

**Unintended Consequences**  
How the Crow Indians Used Their Education in Ways the Federal  
Government Never Intended, 1885-1920.

By Peter P. Holman

*Baaishtashiile ammaaeche iiwaa awassahcheewailuuk  
Ammaeche ewahkuulak baaawassahcheewiolak baleetaak*

*With what the whiteman knows he can oppress us. If we learn what he  
knows, then he can never oppress us again.*  
*Chief Plenty Coups*

Chief Plenty Coups understood the importance of education for the Crow people. He realized that education was essential for survival in a white world and without it, the Crow people would face oppression and a bleak future. Studying the Crow Indians gives the opportunity to examine a people that were different from most of the tribes in the west. The Crows became allies with the U.S. government during the Great Indian Wars. They fought against their old Indian enemies at the side of their white friends. The Crows hoped that alliance would continue. When Plenty Coups spoke of what the “whiteman” knows, he did not speak of them as an enemy. Instead, he spoke that if the Crows learned the white’s language and knew how the whites thought, then the Crows could use that knowledge to protect their own interests. Just as during the Cold War with Russia, the Americans studied the Russians and learned about their adversary. The Crows used similar tactics just a century earlier.

The education of the American Indian was at the forefront of the assimilation process that began when reformers and government policy makers agreed that to educate the Indian was to civilize the “savage,” giving him or her the opportunity to live and work among the whites. To do this, focus centered on the children and not the older Indians. It was not that the older Indians were not smart or capable, but rather that they resisted the drastic change that was taking place. The government instead focused their energy on the younger Indians, prepping the children to become self-sufficient farmers and eventual citizens, capable of managing individual affairs.

Crows who returned from the boarding schools used their education, not only to meet the standard set forth by government, but also in ways that reformers, government officials, and even themselves did not expect. The U.S. government's expectation was to use education to prepare the Indian for a particular limited lifestyle. Farming was the occupation intended to further the new cultural direction of the Indian after allotment of Indian lands. The curricula of boarding schools focused on industrial education, preparing the Indian child to a limited future without choice. Instead of following the path chosen by others, certain Crows opted to use their education in alternative ways: ways that startled agents and commissioners.

The federal government intended on individualizing the Indians by giving each his or her own land, surrounding them with whites, reaking up tribal unity, and making the Indians agriculturists. The unintended consequences were that the Crow used the education from boarding schools to maintain tribal unity, redefine tribal leadership and political structure, and protect themselves from white encroachment.

The Crow culture changed dramatically when the U.S. government forced them onto reservations. In the past, Crows became leaders through acts of bravery in war, hunting ability, stealing horses, and other accomplishments. All that changed. Reservation life left no opportunity for the younger Crows to gain leadership through traditional paths. None of the older criteria existed. Limited within the reservation, the Crows' choices were either change or die. The younger Crows chose change and helped establish a new culture for gaining leadership within the Crow tribe. They used education to create new guidelines for leadership roles. Not only did the returned students become leaders, they used their education to protect not only themselves, individually, but the advances made by the government to break up the tribe as a whole for "civilized" advancement.

Much work has been done examining the dramatic cultural change that occurred during the boarding school experience.<sup>1</sup> Children who did not embrace white culture suffered through traumatic changes as they saw their old culture disappear. The educational process was at times cruel and unjust. Educators allowed very little time to let the Indian child change slowly. Instead, educators tried to implement cultural change quickly and aggressively, allowing no time for children to adapt on their terms [Children endured a complete cultural change in a matter of years, not generations.]

Whether operated by government or private entities, or off the reservation, schools tried to drive deep the cultural structure that educators needed for their plan of full acculturation. Police forced children from their families or the acting agent threatened to withhold rations if parents did not give up their children. There was no choice, when the agent enforced his orders to enlist every able-bodied student and educate them. Children's hair was cut short, signifying the first step toward citizen's dress. Teachers punished children for speaking their native tongue. With barely any knowledge of the English language, children had little opportunity to communicate with their teacher, let alone fellow students. The stress and anxiety the Crow children endured was a formidable force during their educational process.

Even though the boarding school experience impacted the Crow students just as it did other tribal children, the focus of this study is to look at how Crows who attended Euro-American schools used their education to help their situation, not only individually, but for their own people on the reservation. The government wanted to acculturate the Indian children into mainstream American, but instead, the Crows learned what the

---

<sup>1</sup>David Wallace Adams, *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928*, University Press, Kansas, 1995. Amelia V. Katanski, *No One can Dispute my Own Impressions and Bitterness: Representation of the Indian Boarding School Experience in the 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> Century American Indian Literature*, Tufts University, 2000. These are books that explain the boarding school experience in great detail.

whites knew through their education so they could better understand the white world while still protecting their own culture and set of beliefs. That is the unintended consequence.

Some important terms need explanation. Federal acculturation policy defined a process of one culture forcing another do adopt the culture and lifestyles of the dominant culture. In the case of the Indians, Euro-Americans tried to force Native Americans to adopt white culture and work practices. Education was a valuable weapon in doing that.

The term "young educated Crows" will be used frequently. It refers to the students who were educated in either the reservation or off-reservation boarding schools between 1885 and 1920. The term does not intend to show disrespect towards the older Crows who were not educated in the boarding school. Their education lay in the deep traditions of Crow culture and their knowledge of that culture is unquestioned and respected.

Different organizations that ran boarding schools were both on and off the reservation. The federal government funded and ran the reservation boarding schools through the agent or superintendent in charge of the agency. Off-reservation boarding schools were run and financed through private organization and tried the approach of full separation not only from family, but from the entire reservation. Agencies shipped numerous students to off-reservation boarding schools east of the Mississippi.<sup>2</sup> The missionary schools on the Crow reservation were called contract schools. This was because the federal government contracted out and paid the contract schools depending on the number of pupils.

---

<sup>2</sup> Many of the educated Crow who attended the off-reservation boarding schools first attended a boarding school at Crow Agency.

The Crow Boarding School and Pryor Boarding School were the reservation schools on the Crow reservation. The Montana Industrial School and St. Xavier Mission School were contract schools, run by private, religious organizations. Crow agents often sent older students to off-reservation boarding schools at Carlisle, Haskell, Hampton, Ft. Shaw, and Riverside.<sup>3</sup>

Thomas Jefferson's Administration inaugurated the first effort to assimilate Native Americans. President Jefferson's Indian policy was simple: settle all the areas around the Indians and gradually suffocate the Indians into assimilation or death. Land was at the core of Jefferson's philosophy. In Jefferson's view, Indians occupying large tracts of land was inefficient. Indians slowed white development. Jefferson's plan for white expansion included sending an army to prevent white encroachment while suppressing Indian uprisings. He also wanted Indians to rely on trade so extensively that they ended up in severe debt. The solution was then to trade the Indians' sections of land to clear the debt. Jefferson wanted to encircle Indians lands by occupying lands on the east bank of the Mississippi and squeeze the Indians from both the west and east into a dramatically smaller area. As game populations declined, Jefferson would offer food and goods in exchange for land. If war escalated, then he would negotiate land secession for peace.<sup>4</sup> Jefferson's Indian policy was clear and concise: use every means necessary to obtain Indian lands to make room for expansion.

Over the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, many administrations pursued a similar Indian policy. By the end of the 1870's, Indians of the west were all placed on reservations and no longer occupied large tracts of land. Land hungry settlers gobbled up land and wanted more. In order to make room for white settlement, reservation lands became the heated

---

<sup>3</sup> Ft. Shaw was in Montana and Riverside was in California.

<sup>4</sup> Anthony FC Wallace, *Jefferson and the Indians: The Tragic Fate of the First Americans*, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999, P. 225

topic of discussion. To make room for white settlement and to deal with the large expanses of reservation land, the federal government and reformers decided that to remedy the situation the Indian must become civilized.

