makers.27 In the fall of 1882, Wilkinson left as

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27 Ibid.
Henry J. Minthorn would become the school’s next superintendent.

In August of 1883, enrollment at Forest Grove grew to 151 students, and Minthorn’s leadership was seen as more efficient than his predecessors. Despite Minthorn’s efficiency, a growing concern with the campus’ physical state had begun. The location of the buildings had become inadequate and inconvenient. Students had to travel considerable distances in order to work in their vocational-agricultural programs, while the land itself suffered from poor drainage and a fluctuating source of water. To make matters worse, the townspeople grew increasingly negative towards the school. Administrators of the nearby Pacific University felt that having a “savage” institution so close to their school hurt their enrollment.28 Following a girl’s dormitory fire, little convincing was needed for Minthorn to relocate the school. Several towns contended for the school’s new location: Newburg offered a 100 acres, Forest Grove offered 23, and Salem offered 173, including ten under cultivation.29

Congress had appropriated $20,000 to the school for an improvement or relocation. Salem, realizing the potential economy with a federal institution and appropriations nearby, lobbied heavily for the new location. The following is an excerpt from the September 9th, 1884, Statesman Journal:

As an illustration of a few of the benefits it will be to the county, we will enumerate: First, there is twenty thousand dollars ($20,000) appropriated for building purposes, which would be expended immediately and the principal part of which will be absorbed by our citizens for material, work, etc. Second there is an appropriation of $175 per capita for two hundred pupils which would amount in the aggregate to thirty-five thousand dollars ($35,000). This sum, also,

would chiefly pass into circulation in Marion county. No doubt other appropriations would follow, and our people would be the chief gainers.\textsuperscript{30}

Salem was chosen for its location, land offered and visual attraction. Samuel Elliot, in his report on conditions of northwest facilities noticed Chemawa's natural beauty:

The situation of the school is admirable and I know of no school in service which is more attractive in its surroundings. The climate and soil of the Willamette Valley are admirably adopted for farming and fruit raising.\textsuperscript{31}

On October 14, 1885 Chemawa, then the Salem Industrial School, opened with approximately 200 students. Later that fall the school, under superintendent John Lee, purchased an additional 83 acres. This land was acquired by the students through their labor in cultivation.\textsuperscript{32}

The purchasing of land through the use of student labor is an excellent example of the contradiction within the Bureau of Indian Affairs. It has been noted that the primary goal of the federal government, through assimilation was to teach Native Americans the value of accumulating material goods. In order to be successful they, Native Americans, should not settle for a subsistent life style. However, the first years at Forest Grove and Salem Industrial School created exactly that. Wilkinson, himself, claimed that earning in character was much more important than, "any money that could be put into their hands." That was exactly opposite of what the school was supposed to do! The school was supposed to give the students the means to accumulate wealth for themselves. Despite the inconsistencies within the boarding schools, the federal government increased funding.

\textsuperscript{30} Reddick, "Broken Crucible", 460.
\textsuperscript{32} Bonnel, "Chemawa Indian Boarding School", 40.
The early period of reservation boarding schools, 1870 to 1882, saw the government appropriate $800,000 for education. By 1883 the annual appropriated amount rose over 262 percent, and by 1893 the annual cost was approximately 2.35 million dollars. Despite the rising funding only 16,000 Native Americans were being educated, while children all over reservations were not participating. The indoctrination of the community was ineffective. This was even more evident with Congress unwilling to commit to the full financial services for “conversion.” However, boarding schools saw the peak of their success and influence in the early 20th century. From 1904 until 1915, the boarding schools population rose steadily until its greatest number of students at 26,128 in 1915. It was also Samuel Elliot, a Bureau of Indian Affairs’ official touring the northwest, evaluation and appraisal of the school’s curriculum that reflected Chemawa’s peak.

Elliot’s critique of the school’s curriculum said that it rivaled those of surrounding like-institutions, “...the young men and women who attend Chemawa are getting more serviceable education than those secured in any, but the very best high schools and academies.” Elliot went further, commenting on Chemawa’s insistence on patriotism and the fundamental principles of good citizenship.

