

LUMMI STORIES FROM HIGH SCHOOL: AN ETHNOHISTORY OF THE
FISHING WARS OF THE 1970s

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**LUMMIS AT FERNDALE HIGH: AN ETHNOHISTORY OF SCHOOLING DURING
THE FISHING WARS**

ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the stories and experiences of Lummi students and their teachers at Ferndale High School from 1970 to 1980. The conditions of schooling for Lummis were affected by the climate of anti-Indian hostility which was fueled by the attitudes about Native fishing rights. This conflict, referred to as the "fishing wars," culminated in the landmark 1974 Boldt Decision. Throughout the 1970s the school was a site where the cultural and political conflicts of the community were played out.

This study examines the ways that Lummi students saw the school and the choices they made for survival and resistance in a complex and adverse environment. It is also a study of the teachers who were at Ferndale during the 70s and how they conducted themselves in an explosive cross-cultural educational setting.

Utilizing an ethnohistorical perspective, this study brings forth the stories of both Lummi students and non-Native teachers and sets them within the context of the culture-conflict climate of Whatcom County in the 1970s. This study shows how political issues were inextricably welded to cultural issues for Indian students in the 1970s.

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Interstate 5

Nooksack
River

Ferndale

Lummi
Reservation

Lummi
Bay

Bellingham

Lummi
Island

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This is a study of Lummi Indian¹ students at Ferndale High School from 1970 to 1980. The conditions of schooling for Lummis at that time were formidable because of the mixture of political and cultural conflicts which came into the school from the two polarized communities of Ferndale and the Lummi reservation. This work is also a study of the teachers who were at Ferndale during the 1970s and the ways they conducted themselves in an explosive cross-cultural educational setting.

Ferndale is located in Whatcom County² ten miles north of Bellingham in the northwest corner of Washington State. The population of Ferndale in 1970 was 2,164.³ For the most part, the town was a mixture of descendants of nineteenth century Scandinavian immigrants and newcomers who arrived in the 1950s to work at the Mobil and Arco refineries. In many ways it was a typical small northwest town with an economy based on fishing, farming, logging, and some heavy industry.

1. In this thesis I employ the terms Indian, Native, Native American, and occasionally First Nations. Aboriginal peoples refer to themselves with all of these names.

2. Whatcom County occupies the northwest corner of Washington State. It is bordered by Puget Sound to the west, the Cascade mountains to the East, British Columbia to the north, and Skagit County to the south. Although the focus of the study is on Ferndale High School, the problems of Indian-white relations were generally felt throughout Whatcom County schools, but not so intensely as at Ferndale.

3. United States Bureau of the Census, U.S. Census of Population: 1970, Number of Inhabitants Final Report PC (U-A49) (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1971), 11.

The Lummi reservation occupies a peninsula of nine square miles which is located seven miles west of Ferndale. The Nooksack river passes through both downtown Ferndale and the reservation on its way to Puget Sound. In 1975 about 1,200 Lummis lived on the reservation.⁴ Approximately 40 percent of the land area of the reservation is owned by non-Natives as a result of laws that were forced on the tribe in the nineteenth century. This includes much of the most desirable waterfront property. During the 1970s a number of teachers at Ferndale High were property owners on the reservation.

The Lummis are Straits Salish people who occupied a large territory which included the Lummi Peninsula, Point Francis (now Portage Island), Lummi Island, and the San Juan Islands. Traditional Lummi cultural patterns are linked to the themes of the larger Northwest Coast culture region: potlatching, canoe building, the prominence of cedar, and the centrality of the salmon. Modern Lummi culture is a fusion of enduring earlier patterns and adaptations to the non-Native society and economy that grew up around them.

The two communities of Ferndale and Lummi are very close geographically, but worlds apart in values and lifeways. In the 1970s, those differences were made more visible and amplified by the fishing rights struggles which culminated in the landmark 1974 U.S. vs. Washington case

4. Barry Stein, The Lummi Indians: Economic Development and Social Continuity (Cambridge, Mass.: Center for Community Economic Development, 1975), 2.

(the Boldt Decision)⁵ determining that Puget Sound Indians were entitled to half of the salmon catch at their traditional fishing grounds. The background and context of the Boldt Decision will be explained in chapter three, "A Clash of Attitudes," and further in chapter five, "Education and the Fishing Wars."

Politics and culture were inextricably welded together as Lummi and whites⁶ battled over the salmon. Lummi viewed the fish from the perspective of spiritual and cultural survival while whites saw the salmon as an economic resource that should be open for individual competition regardless of "antiquated" treaties or cultural considerations. This clash of values and attitudes was felt by the students and teachers of Ferndale High School.