Henry Dawes, a Senator from Massachusetts, introduced a bill to Congress that called for the allotment of reservation lands. The Dawes Act of 1887 called for each Indian who was head of the household to receive 160 acres, single persons, 80 acres. Each Indian would have land to cultivate and step closer into the civilized world. The Indians would have 25 years in which the federal government held the trust patent to the land and after that time expired, they gained full ownership of the allotment and became citizens with all the rights pertaining. The federal government felt that the best way to civilize a "savage" was through the use of agriculture. Agriculture represented the highest tier in the anthropological scale that started at savagery, and progressed through barbarism, and then civilization.<sup>5</sup>

After allotment, the remaining surplus lands opened up for white settlement. The purpose was twofold: giving each individual land broke up tribal unity and surrounding Indians with white farmers set good examples of self-sufficiency through agriculture. Indians would also have close contact with white culture. An important aspect of the Dawes Act was the extermination of tribal unity. Dawes believed if Indians felt obliged to a greater unity, then they would never gain individual and economic desires that helped define civility. Dawes believed that the answer to the "Indian question" lay in the success of the act. The transformation of the Indian could not happen overnight, so education rose to the forefront of the implementation and potential success of the Dawes Act.

---

<sup>5</sup> D.S. Otis, *The Dawes Act and the Allotment of Indian Lands*, University of Oklahoma Press, 1973, p. 6

Education was essential for the success of the Dawes Act. Many of the reformers and organizations that participated in the design of the Dawes Act felt that without education, the Indians could not advance. Through the 1870's, the Lake Mohonk Conference discussed such issues.

Education was key to this plan. Reformers and government agreed on the best approach to educating the Indian. The older Indians grasped the old way of life too tightly and were therefore, deemed unworthy of concern. Instead, energy focused on the younger Indians, showing them the opportunity of civilization through education. The Board of Indian Commissioners wrote in 1875 that, "in order to civilize the Indians and establish them in a permanent condition of self-support, education must be as [sic] fundamental and indispensable factor."<sup>6</sup> The conclusion was to instill the virtues of Euro American civilization into the young.

Government officials saw the goal to induce the Indian to become a self-sufficient citizen. If education could create an industrious worker who tilled the land, that Indian would become self-sufficient and would not require governmental money. Secondly, if the educated Indians used their allotted land and produced from it, all excess land was then open for white settlement.

Indian boys needed education focused on agricultural practices that would enable them to farm successfully their allotted plots of land and become self-sufficient "citizens." Indian girls needed education that catered to industrious home life, such as cooking, cleaning, keeping a clean and nice home, and other essential home necessities. According to historian David Adams, "Education would give Indians the knowledge and skills necessary for survival in a civilized world."<sup>7</sup> Without it, Indians would require assistance from government, which was a very costly venture.

Some reformers believed the best way to educate the Indian was through the boarding schools. Reservation life provided pressure from family members to resist the

---

<sup>6</sup> Francis Paul Prucha, *American Indian Policy in Crisis: Christian Reformers and the Indian, 1865-1900*, University of Oklahoma Press: Norman, 1964, p. 269

<sup>7</sup> David Wallace Adams, *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928*. University Press, Kansas, 1995, p. 19



lessons of white education.<sup>8</sup> The answer was to remove the Indian child and place him or her into a secure environment where teachers and school officials could censor familial influences. Schools prepared a set agenda for educating Indian children. Indian children spent part of the day learning to speak and write the English language and the latter half of the day working on industrial practices. Boys spent their time learning agricultural practices, carpentry, and blacksmithing, while girls spent their time learning homemaking skills such as sewing, housekeeping, cooking, and other elements that make up a good home.<sup>9</sup> A weekly curriculum sheet for the Crow Boarding School showed focus on pronunciation and spelling, drawing, writing words on the black board, arithmetic, and reading (see appendix I).

Because of the rising popularity of the boarding school idea, the Carlisle Industrial School emerged as the model off-reservation boarding school. In 1879, on the grounds of an abandoned army hospital in Pennsylvania, Richard Pratt organized and established a boarding school that focused on industrial education. Pratt had Indian children transported from every reservation in the country, providing diversity among the students. Pratt's primary goal was the same as other boarding schools, educate Indians in the industrial arts so that they might find their place in the "civilized" world.<sup>10</sup>

Other schools surfaced such as Haskell Institute. But these schools could only handle a limited number of students so emphasis was again put on the reservation boarding schools which provided the Indian children the same curriculum as the eastern schools. Agency officials used the same process to collect children for the boarding schools. Military or tribal police forced parents to relinquish their children and would

---

<sup>8</sup> terms like "you are not proud of being an Indian" were common

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. p30.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. p.51-59

withhold rations and annuities to motivate unwilling families, an effective tactic since little game was left on the reservations.

In 1884, Crow Agency was moved near the present day town of Hardin, Montana from Mission Creek, located eight miles east of Livingston, Montana. Throughout the period between 1774 and 1884, the Crow Agency moved three times as the government reduced the size of the reservation, finally settling near Hardin, Montana. Although a small government boarding school operated during the late 1870s, very few Crows attended. The big boost in school population occurred after the passage of the Dawes Act and education moved to the forefront of the civilization movement. The first government boarding school started in 1884 and operated until 1920. During this time, school capacity grew from 50 to 150, and it was nearly filled through its entire existence. The school was located at Crow Agency, seven miles east of Hardin (See Map). The school building expanded to accommodate the number of available Crow students who required education. The Crow Agency boarding school was the only school operating at Crow Agency from 1884 to 1887. Even though the Crow were reluctant to give up their children, attendance was high and continued so until the very end of its existence.

Missionary groups also launched schools at Crow Agency. The first of these was the Unitarian Association. The Unitarians were no strangers in helping the social conditions of "secondary citizens." As historian Margery Pease noted, "Unitarians as groups and individuals brought change to social conditions in the United States," and helped with, "womens [sic] suffrage, abolition of slavery, improved conditions in prisons, and the use of the concept of "industrial education" to freed blacks after the Civil War."<sup>11</sup> In 1886, the Unitarians sent Reverend Henry F. Bond and his wife Pamela to Crow

---

<sup>11</sup> Margery Pease, *A Worthy Work in a Needy Time: The Montana Industrial School for Indians, 1886-1897*, Published Oct. 1, 1986, p. 7

Agency to find a site for an industrial school. In 1887, Bond opened the doors of the Montana Industrial School for Indians at Ramona Ranch, a contract school that was located on the northern border of the reservation<sup>12</sup> (See Map). Bond's philosophy was simple, "to lift the red man, physical, intellectual, moral, spiritual."<sup>13</sup> By June of 1887, the student body grew from 13 to 30, and in 1889, 55 students attended regularly. The school did have a difficult beginning. Many of the Indians in the northern part of the reservation, near the Bond School, were not allowed to stay close to the school. The Crow parents wanted to be close to their children, but Rev. Bond would not allow it in order to maintain discipline and to pursue indoctrination without the outside influences of the family. Every Sunday parents could see their children, and attendance grew after Rev. Bond started providing meals for visiting Indians. Rev. Bond also relied on tribal police to collect students, but as he soon found out, the police were not as reliable as hoped. Because the Montana Industrial School operated on a portion of money given to them by the government, other denominations grew jealous, and demanded that their denominations receive aid from government in their own mission ventures.<sup>14</sup> The government's solution was simple, all funds sent to missionary organizations, including the Unitarians, stopped. The Unitarians could not support the school with the association's own money, so in 1898, they were forced to close. The government did operate the school for a short period of time, but soon closed the doors and sent the students to Crow Agency boarding school.<sup>15</sup>

The Catholics also started a contract boarding school at St. Xavier (See Map).