The school’s training program consisted of farming, gardening, and dairying. Trade programs offered tailoring, harness making, steam engineering, and electrical work. The domestic training included cooking, dressmaking, nursing, and general house keeping. Despite the industrial education that Native Americans were receiving the curriculum was

33 M. Annette Jaimes, ed. State of Native America (Boston: South End Press, 1992), 383.
34 Elliot, Conditions and Needs, 23.
falling behind national trends. The vocations were either outdated or entirely useless. Federal funding was seen as the key reason for such a decline. Where the government spent only 204 dollars per person in 1921, state schools spent 360 dollars per boy and 436 dollars per girl. With student enrollment increasing and federal funding decreasing, personnel, vocational training, and buildings became insufficient.

Indian Commissioner Francis E. Leupp, realizing the problem, began to place Native American students directly into public schools. In 1929, a Federal law was passed requiring Native youth to attend public schools in accordance to state laws. In 1926, just three years before Leupp’s placement of Native youth into public schools and only two years before the Meriam Report, Edgar B. Meritt, the assistant Indian Commissioner wrote a report called for by the BIA.

Meritt’s bulletin concerned Indian government administration. In this bulletin Meritt gives several population and financial statistics, followed by a critique of a number of administrations. His opening statement appraises the Bureau’s school as, “one of the most efficient in the United States or the civilized world.” Meritt then compared the annual pupil cost of education at $225 for each boarding school student, to $60-$125 for each day school student. The bulletin then goes on to say that though these boarding schools offer the same education as secondary and post-secondary schools, the Bureau is able to do it at half the cost and Indians are, “showing keen appreciation for educational

35 Jaimes, State of Native America, 384.
37 Ibid., 11.
advantages." Its interesting to note that in 1900 only 3,052 Native Americans attended public schools, while 22,124 attended government schools. By 1925 however, the trend reversed with 34,452 Native Americans in public schools to 26,416 in government schools. The attendance difference shows the focus Leupp placed on public schools as its attendance rose over 31,000 students.

The numbers in Meritt’s bulletin represent the focus of the federal government interest in low cost education. Believing that it was essential for Native Americans to be removed from their culture in order to gain an education, they place greater emphasis on the cost factor. The result was Leupp’s placement of Native Americans into the closest and cheapest school possible. If Meritt’s bulletin is correct then the government should have been content with its boarding schools rivaling secondary and post-secondary institutions at half the cost. Instead they wanted the cheapest education possible, regardless if it was better or not.

In 1928, the Senate appointed a commission headed by Lewis Meriam to find the final solution to the “Indian” education problem. Meriam defined his mission statement as follows:

The fundamental requirement is that the task of the Indian Service be recognized as primarily educational, in the broadest sense of the word, and that it be made an efficient educational agency, devoting its main energies to the social and economic advancement of Indians, so that they may be absorbed into the prevailing civilization or fitted to live in the presence of that civilization. It’s important to note that the term “broadest sense” and “efficient educational agency”

38 Ibid., 17.
39 Jaimes, State of Native America, 384.
were mentioned before the actual action of educating Native Americans. The Meriam Report’s responsibility was to find the most cost-effective education while educating the biggest group possible. Despite the goals of the Indian Affairs Office, the report found that many Native Americans had not been absorbed into the prevailing civilization. O.H. Lipps, District Superintendent of Chemawa, wrote to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs on January 31, 1929, just prior to the Meriam Report’s release.

I understand there is now in Washington a Committee revising the Course of Study for Indian Schools....the old type college preparatory course (traditional high school), In my opinion this is unsuited to a great majority of Indian boys and girls.41

Native Americans needed training in some sort of economic self-sufficiency. This was to be achieved through an intelligent use of their resources. After roughly sixty years of federal education the BIA had come to the conclusion that Native American success was dependent on emphasizing new vocational programming. Lipps believed that a hairdressing/beauty shop for girls and a barber shop for boys was exactly the kind of vocational training Chemawa needed. He felt that Chemawa, as a college prep school, did not rouse the interest of Chemawa students stating, “They have no ambition to go on to college and perhaps do not have the capacity for a college education.”42 However, Lipps goal of establishing a his and her barber shop were halted after a response on February 11, 1929 from the Commissioner of Indian Affairs.