In 1989 I was hired by Northwest Indian College on the Lummi Reservation to help design and teach an alternative high school program. The program, an effort to curb the Lummi dropout rate, was developed out of federal grant money. Approximately 20 students were in the pilot program. These were Lummi teenagers who had been expelled, suspended, or just stopped going to Ferndale High School. I worked with a group of elders, parents, and members of the tribal

5. United States v.s. State of Washington, United States District Court, Nineteen District of Washington, Feb. 12, 1974, Government Documents Civil No. 9213.

6. I use the term white to be synonymous with non-Native. It was and still is used in the everyday speech of both Indians and non-Natives. Moreover, during the 1970s the high school and community had scant influence from other ethnic groups. It was, as one informant put it, "just Indians and whites in those days."

cultural committee designing curriculum and procedures for the school. As I talked with Lummi people about the schooling problems of their children they told me stories of their own days at Ferndale High during the 1960s and 1970s.

These accounts of life at Ferndale High School during the explosive climate of what was called the "fishing wars"⁷ sketched a complex and divided school landscape of cultural conflict. The stories had become part of a body of oral tradition about schooling and the struggle of Lummi students to maintain their identity in the face of a white community and school system that was attempting to assimilate them.

Although the stories are unique with regard to individuals, time, and place, they are also a more general commentary on many of the classic themes of Indian education: language problems, identity issues, and the mixture of political and cultural conflicts between whites and Indians concerning ways of seeing the world. This latter theme of cultural conflict revolves around what Ray Barnhardt and Verna Kirkness have written about regarding

7. The term "fishing wars" has been used by a number of authors. It refers to the legal battles between the State of Washington and Pacific Northwest tribes which culminated in U.S. v. Washington (The Boldt Decision). The term is also applied to the frequent confrontations at fishing sites between game wardens and Native peoples. These protests against the denial of Indian fishing rights were called "fish-ins." A good depiction of the fishing rights situation can be found in Stan Steiner, "The Fish-In Within the Fish," chap. in The New Indians (New York: Dell Publishing, 1968), 48-64. I extend the use of the term "fishing wars" to describe the conditions of hostility between Indians and whites about values and attitudes which were propelled by the fishing rights battles.

the "Native reality set."⁸ That is, Native people have patterns of behavior and ways of thinking that are devalued by schools. The stories from Lummi students offer evidence about how these underlying themes of Native education are experienced by individuals in a personal fashion.

While engaged in my academic studies in the anthropology and history of Native education, I reflected back to some of the stories I heard from Lummi parents and students as a way of locating particular concepts or paradigms in an actual and realistic setting. I decided that collecting stories from former Lummi students would not only reveal a great deal about the setting of Ferndale High School in the 1970s from the Lummi point of view, it would also illuminate larger themes in Indian education.

This study is a collection of stories from former Lummi students and their non-Native teachers, each individual recalling life at Ferndale High during the 1970s. The stories are set within an examination of the macro-themes of Indian education in the 1970s in the United States.

Methodology

I began my study by doing interviews at Northwest Indian College at Lummi. I told students and faculty informally that I wanted to talk with anyone who had

8. Verna J. Kirkness and Ray Barnhardt, "First Nations and Higher Education: The Four R's--Respect, Relevance, Reciprocity, Responsibility," Journal of American Indian Education, 30, 3 (May, 1991), 7. The authors cite from the work of Ron and Suzy Scollon who identified four aspects of a "Native reality set." Kirkness and Barnhardt utilize the reality set concept to explain how First Nations students experience "cultural and psychic conflicts" in public schools.

attended Ferndale High School between 1970 and 1980. Although I began the research at Lummi, I eventually travelled throughout Whatcom County to interview people. Over the course of a year, I collected stories from 30 individuals. Half of the informants were Lummi and half were non-Native teachers, administrators, and members of the Ferndale community. Usually one person would recommend that I speak with three or four other individuals about a particular point that had come up in conversation. "You should talk with Ted about that," they might say. Or, "Shirley had quite a time in high school, you should hear what she has to say about those history classes." In this fashion one informant led to another until there was a long list of people that I could talk with about Ferndale High School.

In talking with people I tried to avoid asking questions of a specific nature. Instead, I asked open-ended questions that would encourage an individual to speak to a theme from their experience and memory. I asked questions such as: What were your concerns during the days when you were at Ferndale High School? or, How would you describe the situation among students both Native and non-Native? Can you give examples? This opened up dialogue and facilitated story-telling. In this study I only used names of persons when that name is part of a published record. For reasons explained later, I used one pseudonym. All informants spoke to me with the understanding that their comments would be used anonymously. In all cases I tried to show respect for

the experience of each individual; I did not challenge what anyone told me even when I had evidence to the contrary. I only occasionally asked for clarification on a particular point raised by someone in the course of conversation. I framed each interview so that the informant would tell me what he or she thought was important, not what they thought I was interested in hearing about.