The school operated from 1887 to 1920, expanding student populations throughout that

---

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. The Montana Industrial School was also called the Bond School.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. p. 11

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. p. 30

<sup>15</sup> *A Worthy Work in a Needy Time* was the only piece written on the Montana Industrial School. There was little mention in reports made by the Crow agent of this particular school.

time. The school could accommodate up to 150 students within its new building, but was rarely at full capacity. Reverend J. Bandino supervised the school and focused the education on industrial practices. Just as in the other boarding schools on the reservation, St. Xavier Industrial School aimed to prepare Crow students to become self-sufficient farmers and housekeepers. St. Xavier leased out its allotted mission land to support the school when government eliminated their cash support of missionary organizations on reservations. Government only contracted out the education of 10-15 students, so the Catholic Bureau of Indian Missions had to finance the remaining costs. Daniel Dorchester, Superintendent of Indian Schools, commented while visiting the Crow reservation in 1892 that "I never found in any school Indian children who could stand so good an examination regarding the use of capital letters in writing."<sup>16</sup> The school and its teachers committed themselves to the education of the Crow in their preparation for a "citizen's" life.

Pryor Creek was located on the western edges of the reservation and was difficult to get parents to let their children attend the Crow boarding school, which was several miles away (See Map). In 1903, the federal government started another boarding school. The Pryor boarding school opened its doors on February 12, 1903, and ran until 1919. The Catholics also tried a school at Pryor, but it closed rather quickly. Upon the demand of parents the Pryor boarding school opened and began teaching the Pryor Creek Crow children. The school opened with 32 pupils and had as many as 58 at one time.<sup>17</sup> The Pryor boarding school closed because of lack of government funds to keep two agency schools functioning. After its closure, the students were sent to Crow Agency boarding school.

---

<sup>16</sup> Charles C. Bradley, *After the Buffalo Days: Documents on the Crow Indians from the 1880's to the 1920's*, Masters Thesis, Montana State University, Bozeman, August 1970. p. 181

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* p. 191

Although different organizations supported their boarding schools, the goal of all of them remained the same, industrial education, as well as the basics. Most morning classes covered reading, writing, geography, history, and arithmetic. The afternoons were spent working on agricultural or domestic practices. Each school sustained a farm and students could put to use the skills they learned. Blacksmithing, carpentry, plowing, dairying, and other farming skills were at the core of the Crow boy's industrial training. The girls learned sewing, gardening, baking, washing, ironing, cooking, and general homemaking skills.<sup>18</sup> Each school, whether government, Unitarian, or Catholic, emphasized the importance of these skills.

Almost all educated Crows in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries attended one of the schools on the reservation, at least 3 to 6 years. Many of them finished their education in an eastern boarding school such as Carlisle. Many of the Crow students were 16 years old or older when they went east. They were at the age where separation from their families may have not been as overwhelming, to both the individual and the family. Almost all of the educated Crows who will be discussed went through the above process, starting their education at the agency and leaving to finish their education in the East.

In 1890, the Bureau of Indian Affairs sent a commission to buy the western edge of the Crow reservation. The secession of land would be sold to potential white settlers and the Crows would collect the funds generated from the land sales. Plenty Coups lived on the western edge of the reservation near Pryor Creek and adamantly opposed the sale. The commission told Plenty Coups that even if he opposed the sale, it would gain support from other leaders of the reservation, collecting signatures and ultimately undermining

---

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. p.176

his authority as head chief of the Crow. Not wanting to relinquish control of the tribe, Plenty Coups agreed to the terms of the land sale.

In 1896, the U.S. government again pressured the Crows for land. This time Plenty Coups and other leaders organized themselves and sprang into action. During the meeting, the commissioners spoke of the land they wanted open to white settlement. Plenty Coups addressed the committee stating that the Crows would not negotiate until the government gave them the money from the last land sale. The commissioner did not expect such a response by the Crow leaders and they were especially not prepared for what transpired next.

Plenty Coups and the other leaders gathered a group of young educated boys who had just returned from the boarding schools and as Spotted Horse exclaimed, "Here gather [sic] near me you see the boys we sent to school... They are young men now and can read and write; they are men now that we look up on with confidence."<sup>19</sup> Carl Leider, one of the returned students, addressed the commission, "This is the first time in the history of the Crows we younger men have been allowed a voice in the Crow council."<sup>20</sup> Leider spoke to the commission in English reading a list of "broken promises, payment [sic] missed and annuities delayed."<sup>21</sup> Not only did Leider speak about the grievances, but he handed a list written in English to the commission enumerating the Crows' demands. Surprised by the organization of the council and the use of educated young men, the commission adjourned to regroup.

The 1896 land sale debate was the stepping stone for young educated Crows to enter the world of Crow politics and leadership. Plenty Coups, Spotted Horse, and other Crow leaders realized the importance of these educated men, and how to use their

---

<sup>19</sup> Frederick Hoxie, *Parading Through History*, p. 233-4

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. p. 234

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. p. 234

education for the benefit and protection of the Crow people and their lands. The education that the young men received helped to block the attempt to sell Crow land. After experiencing trickery by the commission in 1890, Plenty Coups used some trickery of his own.

As negotiating land sales continued, so did the use of educated Crows. Plenty Coups demanded that no more land sale negotiations would continue if back payment of previous land sales was not paid in full and he stated, "I will get my boys...young fellows who are educated-get them together and have them see that all the back payments are paid."<sup>22</sup> The educated Crows created a place for themselves on the Crow reservation. Spotted Horse, Plenty Coups and Medicine Crow used the educated students as pawns in a game of chess with the U.S. government.

The educated students played an important role providing an organized defense against the land hungry commissioners. The 1896 land negotiation was the catalyst in the development of how the Crows would use their education. It was a surprise to the land sale commission that the Crows used education against them. That was not the intention of the boarding school. Educated students would continue the ploy of using their education in unintended ways, forming political organizations, negotiating leasing and grazing contracts, and finally, commanding the business transactions and well being of the entire Crow reservation.<sup>23</sup>

In 1906, Helen Pierce Grey, a journalist, was sent to Crow Reservation by the Indians Rights Association to investigate possible corruption and favoritism committed by Agent Samuel G. Reynolds. In 1902, President Theodore Roosevelt appointed Reynolds, a banker from Billings, Montana, Crow Indian agent. Agent Reynolds was

---

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. p. 235

known for harsh discipline and pushed for self-reliance. Reynolds was also accused of favoring local ranchers and working with them to arrange cheap grazing leases. Historian D.S. Otis spoke of the alleged corruption by stating, "It is apparent that white settlers and promoters had found leasing a new and effective technique for exploiting Indian lands. So had Indian agents, according to the Indian Rights Association."<sup>24</sup> The IRA sent Grey to investigate just that.

Upon Grey's arrival, she allied with a group called the Crow Indian Lodge (CIL). The CIL was composed of mostly boarding school graduates, and according to historian Frederick Hoxie, formed to achieve, "greater commercial freedom for the tribe's farmers and ranchers and [it] was hostile to Agent Reynolds."<sup>25</sup> Joe Cooper, now in his late twenties, led the CIL. Cooper lived in Lodge Grass. He attended the Crow Boarding School and graduated from Carlisle. Cooper and Reynolds displayed a great dislike for each other. Cooper believed that Reynolds practiced favoritism toward other Crows, giving them better tools and equipment to farm. Cooper also believed that the Crows could make decisions for themselves without the help of the agent, and he wanted more Crow control of the reservation. Reynolds believed that Cooper, "has no standing in the tribe, but is regarded with utter contempt as a loafer [sic] and mischief-maker."<sup>26</sup> The two detested each other and the battle ensued.

Grey gained influence with the CIL, sparking a growing resentment of Reynolds and promising the group money and freedom from tyranny. Agent Reynolds responded by saying, "This woman has acted detestable and done more actual harm to these Indians

---

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. p. 236. Frederick Hoxie explains the entire land sale incident in *Parading Through History*. Much of his citing was from the files and research in Washington D.C. I used Hoxie because the material was available and a trip to Washington was not practical.