On account of the fact that future funds have been so limited and that equipment necessary to make it possible to give efficient instruction along vocational lines costs so much more than does

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42 Ibid.
Despite the Meriam Reports calling for more modern vocational training, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs denied Chemawa the ability to update its vocational training. What was the rationale for not allowing Chemawa the ability to emphasize a vocational program? The Meriam Report, who the Commissioner of Indian Affairs must have known about, called for education in the “broadest sense possible,” yet the commissioner kept on with the cost effective education. This was the inconsistency of the Meriam Report. It called for the greatest number of students to be educated while at the cheapest cost. Academics, according to the Commissioner, were cheapest form of education, but the broadest was vocational. Even more distressing was Lipps response the following December.

Instead of asking for more funding in vocational programs, Lipps asked for funding to improve their academic programs.

While we have been deploiring the weakness of our vocational training of late, I really believe that we are stronger in our vocational courses than we are in our academic courses, particularly in English.44

Within one year's time the Superintendent of Chemawa claimed that its vocational program was in dire need to receive additional funding. Yet by years end he argued that

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the vocational program was strong, but that the school needed funds for academic purposes. Essentially the Superintendent was not aware of how to improve Chemawa’s education, thus using any argument to get funds. The school couldn’t improve either its vocational or academic programs. Therefore the Meriam Report had little direct effect on Chemawa. The situation was growing worse for Native Americans because of the lack of provisions in the educational system.

An overwhelming majority of the Indians are poor, even extremely poor, and they are not adjusted to the economic or social system of the dominant white civilization...The health of Indians as compared with that of the general population is bad...The prevailing living conditions among the great majority of the Indians are conducive to the development and spread of disease...the diet to the Indian is bad...The housing conditions are likewise conducive to bad health...Sanitary facilities are generally lacking...45

Students suffered from harsh punishment, dilapidated housing, poorly trained staff, outdated vocational training, and in some cases a violation of child labor laws, according to this report. Contradicting the Bureau’s earlier belief in boarding schools, the report went on to say that placing students hundreds of miles away from their families was not fundamentally sound.46 The report concluded that Native youth should be educated in their own communities. In 1929, W. Carson Ryan was appointed as the director of education for the BIA. His goals were to reorganize school systems within the BIA, placing community school systems on reservations.47

The only truly significant outcome of the Meriam Report was the Indian Reorganization Act (IRA) of 1934. This Act required a greater emphasis on mass

45 Ibid., 11-12.
46 Garnett, Off Reservation Boarding Schools, 27.
47 Bonnel, Chemawa Indian Boarding School, 57.
education of Native Americans through reservation day schools and public schools. In 1939 another report, this time by Lloyd Blauch, found many of the same things as the Meriam Report. "These non-reservation boarding schools became prominent and tended to educate Indian Children in the ways of the white man, a task which was thought could be best accomplished by separating children from their parents." Blauch found that the schools showed a lack of psychological care. The abrupt separation accompanied by brutal treatment seriously damaged the student’s ability to learn. His report also followed with a recommendation for a uniform case study and that BIA teachers should be held to the same standards as public institutions. The most substantial conclusion in Blauch’s report was the critique of the vocational training.

Blauch found that a greater understanding for vocational studies needed to be realized. Employment both on and off reservations should be met with educational standards within boarding schools. Also that the long running “half-day plan,” which was applauded in the 1880s and 1890s, was decreasing efficiency in education. Not only was the vocational training outdated, but its practices and participants could actually be in violation in several states’ child labor laws. Therefore Blauch found that the BIA should emphasize the same education and standards as seen in accredited high schools. This was a fundamental difference in Blauch’s report from Meriam’s. Blauch emphasized a “traditional” high school and suggested several needs and objectives.

49 Ibid., 41.
50 Bonnel, “Chemawa Indian Boarding School”, 66-68.
From 1880 until 1923, the BIA and the federal government felt that boarding schools were of great value to Native youth. By the 1930’s, primarily due to its financial and administrative costs, the positive view of boarding schools had changed. The BIA made several changes in admission and administration policies.