The stories, after I had heard a number of them, seemed to follow scripts. There was a consistency in the themes that were talked about on each side of what I call the "cultural barricade." That is, teachers and non-Natives in Ferndale talked about similar themes and Lummis talked about certain themes. But, whites and Indians often talked about different issues. When they did refer to the same themes, such as the effect of the Boldt decision, it was with emphasis on different factors.

Clearly, the Indian-white conflicts of two decades ago were still fresh in people's minds. And, they were still controversial. Many non-Natives in the Ferndale community acted as though it were in bad taste to ask questions about that time; they preferred to tell me about how the high school was at the present, that Indians and whites were now getting along much better than in those "awful times." When I talked with teachers and non-Native members of the Ferndale community and told them that I was trying to understand both the modern Lummi culture and the cultural ethos of the town of Ferndale in order to grasp how Indians and whites clashed at the high school, some individuals were

uncomfortable with the context of my inquiry. "Cultural ethos?" replied one former teacher, "I didn't know we had a culture." She then went on to explain that it was the Indians who had a culture and that folks in Ferndale were "just pretty typical small town Americans."

In contrast, when I spoke with former Lummi students about past events at Ferndale High, they easily shifted to that time and place as though it were contained within the present moment as well. I told them that I was trying to describe the "feel of that time" and the cultural conflict at the high school. The nature of my questioning, for Lummis, was familiar and coherent.

As a former instructor on the reservation and as a person of Native ancestry, I was familiar with the Lummi communication styles and "in-group" references to people, places, and events. I was given information that an outsider would not have had access to. A great many aspects of the Lummi culture and history were explained to me as I heard the stories about life at the high school.

The most central and dominating theme from both teachers and students alike was the anti-Indian attitudes that were fueled by the fishing rights struggles. The prejudice directed against Lummis at this time was not simply an irrational bigotry, it was also an expression of white feelings of injustice about the outcome of court decisions favoring Indians. It was in this regard that an Alaskan Native man, hired by the Ferndale School District to tutor Indian students as part of a federal education grant,

told me that "the other teachers were very aloof and unfriendly toward me when I was first in the school. Then one day I was in the teacher's lounge and they were talking about Indian fishing. I said, 'I wish I had fishing rights here.' They said, 'aren't you Lummi?' I said, 'no, I'm from Alaska, I don't have any fishing rights here in these waters.' Immediately they came over, shook my hand and became very friendly. At first I thought that they didn't like Indians; I guess they just didn't like Indians with fishing rights."

My goal in this study was to tell the stories the way I heard them and provide as much historical and cultural context information as would give sufficient depth and meaning to the accounts of life in this cross-cultural small town high school. I have attempted to describe this setting in the way that it looked to Lummi students and their teachers during the tumultuous 1970s, the decade of the fishing wars.

In chapter two I examine the works of anthropologists and historians while outlining the themes of an ethnohistory of Indian education. I then explain why the study of Lummi at Ferndale High School should be approached from an ethnohistorical perspective. Additionally, I offer comments on how this study, and others like it, can fill in important gaps in the field of Native educational history.

Chapter three describes the backdrop of the setting and sketches out the political and cultural factors which led to the explosive climate of the fishing wars of the 1970s in

Whatcom County. This section offers insights into the mood of the times with regard to Indian-white relations.

In chapter four I briefly go through the early history of Lummi education: traditional tribal education, the Tulalip Boarding School, and the Lummi Day School. Then, I examine the federal educational policies and programs implemented on the Lummi reservation in the 1960s and 1970s while showing the Lummi response to these programs and the conditions at the high school.

In chapter five I discuss the way that the climate of the fishing wars was felt directly in the classrooms and halls of Ferndale High School. In addition I describe the Lummis as "salmon people." Then I point out how Lummi students were silenced in the school by an unspoken ban on conversation about fishing, one of the central features of Lummi identity. This chapter also explores white attitudes in Ferndale about Indian fishing rights.

In chapter six I examine the landscape of Ferndale High School from the Lummi students' point of view. This section brings forth the stories of life at school. These stories are about school sports, fights, struggles with the academic program, efforts to maintain an Indian identity, and the difficult social relations between Indian and white students.

Chapter seven shows the kinds of teachers who worked at Ferndale High School in the 1970s. The stories of teachers are displayed as well as Lummi students' perception of the teachers. In addition, I examine the ways that values and

attitudes about Native peoples were transmitted from Western Washington University in Bellingham to student teachers who were placed at Ferndale.

Chapter eight offers concluding notes and commentary on what can be learned from studies like this one and how such research can help educators deal with tense settings of political and cultural conflict. I finish with an examination of how the cultural conflict themes of Indian-white relations from the 1970s are returning to Whatcom county in the 1990s.