<sup>24</sup> D.S. Otis, *The Dawes Act and the Allotment of Indian Lands*, University of Oklahoma Press, 1973, p. 122

<sup>25</sup> Frederick E. Hoxie, *Parading Through History*, p. 24



especially one who was part of the trouble makers of the CIL, too attack his reputation and accuse him of corruption.

Grey returned to Washington D.C. and reported her findings to President Theodore Roosevelt and Secretary of the Interior James Garfield. They sent an attorney named Lewis Dalby to Crow Reservation to investigate. Reynolds, threatened by the momentum and support picked up by the CIL, helped organize a counter lodge. The Elks Lodge formed to combat mutilation practices during burial ceremonies and Reynolds explained:

“The last three or four years the Indians have requested me at different times to organize them into a lodge for their mutual benefit, so about a year ago, I met with several of the educated boys and we made up a simple ritual, setting forth in the obligation and two or three short lectures the purpose of the organization. In the obligation, the Indian promises to obey the laws of his country, rules and regulations governing his reservation, not to wrong, cheat or defraud any of this fellow men, and that he will live honorable and upright life, and that he will aid an assist any of his brothers or their families in case of sickness or distress.”<sup>30</sup>

Educated young Crows made up most of the Elks Lodge. Carl Leider and a former president of the CIL, George Pease, occupied its leadership roles. The Elks Lodge was made up of mostly Crow agency Indian employees and recruited heavily from the Black Lodge District. The Black Lodge District had always ignored the power of other tribal leaders and the CIL fit that category.<sup>31</sup> The motivation behind the Elks Lodge was Reynolds' agenda of forming an alliance with other Crows who did not want to follow the CIL and Cooper. The formation of the Elks Lodge was a clear attempt to squash the power Cooper had garnered.

---

<sup>30</sup> PCLS (Reynolds) to the CIA, Relative to the Practices of the Crow Indians Mutilating Their Bodies, Jan. 13, 1908, RG 75, Box 7, NARA-D

<sup>31</sup> Hoxie, *Parading Through History*, p. 243-4

The Elks Lodge gained membership quickly to about 150 members, mostly from districts out of the geographical influence of the CIL.<sup>32</sup> As the momentum of the Elks Lodge grew and as the CIL maintained its power, the clash between the two was inevitable. Agent Reynolds wanted nothing more than to rid himself of the pesky CIL members, especially Joe Cooper. Arresting certain individuals of the CIL for illegally leaving the reservation without a pass was just an excuse to constrain them until the Elks Lodge could organize. It was the first political battle between the educated young Crows. Hoxie stated it best: "the two lodges now vied for support in the struggle over political leadership on the reservation."<sup>33</sup> The educated Crows did not return to the reservation exclusively to farm, but formulated political organizations, struggling for leadership for the betterment of their own people. Agent Reynolds tried to control the movement, but could only provide an antidote for the troublesome CIL.

Grey was only allowed to reenter the reservation briefly, but every time she did, she tried to mobilize the CIL. Grey's intentions were to help the CIL remove Reynolds from office. He arrested her and again escorted her off the reservation. Her ability to rile up the CIL threatened Reynolds's power and he watched her closely.

Upon his investigation, Lewis Dalby found no wrong doings on the part of Agent Reynolds. As a consequence, Grey was never allowed on the reservation again and the CIL struggled to maintain its active political. The rivalry between lodges continued until 1910, when the Indian Commissioners proposed another land deal, potentially shrinking the reservation. Both the CIL and the Elks Lodge opposed any such deal, and were

---

<sup>32</sup> Lodge Grass was the base of the CIL. Both Cooper and Jim Carpenter both had farms near Lodge Grass. The Elks Lodge gained support from the Black Lodge District. Hoxie, *Parading Through History*, p. 243. Elks Lodge held 150 members from PCLS (Reynolds) to CIA, Relative to the Practices of the Crow Indians mutilating their bodied during burial rituals, Jan 13, 1908, RG 75, Box 7, NARA-D

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. p. 244

forced to unite, putting aside their differences, to combat another attack upon their lands. The uniting of the two groups began the Crow Business Committee.

The Business committee formed in order for a group of trustworthy Crows to oversee the tribal funds generated from grazing leases. The Crow men wanted to use their education to account for all money that the reservation made.<sup>34</sup> This was a new stance. In a letter to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Agent Reynolds reported:

The instigators and leader of the movement are the young men- older people apparently taking no interest in it... It is composed of the most intelligent, but not the most reliable members of the tribe.<sup>35</sup>

These young Crows wanted to control decisions that affected their people. They believed that, "they should manage the Reservation and the affairs of the tribe," developing their own leadership and decision making skills.<sup>36</sup>

The importance of the Business Committee was to be an active participant in Crow affairs. It pressured the agent to make final decisions in the best interests of the Crow people and their land. In many instances, the Committee used its power to persuade Congress, bear witness at congressional hearings on tribal matters, and take part in the legislative process. The Committee also demanded certain actions, such as lease agreements, and was very persuasive in doing so.

The Business Committee needed members and due to the different communities on the Crow reservation, they were split into six districts. Each district performed an election to vote for three members of the community to represent them on the Business Committee. The Crows demonstrated democracy to the fullest, allowing the three members to speak on the behalf of each district and resolved, "being duly elected and

---

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. p. 288

<sup>35</sup> Crow Business Committee, AC Files, Mar. 20, 1911, RG 75, Box 78, NARA-D.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

organized, shall have full authority to transact all tribal business, properly coming before it, and that their action shall be accepted and held binding upon the entire tribe."<sup>37</sup> The significance was again, educated Crows took part in a process that had not been taught in schools, but one that ventured into a new realm of responsibility that governed their own decisions and policies.

The process and organization of the first election in 1911 were important in demonstrating the competence of educated Crows.<sup>38</sup> Conducting an election was no small feat, yet the Business Committee did so with great success. Each district nominated, voted, and tallied the results, naming the members quickly. In addition to the sophistication of democracy demonstrated by the Crows, they wrote up the results in a professional and formal manner, documenting the elected members.<sup>39</sup>

Another significant aspect of the formation of the Business Committee was that many of the newly elected members were young educated Crows. Some of the educated men served as the chairman of the committee and as secretary. In 1911, the council organized the election of president and secretary, electing Frank Shane as chairman and Rosebud Farwell, secretary. According to Agent Reynolds, "both are educated progressive and well-disposed Indians."<sup>40</sup> In fact, educated men sat as chairman of each district. Changes of the president happened frequently at first, but each time the newly elected was an educated Crow.

In one instance, Reynolds did not approve of two elected members from the Lodge Grass District. That district unanimously elected Joe Cooper and Jim Carpenter,

---

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> All of the documents stated the names of the elected members, location of district, and signed by the chairman of that district. Most of the Chairmen of the districts were educated young men. Information found in AC Files, Crow Business Committee, RG 75, NARA-D.

<sup>40</sup> AC Files, Business Committee Folder, April 20, 1911, RG 75, Box 78, NARA-D. The Business Committee was also referred to as Business Council.

but because of Reynolds dislike for Cooper and Carpenter, he appointed two other non-educated Crows in their place. Reynolds claimed their "unfitness for the position lies mainly in his opposition to Departmental and Agency authority."<sup>41</sup> Although democracy was supposedly at work and the Crows tried to strike out beyond the grasp of government, the agent still clutched and held onto the wards tightly so he would not lose his hold.

The Committee demanded a wide range of responsibilities. First, the committee wanted participation in the control of tribal funds. Grazing contributed large amounts of income for the tribe. The tribe collected a formidable amount of money and wanted control over the collection process and the distribution of the funds. Because of little support from the federal government for farming practices, Crows gained little or no money. Leasing created money for both individuals and the tribe.

The allotment process was also at the forefront of the committee's agenda. Not wanting to relinquish more land to white settlement, the committee took an important role pushing for new allotments to new members of the tribe and children who had not received their allotment. The Business Committee decided to allot as much land as possible into Indian ownership, thus protecting Indian land from white expansion, allowing their children to receive land that was due to them.