From 1933 to 1936 boarding school attendance dropped from 22,000 to 14,000 students. New admission standards were adopted in order to address the new educational focus. Students had to be one of the following:

1. Orphans who have no homes at all
2. Neglected children whose home environment is wholly demoralizing
3. Children who have no local school facilities
4. High school pupils desiring special vocational training that is not offered at other schools.\(^{51}\)

In addition boarding schools also lost $500,000 to reservation day schools in 1933.\(^{63}\)

In the case of Chemawa cuts had serious effects on its enrollment and funding. From 1932 to 1933 the school was not allowed to recruit students. By the spring of 1933 the school was temporarily closed due to severe budget cuts. But public outrage amongst the Native American population began to call for reopening of the school. William Fairweather, a pastor of the First Baptist Church in Pendleton, Oregon, wrote a letter reflecting the community’s anger over the closing of the school. The Native American community feared the prejudice of public schools, and they cited government treaty obligations in providing education. Chief Gilbert Minthorn showed his disapproval by

\(^{51}\) James, State of Native America, 385.
claiming that only Native Americans had the right to make those decisions. Meanwhile Superintendent James Ryan continued to lobby for the school’s reopening. By the fall of 1933, the school was allowed to reopen with 300 students and a budget of $111,740. The school’s vocational programs were narrowed down from four years to two, and were modernized. These modern vocations included nursing, cosmetology, child care, mechanics, carpentry, gas welding, home wiring, tailoring, plumbing, steam engineering, farming, and machine shop production.52

Another shift in Native American educational philosophy occurred in the mid-1940s. Legislators found that the boarding schools, though they isolated students from their community isolation from their community, they were much more productive.

The Indian Bureau is tending to place too much emphasis on the day school located on the Indian reservation as compared with the opportunities afforded Indian children in the off-reservation boarding schools where they can acquire an education in healthful and cultural surroundings without the handicap of having to spend their out-of-school hours in tepees, shacks with dirt floors, and no windows, in tents, in wickiups, in hogan, or in surroundings where English is never spoken, where there is a complete lack of furniture, and where there is sometimes active antagonism or an abysmal indifference to the virtues of an education.53

It seemed that boarding schools would no longer have to fear enrollment numbers dropping or funds decreasing. Strangely, the same legislators who championed for the boarding schools to stay open, in fact a decade later, sponsored the Termination Policy of the 1950s.54

Established in 1948, the Termination policy called for the gradual reduction in

52 Bonnel, “Chemawa Indian Boarding School”, 100.
54 Jaimes, State of Native America, 386.
federal aid to Native Americans. The goal was to make Native Americans more self-sufficient. As a result they supported the theory of assimilation and closed several boarding schools. They discontinued loans were discontinued, and closed schools in Idaho, Michigan, Washington, and Wisconsin. Meanwhile they passed federal jurisdiction was passed down to the state level. The Termination policy also made Native Americans subject to the same laws and responsibilities as other citizens of the United States.55

The 1950s definition of assimilation was not the process of removing the “Indian” from the man, but making the man independent from federal aid.56 Students were now taught in regards to both their reservation environment and Euro-American’s environment. This is arguably the only autonomous period in Chemawa’s history. Staff and Students found common elements as they shared many of the same social hardships. Though students and staff were from different languages, cultures, and geography, they all had one common element: active government involvement in their lives. They created their own families, their own school, and means of education. “Personal or family situations were the catalysts and brought students to Chemawa.”57

As the 1960s approached Chemawa saw yet another change in policy. With the Economic Opportunity Act of 1965, tribal communities now became active in Native American policy. This act could be seen as a bi-product of the minority agitation of the

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55 Bonnel, “Chemawa Indian Boarding School”, 84.
56 Mckeehan, “History of Chemawa”, 149.
57 Ibid.
With conflict and debate growing within the African American community, the federal government was hoping to escape the same situation with Native Americans. Walsh McDermott headed a White House task force that sought to alleviate tensions between Native and Euro-Americans. McDermott found that empowering Native Americans, along with increased funding, would calm any possible conflict. Thus the concept of self-determination was put forth in the Indian Education Act of 1972. With this act the government acknowledged the importance of the education of Native youths being determined by Native Americans. Both the Economic Opportunity Act of 1966 and the Indian Education Act of 1972 began to empower tribal communities to participate and control their educational policies. In 1969 Senator Ted Kennedy, wrote a report which further reinforced federal support for tribal self-determination. The federal government, on its Report of Progress for the Second year of the Program found that:

1. 37 percent of the adult Indian heads of households have not completed grade school; only 14 percent have completed high school; only 2 percent have completed 4-year degree programs, and only 1 percent has completed graduate school.
2. The illiteracy rate among the Navajos, the largest Indian tribe, is 90 percent.
3. The average educational level for all Indians under Federal supervision is less than 6 school years.
4. Among Indian school youth the dropout rate ranges from 45 percent to 62 percent; 50 percent of the total number of Indian pupils have high rates of absenteeism.

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58 Jaime, State of Native America, 386.
Responding to the rights of Native American children, Morris Thompson, Commissioner of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, announced a Bill of Rights for BIA students, the first declaration of any such rights.

Right to an education, freedom from unreasonable search, reasonable privacy, a safe and secure environment, freedom of religion and culture, freedom of speech and expression, the right to peaceably assemble and to petition the redress of grievances and the right to due process and disciplinary actions which could involve suspension or expulsion.60

The 1960s had seen the emergence of strong student involvement at Chemawa. Student council and functions developed along with opportunities for off-campus living, a reading lab, career development programs, and a business education department. The class of '69 saw 262 graduates with an 850-student base.61 Though the preceding Economic Opportunity Act and the Indian Education Act may not have been directly responsible for Chemawa’s success, it was the foundation for the most important act since the Meriam Report. The Self-Determination Education Assistance Act would allow tribes to decide on the fate of Chemawa and the improvement of buildings on campus.

In 1975, the Self-Determination Education Assistance Act Congress acknowledge that the federal government had oppressed Native Americans. The act’s goal was to support stronger and greater Native American communities, namely through education. This act was especially important for Chemawa because of its dilapidated state.

By 1975 however, attendance had dropped to 250 from 699 in 1971.62 The school’s physical structures were outdated and inadequate. Because of the Self-

61 Ibid., 198.
62 Ibid., 202.
Determination Act, local Native American communities had the choice to improve the structures at Chemawa. They planned a community college-type campus with “cottage style” dormitories. Despite the efforts of local tribal communities, the federal government tried to close Chemawa. This time the local community aided Chemawa in keeping it open. The Superintendent, Portland Area Office, Salem Chamber of Commerce, and Senator Hatfield, pressed for the school’s preservation and the construction of modern structures. In October of 1977, the House of Interior appropriated ten million dollars to build classrooms for 600 students and dormitories for 400. By 1979 the new structure was completed and gave birth to the “modern” age of Chemawa. The mission statement summed this up.

Its prime function is to produce and prepare native American peoples capable of performing adequately, if not superiorly, within a worked society that is economically and financially dominant without having to degrade, denounce or substitute their cultural heritages or uniqueness. Its mission is to provide a reservoir of Indian intellectuals and leaders who will serve their people diligently and devoutly.

Chemawa is an Indian school whose sole dedication is to serve the enrichment and future prosperity of all Native American peoples.

With the emphasis on cultural heritage and individual success, Chemawa, with the help of many communities, had succeeded in establishing the right to choose its own fate.

In October of 1977, the House Interior Appropriations subcommittee appropriated ten million dollars to begin the construction of a new campus. Gerald Grey, in 1982, became the school’s 31st superintendent. Grey was able to improve student leisure time by implementing mandatory programs. He wanted education and recreational activities to

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63 Ibid., 204.
64 Ibid., 207.
dominate the students time.\textsuperscript{65}

The success of Indian self-determination came the social realities of reservation life. These realities became apparent at Chemawa whose student body included many kids who had severe social, emotional, and environmental conditions that simply matured them too quickly.

Native Americans in their early adolescence, were exposed to drugs, domestic abuse, alcohol abuse, and several other “dysfunctional” lifestyles. Jessie D. Hunt, who studied Chemawa students in the early 1990s, highlighted this social crisis. Hunt’s study found that since 1985 Chemawa has taken a more alternative school structure, which reveals what kind of services are required.