The committee participated in other activities such as authorizing pay increases to employees, whether white or Indian, appointing teachers for educational work, firing white agency employees, appointing and sending delegates to Washington D.C., and other various tasks.<sup>42</sup> The importance of the committee manifested itself in their participation in all functions of the reservation. In essence, the committee protected the Crows from any outside force they deemed imposing or unjustified.

---

<sup>41</sup> Reynolds to CIA, April 20, 1911, AC Files, RG 75, Box 78, NARA-D

The Business Committee used its power to benefit and protect the tribe. Many examples exist. In April 1913, the Business Committee drafted a proposal for the Commissioner of Indian Affairs in opposition of white ranchers who leased grazing ground. Mr. Goodall, a government range inspector arrived on the reservation to investigate the overgrazing of tribal land by William Heinrich, a local cattleman.<sup>43</sup> The Business Committee wanted the lease with Mr. Heinrich terminated; it felt his cattle had overgrazed the range. The committee agreed that further grazing would destroy the range and it wanted to protect it, as the Crow wanted to purchase their own cattle and use their own range for grazing. The Crow saw how much money Heinrich made off cattle and wanted to duplicate his success. According to the Crows, Inspector Goodall's trip to the reservation was biased. He spent most of his time traveling with the agent, Mr. Heinrich, and other white cattle raisers in the area. Goodall spent little time at the actual range in question. Mr. Goodall's decision allowed Mr. Heinrich to continue the lease for another year. The Crow Business council was aghast that the inspector made such a decision. The committee stated that Mr. Goodall spent only four days examining the range "in which he gave his apparent assumed and dictated judgment, on a question of the greatest and most vital importance to the Crow Indians."<sup>44</sup> The Crows insisted Goodall filed an unjust report. The letter further stated that:

This committee unanimously protest to the procedure, manner, and the company or persons with whom he made his inspection... The time taken by him on his tour is inadequate to insure just, honest, impartial, and an unbiased conclusion and

---

<sup>42</sup> T.J. Burbank was the white farmer from the Pryor District. The Business Committee forced the removal of Burbank and replaced him with a more qualified farmer. Minutes of Meeting of the Crow Business Committee, AC Files, April 19, 1911, RG 75, Box 78, NARA-D.

<sup>43</sup> No first name of Mr. Goodall was in document source.

<sup>44</sup> Letter to CIA, AC Files, April 30, 1913, RG 75, Box 78, NARA-D. The letter pertained to Mr. Goodall's report and suggestions. It was signed by George Hogan, an educated Crow, and President of the Business Council.

verdict for parties concerned, and expressly the Crow Indians whose interests are equally as much at stake.<sup>45</sup>

The Business Committee began to see the government as the Crow's adversary. The Crows had always been an ally of the whites, but soon realized that the Crow people needed to start building a defense. That realization created a new mind set that allowed the Crows to start administering their own affairs more effectively. The Goodall incident created animosity toward the agent and inspectors and the Committee started accusing government officials of false reporting or sugar coating reports. The Crow knew the truth about the range and knew that it was overgrazed, almost to the decisive point and therefore, accused Mr. Heinrich of having his hand in Mr. Goodall's and Agent Reynolds's pocket. The committee continued by asking:

What enables him to know the average condition of this range that he assumes to know so well, and even better than we, who have lived here all our lives, and who know the exact conditions and are better able thereby to judge.<sup>46</sup>

The letter continued berating the Indian Office and Mr. Goodall's ignorance of how many head of cattle the Crows owned. If a BIA official was incapable of knowledge of the Crow herd, how then could the Crows expect the federal government to look out for the tribe's best interests? The Business Committee realized that it must assume that role.

The Goodall incident holds much significance. First, it displayed the organization and presentation skills of the educated leaders. They formulated a document that listed each of the grievances with the Indian Office. The committee demanded the implementation of their own decisions, decisions that the Crow knew were best for the economic situation of their people. Secondly, it displayed the Crow's ability to assess rangeland. To be a successful cattleman, one must recognize overgrazed range and good

---

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

range. It also distinguished them as able managers of cattle. They were able to decipher how many cattle a particular range could handle. In the Goodall case, they demanded that no more cattle graze the particular area because of the possibility that native grasses might not return. Thirdly, it sent a signal to government that the Crow were ready to take control of their own affairs. The Crow no longer wanted to act as wards of the government, but as educated individuals possessing the ability to function and perform the wishes of the whole tribe.

As the need for representation in Washington D.C. grew, so did the core of educated Crows who had the ability to negotiate and use diplomacy. Many of those Crows were growing as leaders in their communities, displaying their ability to make decisions that benefited and protected their people. Many of the same individuals who occupied seats on the Business Committee traveled to Washington, and carried with them issues that the Committee dealt with closely. Such matters included grazing leases, health care, allotment issues, and agency employment.

One of the advantages the educated Crows had was a simple dialogue with Congressional members. The use of interpreters became less necessary as the educated Crows took over delegation seats. Crows such as Joe Cooper and Frank Shively, another educated Crow from the Reno district, both frequent delegates to Washington, spoke good English and provided congressmen with written complaints and legal interpretations of certain leasing contracts. It gave the Crows a wonderful and useful power, not only for direct communication, but also for understanding explanations given during Congressional hearings and for responding clearly and concisely. That ability alone gave the Crows the ammunition to combat government forces that wanted land and less financial responsibility that went along with self-sufficiency.

---

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.



It is important to examine the transformation that took place in the delegation process between 1910 and 1920. The delegations were no longer made up of older Crow leaders, such as Plenty Coups, and none of the elders frequented Washington as they had a decade before. The educated Crows completely took over the ranks of delegates. That transition was important because it magnified the switch from the older, traditional leaders to a new group of educated, progressive young men.

The switch in individuals took place not only in the delegate scenario, but also throughout the whole political system of the tribe. First, the older leaders were not young anymore. Many of them stayed close to their homes and families, still involved, but on a local rather than a national level. Plenty Coups still maintained his seat on the Crow Business Committee, but realized the importance of the younger generation. In a letter to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs in 1918, Plenty Coups stated, "I have no voice and can't help my people much more."<sup>47</sup> Plenty Coups understood the importance of education and was finally able to reap the benefits from it. He still carried a great deal of power and most of the Crows respected him. The importance of the transition was that Plenty Coups knew better than most that the educated young men would use their skills effectively, protecting land, resources, and overseeing issues in Washington that had a direct effect on the Crow.<sup>48</sup> As Plenty Coups stated, to know what the white man knows, the Crows can understand how whites think.

Since the Helen Grey incident in 1906, the educated Crows slowly gained momentum in their struggle for leadership. By the mid 1910s, most power had transferred to a new generation. Working as a delegate helped make that transformation. Joe Cooper, Frank Shively, George Hogan, and Robert Yellowtail all rose to the forefront

---

<sup>47</sup> Crow Business Council to CIA, Jan. 22, 1919, RG 75, Box 78, NARA-D

as delegates of the Crow Reservation. Each one had attended the Crow Boarding School and finished either at Carlisle, or in the case of Yellowtail, at Riverside, California.

George Washington Hogan, who was from the Reno district, became an experienced delegate through his many trips to Washington. Each district on the reservation had its own council to elect members to the Business Council.<sup>49</sup> Hogan served as president of his district council. Robert Yellowtail was the youngest of this cohort. Recently returned from Riverside at the age of 22, Yellowtail was eager to get involved in Crow politics. He continued his campaign to hand key agency positions over to qualified Crows and eventually became the agent himself in 1934, the first Crow agent for the reservation.