At the high school level there’s a 36 percent dropout rate, higher than any other minority. Chemawa students’ families had an 80 percent substance abuse problem, while 42 percent of the student body had drug related problems. The student body also had a 73 percent of its students with alcohol problems\textsuperscript{66}. Chemawa’s student body effectively became students who were either too difficult for their reservation schools, public school, parental control. The family dysfunction that was associated with reservations was now associated with Chemawa. Though this problem was not entirely new to Native Americans, it placed a greater financial and personal focus on social services instead of academic. Unfortunately for Chemawa, the Reagan administration cut the BIA’s budget

\textsuperscript{65} Bonnel, “Chemawa Indian Boarding School”, 117.
\textsuperscript{66} Jessie D. Hunt, Social Behaviors of Chemawa Students: CAEC and CIBS Approach to Alcohol and Drug Intervention. Senior Term Paper (George Fox University, 1993), 3.
by over one-third. Whereas in the past the school suffered from the funding of acculturation (1880-1930's), now gave way to inadequate funding of self-determination. As the government had acknowledged its arrogance in acculturation, it now prolonged its failure with severe budget cuts.

Undoubtedly, as the lack of funding created a weakened infrastructure, serious drug and alcohol addiction cases grew. This, accompanied the school's shift to an alternative school which required greater recovery and service programs. The alternative school setting acknowledges its student base as mostly "high risk." At risk students are more susceptible to drug and alcohol addiction, as well as learning disabilities, thus requiring greater social and drug treatment programs. In 1989, over one-fourth of Chemawa's student-body were dropouts from other schools. This effectively gave Chemawa the atmosphere of a remedial school, as its focus has become divided between educational, economic, cultural, and behavioral needs of the students. This trend go unnoticed. In a hearing before the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, an oversight hearing reviewed the performance of the BIA's schools.

Chemawa recognizes that substance abuse and the problems associated with it are increasingly commonplace in society, on the reservations and in other communities for which our students come, within the student's homes and within our campus community. Chemawa regards alcohol and other drug use addiction or dependency as a behavioral and medical problem, which interferes with the student's learning processes.68

Today only seven off-reservation schools still exist, four of which are administered by BIA employees. These schools combine to enroll only 2,623 students. As a result of

67 Ibid, 4.
68 Chemawa Indian Boarding School, Substance Abuse Policy (Chemawa Indian School, 1987), 1.
this trend, a concern for Chemawa's effectiveness has surfaced again. Current sentiment amongst bureaucratic officials is that off-reservation boarding schools have become care providers for an ever-increasing dysfunctional student body. This has led Chemawa to become decentralized as each respective department views itself as "essential." As "at-risk" students' behaviors have a direct impact on education, retention, and general welfare, the school's academic focus continues to diminish. Of the students enrolled in off-reservation high schools 58 percent are in intense residential programs, while 46 percent receive chapter one services. As a result the BIA has encouraged several programs to help alleviate the situation.

One of the emerging programs is the "therapeutic community" school model, which is considered to have great effectiveness. The therapeutic community consists of a guidance counselor, a recreational specialist, a dorm staff member, and a home living specialist. These professionals try to create an atmosphere of caring that enables both staff and students to accomplish academic, residential, and mental health goals.

In 1995, the school realized that it needed to redefine its mission due to increased social, personal, spiritual, cultural, and academic needs of the school's student body and decreased funding. With a good portion of Chemawa's students at two to three years below their grade level, school administrators felt the need to decentralize the school's departments. Thus, the school created their School Consolidation Reform Plan.

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70 Ibid., 2-5.
This plan was a direct result form the BIA’s inadequate funding and attention to mounting problems. The federal government, after eighty-five years of trying to indoctrinate Native Americans, had left the schools and the BIA to determine their own education without the previous appropriated funds. Now, Chemawa, had to deal with its rather large “at-risk” population with a fraction of the funding.