The role of these delegates was more than representing the Crow tribe in Washington. It allowed individuals the luxury of feeling involved and useful. The Business Committee provided complete confidence in the delegates. In 1913, Joe Cooper and Frank Shively were "given full power by this committee to act as our representatives and agents."<sup>50</sup> The two conducted themselves well in front of Congress and displayed the ability to make decisions for the whole tribe. In a letter from Victor Evans, the Crows' attorney in Washington, to Plenty Coups, Evans applauded the selection of delegates, saying:

My friend, I want to tell you that the Crows were wise in the selection they made of their delegation. These young men have done their duty to their tribe; they have transacted their business well and they have been respected by the Senate Indian Committee. You have every

---

<sup>48</sup> Plenty Coups always understood the importance of education. It is important to note that he encouraged all the Crow people to allow their children the education they deserve. His biggest problem was sending children back east, away from their families.

<sup>49</sup> Council Elections, March 16, 1911, AC Files, RG 75, Box 78, NARA-D

<sup>50</sup> CBC to CIA, April 30, 1913, RG 75, Box 78, NARA-D

reason to feel that they did everything that could be done for the welfare of the Crows at this session of Congress.<sup>51</sup>

The delegates provided good examples, gained the respect of government leaders, and accomplished their goals of protecting tribal assets.

In 1913, Cooper was under scrutiny from the Business Committee. Cooper, who in the eyes of Reynolds was a troublemaker, insisted that his ideas were best for the whole group. This was nothing new. Agent Reynolds and Cooper had been at war since the Helen Grey incident in 1906, but Cooper still managed to maintain leadership responsibilities in the Lodge Grass district. Some committee members wanted to dismiss Cooper as a delegate because he and Shively, "were of black character, but they might as well spend Crow money as any one else."<sup>52</sup> Cooper rose above the scrutiny and continued his leadership roles. Agent Reynolds spoke of this and commented, "Joe says he is now determined to win as the majority of Indians have ridiculed his lazy and shiftless habits and possibly he will try in his incompetent way to do something."<sup>53</sup> Cooper, despite the criticism of other Crow leaders, forged ahead, embracing his ideology of political leadership. It seemed old rivalries from years past die slowly. The fight continued, just as it did between the CIL and the Elks Lodge, between educated Crows vying for their right of passage as Crow leaders.

The importance of the Cooper story is that despite the ability to perform tasks in Washington, the group of educated Crows were under scrutiny, not only by their own but also by the agent. In 1913, Yellowtail returned from Washington and had, according to

---

<sup>51</sup> Letter to Chief Plenty Coups for Victor Evans, Indian Claims, Plenty Coups Papers, MF 314, Montana Historical Society.

<sup>52</sup> Reynolds to CIA, Crow Business Committee, AC Files, RG 75, Box 78, NARA-D

<sup>53</sup> Reynolds to Commissioner, Alphabetical Correspondence (AC) File, Council Proceedings, Jan. 12, 1911, RG 75, Box 50, NARA-D

Reynolds, "a most remarkable case of 'swell head.'"<sup>54</sup> Yellowtail, Cooper, Shively and Hogan all gathered and initiated a business meeting of their own. They went around getting individuals to sign or mark a piece of paper that signified minutes for the meeting. The group then submitted the minutes to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs. Upon receiving knowledge of the meeting and its minutes, Agent Reynolds wrote the CIA. Reynolds not only expressed his anger and frustration with the individuals, but also lashed out against the freedom the educated Crows were taking and using. He wrote about the four:

They are not content to act in an advisory capacity, but demand compliance with their own ideas of reservation management. Their influence with the old Indian tends to demoralization; and it is absolutely necessary, if we are to retain control, that they be made to understand that they are still wards of the government. We have fortunately, only a few of that class: Joe Cooper, Russell Whitebear, Sam David and Robert Yellowtail being the most mischievous.<sup>55</sup>

Reynolds clearly disliked those Crows who demonstrated leadership skills that went against his own authority. Reynolds and Cooper had been battling for years, but Cooper's alliances with other educated Crows grew stronger. By holding a separate meeting, opposite the norms of the Business Council, the group displayed their intentions of taking Crow matters into their own hands, negating other Crow representatives from other districts and dethroning any government official they thought unfit. The fight was not new and the division between the CIL and the Elks Lodge still lingered.

It was apparent that the "mischievous" group did not want to be wards of the government as Reynolds wished. Those individuals wanted complete control over their people. In fact, Yellowtail wanted the Crow to run the reservation and use whites as merely lawyers that represented the Crow. The incident in 1913 was just a foretaste of

---

<sup>54</sup> Reynolds to CIA, Crow Business Committee, AC Files, RG 75, Box 78, NARA-D

things to come for Yellowtail.<sup>56</sup> Agent Reynolds never liked the educated Crows who threatened his authority. His dislike for Cooper during the Helen Grey incident and his leadership of the CIL, which opposed Reynolds as agent, was obvious. But the educated Crow wanted more. This particular group of educated Crows did not believe that they needed government control when they felt they could attend to the issues of Crow reservation on their own. This was a big switch in the philosophy of Crow leaders. Although Plenty Coups wished independence from the reservation, he realized that such a dream would never happen. Instead, the young leaders, through their education, spawned a new generation of thinkers and politicians, who sought to protect themselves not only from white advancement, but also from the agent, himself.

The unintended consequences of boarding school education were not exclusive to the struggle for leadership and political participation of educated young men. Individuals used their education in other everyday, sometimes mundane, ways. Alexander Upshaw returned to the reservation in the late 1880s from Carlisle. The agent employed him as an interpreter, but during his first session, he did not perform well, spending much of his time visiting with relatives and old friends. Still, Upshaw continued to work as an interpreter and became very good at it. Then he went beyond translating and spoke his own words during hearings and councils. Upshaw realized the importance of his education and its usefulness. In a conversation between Big Medicine, chief of the Crow Police, and Montana Governor Joseph K. Toole, Upshaw interpreted. He not only fulfilled his job requirement, but spoke of his concern for his people:

---

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> It is not the purpose of this paper to get into details of Joseph Yellowtail after 1920. It is important to note that the above example was a pattern of Yellowtail's struggle to become agent of the Crow Reservation. He finally achieved such a feat in 1934.

When I started to go to school my people were poor. I did not realize at that time the importance of education. I saw some young men, nice-looking young men; they had fine education. It entered in my heart I would like to be like them. By and by I realized that these young men are going to help their people... I came back. I had a stormy life for about four or five years, but everything is changed, and everything is for the better now. But all my thoughts are for the good of my people.<sup>57</sup>

Upshaw used his talents to help his people. He continued to interpret during important hearings and negotiations between the Crow and government and earned the respect of the Crow leaders and government officials. He did not strive for a leadership role, but offered his skills to help the older leaders press their beliefs and concerns.

Russell Whitebear used his education as a teacher. When the Pryor Boarding School opened in 1903, Whitebear taught industrial education. He had a short stint as a teacher and quickly went back to his land and farmed and became a political leader in his district, becoming an important figure in Crow politics, gaining knowledge and interest in the law. The Crow tribe hired a law firm, Kappler & Merillah, in Washington D.C. to take care of any legal matters that pertained to government or any act that might affect them. Law sparked an interest in Whitebear and he asked if the firm could train him to practice law. The firm declined, stating, "we have not taken into our office any person with the view of their studying law in our office, finding it not practicable so to do."<sup>58</sup> The significance of Whitebear's desire was that the government never intended education to promote a professional job.

Richard Wallace used his education to become more than a respected Crow farmer. He used it to protect the Crow herds of cattle from the white grazers. In 1909, Wallace received a letter from Agent Reynolds. Reynolds worried that when Mr.

---

<sup>57</sup> Statement of Chief Plenty Coups to Governor Joseph K. Toole Through Interpreter Alexander Upshaw, Plenty Coups Papers, 1907-1936, Box A1, Montana Historical Society.

<sup>58</sup> Letter to Russell Whitebear from Kappler & Merillah Law Firm, Plenty Coups Papers, Montana Historical Society.

Heinrich gathered his cattle, Crow cattle might get mixed along with the rest. Wallace hired three extra boys to ride along with Heinrich and, "look out for the gathering and branding of the Indian stuff and beef."<sup>59</sup> Wallace also compiled "a tally on Heinrich's cattle and keep the record of the same."<sup>60</sup> Wallace had the ability not only to look after the Crows' herd, but to record the final tally on Heinrich's cattle. The use of education was not always politically charged, but still used to benefit the Crow people.

Little evidence exists revealing how Crow women used their education. There is however, strong evidence suggesting that educated girls who returned to the reservation took up traditional roles. Reservation life produced different pressures for women than men. Many of the girls, upon their return, married and used their education on a limited basis. It was not as if the girls did not receive a solid education and in fact had at the end of the school term, "a good working knowledge to take with them into their home life."<sup>61</sup> The pressure from family members to marry quickly and return to old habits overwhelmed the struggle to remain progressive and use education for wider purpose.

Agent Reynolds asserted:

The one stumbling block in the way of our young people lies in the home life to which they must go upon leaving school. The old people are hopelessly wedded to their old manner of living: They would use force, if necessary, to compel the home-coming student girls to go back to the Indian dress, and their home-surroundings and equipment are such as to render almost impossible civilized house-keeping.<sup>62</sup>

The pressures from home continued until the Crow girls caved into returning to the old way of living. Reynolds continued by giving an example:

---

<sup>59</sup> Letter to Richard Wallace from Reynolds, Press Copies Mailed Letters Sent (PCLS), July 23, 1909, RG 75, Box 26, NARA-D

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Letter to CIA, Crow Council Proceedings, June 18, 1912, RG 75, Box 50, NARA-D

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

We dismissed from school a few days ago one of the brightest and best of the Crow girls; a good cook, fully able to do any ordinary sewing, dress-making &c. She goes to the home of her father, who, while one of our best farmers, persists in living in a tent, crowded with bedding strewn around the floor, and with no furniture save a small stove in the middle of the floor.<sup>63</sup>

The Crow girls could not withstand such pressure, especially returning to her home, where her mother and father had not received such an education and were not able to transform the way government wanted them to. Without the proper support, "nothing remains for the girl but to fall in with the family mode of living."<sup>64</sup>

Despite the pressure to return to the "blanket," a few girls managed to use their education. In 1909, Reynolds looked for Crow historians to keep track of family histories and more importantly, record the family histories on paper. He hired some older women, who were historians in the tribe, to perform the task but none could speak or write English. Reynolds hired a young educated girl named Josephine Laforge to interpret the material.<sup>65</sup> Laforge used her education and made a salary from it. The case was rare, but not exclusive. This illustration demonstrated a Crow girl's use of education, other than the uses intended by government.

It is important to note that the differences between the educated young men and the educated girls. It is fair to state that in Crow culture, men had always maintained the leadership role and women a secondary role. Education did not change that cultural role and would not for some time.

In May of 1912, the Crows submitted a petition that magnified the differences between the U.S. government's expectation of the boarding school education and the unintended consequences of it. The petition demanded the switch from white employees

---

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> PCLS to the CIA, Reynolds to CIA, November 5, 1909, RG 75, Box 8, NARA-D, p. 386



to Crow employees for certain office and non-office jobs. The request for Crow employment was an important element in the struggle for tribal control over the reservation. The language of the petition revealed the influence of its drafters' education. The language of the petition whispered the very essence of the unintended consequences of education. The first paragraph of the petition described the Crows as equals with whites because of, "those same sacred and inalienable rights of humanity."<sup>66</sup> The Crows believed that they were as adequate as whites and could perform certain jobs as well or better. The petition continued, "we, deem ourselves, capable, both mentally and physically, of self government to the following extent, and desire it to be so."<sup>67</sup>

Government never intended, or least that quickly, that the Crows would use education to take control of the reservation, plugging qualified people into jobs that whites performed and as the 1912 petition indicated, "we are absolutely capable of filling each, honorably with men of our own blood, and whom we have absolute faith and confidence."<sup>68</sup> The intent of the petition was one of many moves to implement Crow control over the reservation. The drafters clearly stated their frustration with the current system and desired to put their education into use and not as yeoman farmers. "The educated young men and women, are absolutely unable to put to practice, and use to the best advantage, the knowledge that they received," the petition confirmed and, "are forced back into the camp."<sup>69</sup> Therefore, during the time between 1910 and 1920, the Crow leaders gained control, little by little, through organizations and employment.

The 1910s were a time for transformation for the young educated men. They used their education to ensure a better future for their people. They struggled to gain political

---

<sup>66</sup> Petition to CIA, May 6, 1912, RG 75, Box 54, NARA-D

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

roles within the reservation along with gaining respect from government officials and Congress. The Crows were no longer going to sit and let government dictate what they should do, but take matters into their own hands and no longer be wards of the government.

The Crow leaders pushed for more control by getting the Crow Act of 1920 passed. The act allowed any Crow who had not been allotted their land to be given what was legally theirs. The act enabled the Crows to take final control the reservation lands and not have to worry about white expansion. Even though the Crows were not fond of allotment, they felt the pressure from white settlers and realized that better the Crows take the land than whites. The act also encompassed the tribal cattle herd, splitting the herd into individual ownership, instead of tribal ownership.

The third aspect of the Crow Act, and most relevant to the unintended results of education, required an elected committee of two Crow individuals and one appointed member of the BIA, "to complete the enrollment of the members of the tribe as herein provided for, and to divide them into two classes, competents and incompetents."<sup>70</sup> The act created the Crow Enrollment and Competency Commission to judge those individuals who wanted to manage their own affairs. The important aspect of the Crow Act was the election and the people involved. It also gave control to Crows that sat on the commission. Since the early 1900's, federal policy pushed the issuing of fee patents. Officials wanted more Indians to gain citizenship and assume ownership roles of the land. Many of the Indians who gained ownership of their land soon sold pieces so they could afford improvements on other pieces of their land. The Indian then owned outright his land title and in many cases, sold the land quickly. In other cases, because citizenship

---

<sup>70</sup> Meritt to Crow Enrollment and Competency Commission, Sept. 15, 1920, Enrollment Commission and Crow Bill File, 1920-1922, Numerical Correspondence (NC) Files, RG 75, Box 67, NARA-D

carried with it taxes, many Crows could not afford property taxes and their land eventually succumbed to white ownership. Control over the Enrollment and Competency Commission would help stop individual Crow land loss and keep tribal unity in check.

The reservation held an election for members of the commission. All of the nominees, John Frost, Robert Yellowtail, Richard Wallace, Russell Whitebear and Frank Yarlott, had received their education from boarding schools.<sup>71</sup> It seems that the educated students finally dominated tribal politics. They controlled the entire scope of the election and by 1920, Crow politics had completely transformed. No longer did the older leaders hold control over tribal politics although they remained informed and participated in a smaller scope.

The importance of the Crow Act was that it finally allowed two Crows to occupy one of the most important positions on Crow reservation up to that time. Yellowtail and Frost were both elected to fill the positions. Each had the responsibility to warrant whether certain Crows were competent to take ownership of their own land or whether they needed protection from the government a while longer. They were also in charge of compiling enrollment rolls so they could allot individuals land that was rightfully theirs. The Crow Act was the culmination of the 1910's. At every opportunity, the educated Crows pushed for more power and control over their land and people. The Crow Act allowed Yellowtail and Frost to assume one of the most important roles any Crow had achieved in the new white world.

The U.S. government intended the acculturation process to work through allotting Indians a piece of land, educating them to become self-sufficient farmers or homemakers, and assimilate them into citizenship. Officials, agents, reformers and educators set a system in place they thought practical to achieve their goal. They introduced the

boarding school, believing that if they removed Indian children from home and protected them from the pressures of an old life, it would allow the children to learn skills that would promote self-sufficiency and eventually dissolve the financial burden the Indians made on the U.S. government.