An off-reservation boarding school (or as the profile refers ORBS) profile was conducted in 1999 by the office of Indian Education Programs. The profile’s goal was to define the student body that attends ORBS, and its needs. It found that ORBS have a high population of “at-risk” students attending. The “at-risk” students are those who have severe medical, emotional, and/or educational problems.\(^71\) With Chemawa’s student body in great need of intense-specialized services, it only receives $12,210 annually per student. In comparison non-government funded boarding schools, on average, receive $18,500 annually!\(^72\) Chemawa has 95 percent of its student body as “at-risk,” compared to 80 percent of the rest of the BIA’s off-reservation boarding schools. Yet the most socially and academically challenged youth in the country are under-funded by $6,290! These students attend Chemawa because their public, tribal, or reservation schools back home lack the necessary resources to educate them. Chemawa’s current admission policies are as follows:

1. Those who are rejected or neglected by their families and for whom no suitable alternative care can be made;

2. Those who belong to large families with no suitable home and whose separation from each other is undesirable;
3. Those whose behavior problems are too difficult for solution by their families or through existing facilities; or
4. Those whose health or proper care is jeopardized by illness of other members of the household.  

With these admission policies in place the BIA issued a profile on their schools saying,

"Ultimately, limited financial and trained human resources, and lack of commitment limited the degree of effectiveness of programs attempted of boarding schools."  

Students are sent to Chemawa often as a last resort, hoping that the school will have the programs that can facilitate the students’ needs. If the schools are going to achieve their goal of promoting social, mental, and educational wellness, then they need the appropriate funding for dealing with the educational needs of Chemawa and other off-reservation boarding schools. Currently, Chemawa Indian School lacks the ability to achieve many of its social and academic problems. Therefore, off-reservation boarding schools, which facilitate instructional and residential programs, should receive the same, if not greater, funding than comparable schooling situations.

Since Chemawa’s conception in 1880, the school has seen 121 years of policies, procedures, and ideals implemented. Beginning with the goal of assimilation, Chemawa has always been the product of government arrogance, inadequate staff, inadequate funding, and inadequate goals. The first fifty years of the school’s history were dedicated solely to the indoctrination of the student body. So why does the school still persist

73 Ibid., 14.
74 Ibid., 7.
today? Is not Chemawa’s existence and operation a horrible reminder to both the BIA and Native Americans of the distorted priorities of policy makers? Have Chemawa’s past policies condemned it to be likewise ineffective today?

Chemawa can be seen as a direct product of late nineteenth century concept of indoctrination. As such, Chemawa can never be ran as an effective school without the self-determination of Native Americans, and the funding suitable for the needs of Chemawa’s student body. The BIA has shown that it cannot allow for both self-determination and adequate funding to take place. It has even admitted to this in the profile cited above, “...lack of commitment limited the degree of effectiveness of programs attempted of boarding schools.” Through the BIA’s lack of commitment it has succeeded in one thing. It has effectively removed Native Americans from their culture and land.

The federal government, to this day, is still acting as the paternal supervisor, and though it complains of administrative and educational costs, the government has yet to focus on creating a self-sufficient model for Native Americans. The federal government’s inconsistencies with the reservation, treaty systems, and educational systems have allowed Native Americans to be apart of a perpetuating process that secures their role as a dependent. The reasons vary, maybe because the federal government still holds true to the paternal frame of mind, or maybe if we address the Native American problem now, Euro-Americans have to admit what they did then. Regardless of the reasons, policy makers

75 Ibid.
know that Native Americans have the greatest chance of suicide, alcohol/drug abuse, highest school dropout rate, greatest rate of relapse, and the lowest literacy rate of any minority within the United States. Policy makers know that 80 to 95 percent of off-reservation boarding schools' student body is "at-risk," while they under-fund the schools over $6,000 annually when compared to like-institutions. The government's own "Indian" agency, the BIA admits that it is running their schools inefficiently, yet schools remain ineffective.

The BIA and the federal government have done a rather impressive job of taking a community oriented and self-sufficient culture into one of the biggest government subsidies. But the federal government did get what it ideally wanted, it got vast amounts of land and resources at the greater expense of Native Americans. It created a legitimate and efficient mechanism that not only removed Native Americans from their land, but guaranteed a Euro-American culture. The federal government, the BIA, and Chemawa have created the most stable and efficient dependency ever of one culture onto another. Chemawa, therefore, is a direct product of the perpetuating system that enables the United States of America to control the progress and destiny of Native Americans. With 40 percent of the Native American population under 20 years of age, it is imperative that Native Americans take back their youth and preserve what they can of their culture to truly insure their independence and success.
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