The curriculum of boarding schools centered on agriculture and homemaking. The skills children learned all had to do with creating good farmers and housewives. Those were the intentions of the U.S. government. Instead, the educated Crows had an unintended response when they returned to the reservation. They used their education not to adhere to the long hours they spent on industrial training, but focusing their skills for the benefit of their tribe. Returned students like Joe Cooper, Russell Whitebear, John Hogan, along with many others used their education as leverage to create political organizations, become witnesses to Congress, negotiate land sales and grazing/leasing agreements, but most importantly, to protect their land from invasion and themselves from the U.S. government.

Carl Leider astounded the land sale commissioners in 1896 by handing them a document written in English and speaking to them in English to express the views of the Crow tribe. He also opened the doors for advancement and set a standard for the educated Crows to provide their skills as educated men not only to protect the tribe, but to create an avenue to political leadership. Many of the young men returned and started making a difference.

The political struggle on the reservation centered on the educated young men. They soon found out their knowledge was a powerful force. In fact, Plenty Coups knew that education was the only way the white man could not oppress the Crow and by knowing what they know, can never be oppressed again. The Crow Business Committee

---

<sup>71</sup> Schedule of Ballots, Enrollment Commission and Crow Bill File, 1920-1922, RG 75, Box 67, NARA-D

originated because the young men wanted a say in reservation politics. From the Business Committee, they traveled to Washington D.C. as delegates to witness and share grievances in front of Congress. The struggle between the Crow Indian Lodge and the Elks Lodge was a battle between two organizations comprised of educated Crows vying for political leadership to advance their beliefs on how the tribe should run.

Individual Crows used their education in more practical instances. Some used it to protect their cattle from whites who leased and grazed reservation land. They also protected their land from overgrazing because they knew each healthy blade of grass represented revenue for the tribe. Rosemary Laforge used her education to translate oral history into English text. Each instance demonstrated the educated Crows' ability to use their education for the betterment of their people and their land.

The U.S. government's intention was not the actual outcome of the boarding school experience. Although many Crows farmed their land and squeaked a living from it, the reality was that some young men used the education received through the boarding schools as a tool for personal and tribal gain. Barney Old Coyote, a boarding school graduate who was also active in Crow politics, exclaimed during a 1925 meeting, "Let us have no faction, create no ill feeling and let us all work for the common cause of our people the Crow Indians."<sup>72</sup> Older Crows responded by shouting, "Agree with the boys who are your delegates... depend on them; they will guard your interests. They are Crows."<sup>73</sup>

---

<sup>72</sup> Hoxie, *Parading Through History*, p. 318 Exert from the Crow Council Proceedings

<sup>73</sup> Ibid. 318

## Bibliography

Hoxie, Frederick E., Parading Through History: The Making of the Crow Nation in America 1805-1935, Cambridge University Press, 1995

Bradley, Charles Crane Jr., After the Buffalo Days, need to finish

The Indian School Journal, The U.S. Indian School Chilocio, OK, and Printed by Indians, January 1924, Vol. 23, No. 21

Prucha, Francis Paul, American Indian Policy in Crisis: Christian Reformers and the Indian, 1865-1900, University of Oklahoma Press: Norman, 1964

Annual Reports of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Washington: Government Printing Office, 1876-1920

"Proceedings of Council with Crow Indians," files as 45587-1899, Letters Received-Office of Indian Affairs, Record Group 75, National Archives, October 31, 1899

Watts, Shirley Jean, A Preliminary Investigation into the Current Status of Indian Education in Montana, Montana State University, 1971

Gallatin County Bicentennial Oral History Project, Gallatin County Bicentennial Oral History Project Collection 1974-1976

Juneau, Stan, A History and Foundation of American Indian Education Policy, Montana Office of Public Instruction, 2001

Katanski, Amelia Vittoria, No One can Dispute my Own Impressions and Bitterness: Representation of the Indian Boarding School Experience in 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> Century American Indian Literature, Tufts University, 2000

Ekquist, Karla Lee, Federal Indian Policy and the St. Francis Mission School on Rosebud Reservation, South Dakota: 1886-1908, Iowa State University, 1999

Bell, Genevieve, Telling Stories Out of School: Remembering the Carlisle Indian Industrial School, 1879-1918, Stanford University, 1998

Carrol, James T., Americanization or Indoctrination: Catholic Indian Boarding Schools, 1874-1926, University of Notre Dame 0165, 1997

Hamby, Jeffery Louis, Cultural Genocide in the Classroom: A History of the Federal Boarding School Movement in American Indian Education, 1875-1920, Harvard University, 1994

Benson, Robert, Children of the Dragonfly: Native American Voices on Child Custody and Education, Tuscon: University of Arizona Press, 2001

Carrol, James T., Seeds of Faith: Catholic Indian Boarding Schools, New York: Garland Pub., 2000

United State Congress. Senate. Committee of Indian Affairs (1993), Performance of Bureau of Indian Affairs off-reservation Boarding Schools: learning before the Committee of Indian Affairs, US Senate, one hundred third Congress, second session, an oversight hearing to review the performance of Bureau on Indian Affairs off-reservation Boarding Schools, June 10, 1994, U.S. G.P.O., 1995

Archeleta, Margaret, Away from Home: American Indian Boarding School Experiences, 1879-2000, Museum of New Mexico Press, 2000

Adams, David Wallace, Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928, University Press of Kansas, 1995

Lomawaima, K. Tsianina, They Called it Prairie Light: the Story of Chilocco Indian School, University of Nebraska Press, 1994

Prucha, Francis Paul, The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians, University of Nebraska, 1986

Otis, D.S., The Dawes Act and the Allotment of Indian Lands, University of Oklahoma Press, 1973

Carson, Leonard A., Indians, Bureaucrats, and Land: The Dawes Act and the Decline of Indian Farming, Greenwood Press, 1981

Hoxie, Frederick E., A Final Promise: The Campaign to Assimilate the Indians, 1880-1920, University of Nebraska, 1984

Hoxie, Frederick E., Parading Through History: The Making of the Crow Nation in America, 1805-1935, Cambridge University Press, 1997

Greenwald, Emily, Reconfiguring the Reservation: The Nez Perces, Jicarilla Apaches, and the Dawes Act, University of New Mexico Press, 2002

Carter, Sarah, Lost Harvests: Prairie Indian Reserve Farmers and Government Policy, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990

Carter, Kent, The Dawes Commission and Allotment of the Five Civilized Tribes, 1893-1914, Ancestry.com, 1999

Hagan, William T., Taking Indian Lands: The Cherokee (Jerome) Commission, 1889-1893, University of Oklahoma Press, 2003

National Archives and Record Center, Denver, Record Group 75, Crow Indians.

Prucha, Francis Paul, The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians, University of Nebraska, 1986

Otis, D.S., The Dawes Act and the Allotment of Indian Lands, University of Oklahoma Press, 1973

Carson, Leonard A., Indians, Bureaucrats, and Land: The Dawes Act and the Decline of Indian Farming, Greenwood Press, 1981

Hoxie, Frederick E., A Final Promise: The Campaign to Assimilate the Indians, 1880-1920, University of Nebraska, 1984

Hoxie, Frederick E., Parading Through History: The Making of the Crow Nation in America, 1805-1935, Cambridge University Press, 1997

Greenwald, Emily, Reconfiguring the Reservation: The Nez Perces, Jicarilla Apaches, and the Dawes Act, University of New Mexico Press, 2002

Carter, Sarah, Lost Harvests: Prairie Indian Reserve Farmers and Government Policy, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990

Carter, Kent, The Dawes Commission and Allotment of the Five Civilized Tribes, 1893-1914, Ancestry.com, 1999

Hagan, William T., Taking Indian Lands: The Cherokee (Jerome) Commission, 1889-1893, University of Oklahoma Press, 2003