CHAPTER II

LUMMI EDUCATION IN ITS ETHNOHISTORICAL CONTEXT

With the exception of a small group of ethnohistorians, scholars studying Native Americans have worked in the separate academic realms of either anthropology or history. Ethnohistory, a blend of the two disciplines, emerged as an academic form in the 1950s¹ and utilizes a combination of documentary evidence and ethnographic data. For the most part, ethnohistoric work was done by anthropologists, but recently historians have applied anthropological methods to their work as well. With regard to the education of Native peoples, anthropologists tend to look at schooling in terms of cultural transmission and the maintenance of identity while historians have focused on factors of change in Indian-white relations. Historians have usually focused on the history of residential schools.

Although ethnohistorians have examined many aspects of Native life and history, they have not studied Indian education. These types of studies are especially needed as we examine the history of Indian education from the 1960s through the 1980s. The intricacy of Native response to federal and state policy coupled with the assorted permutations of modern Indian culture during this period

1. Terry P. Wilson, Teaching American Indian History (Washington, D.C.: American Historical Association, 1993), 15.

require creative cross-disciplinary strategies of explanation.

Indian people have been dissatisfied with the treatment they have received in the work of both anthropologists and historians. Historians have been accused of doing white history and neglecting Indian voices² while anthropologists are blamed for avoiding an analysis of power and ignoring cross-cultural exchanges which help to create various dynamics of contemporary Indian culture.³

2. Reginald Horseman, "Recent Trends and New Directions in Native American History," in The American West: New Perspectives, New Dimensions, ed. Jerome O. Steffen (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1979), 126.

3. Donald A. Messerschmidt, "Constraints in government research: the anthropologist in a rural school district," in Anthropologists at Home in North America: Methods and Issues in the Study of One's Own Society, ed. Donald A. Messerschmidt (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 185-201. Messerschmidt not only makes his case well, he also refers to a number of other anthropologists such as Laura Nader, "Up the anthropologist- perspectives gained from studying up." in Reinventing Anthropology, ed., Dell Hymes (New York: Random House, 1974), 284-311, Yehudi Cohen, "The anthropological enterprise," American Anthropologist 79, 1977, 388-396, Harry Wolcott, Teachers Verses Technocrats: An Educational Innovation in Anthropological Perspective, (Eugene, University of Oregon, Center for Educational Policy and Management, 1977), Eric Wolf, American anthropologists and American Society, in Concepts and Assumptions in Contemporary Anthropology, ed., Stephen A. Tyler (Athens, GA.: Southern Anthropological Society Proceedings, 1969), and Walter Goldschmidt, "Anthropology and the coming crisis: an autoethnographic appraisal," American Anthropologist 79, 1977, 293-308, who are critical of anthropology for not adequately dealing with the nature of power when studying cultures. The most strident remarks about the way anthropologists have conducted themselves toward Indian communities can be found in Vine Deloria's Custer Died For Your Sins (New York: Avon Books, 1969).

In this chapter I discuss literature from both educational anthropology and the history of Indian education, as well as authors who have explicitly discussed ethnohistory and its applicability for Indian history. It is also a gathering of works that were of particular use to me in examining the conditions of schooling for Lummi Indians during the 1970s.

I point out four essential themes which should be incorporated into an ethnohistory of Native education. I also review the literature which has been most significant in navigating my own thoughts through topics connected with Lummi education in the 1970s. These themes are 1) the problems of revisionism or, "telling the Indian side of the story," 2) the way individuals conducted themselves within the sphere of their own culture while they traversed into the culture of the school, 3) Indian-white relations as the major dimension of schooling for Native people (There are reciprocal relationships created between the two cultures as invisible boundaries are crossed), and 4) the way schools, and their stories are framed within a sense of "place." This has a context that is both cultural and historical.

A Lummi elder told me that whenever there was conflict between Indians and whites about fishing rights, land use, or economic development in the community, it was always experienced most intensely by the Indian students in the high school classrooms. The themes of political struggle going on in the community migrated into the high school and

were embedded in the daily cultural exchanges between teachers and students.

Without an examination of the larger historic character of this setting, the accounts of life at school from former Lummi students can sound rather Kafkaesque.⁴ Indeed, some non-Natives that I spoke to regarded Lummi high school stories as "mostly exaggeration" or "folklore." But, placed alongside the primary and secondary documents--with special attention to newspaper articles--the narratives produce remarkably consistent convergent lines of evidence about the dynamics of cultural interaction at the school and in the two communities of Ferndale and Lummi.

In deciding on the best way to conduct this study, I was influenced by Daniel Boxberger's To Fish in Common: The Ethnohistory of Lummi Indian Salmon Fishing.⁵ His ethnohistorical approach allowed him to assemble complex themes into a coherent whole and show the Lummi response to federal and state policy. Boxberger summarized his technique:

The ethnohistorical approach can do much more than supplement ethnographic data. To understand the situation of modern-day reservation Indians in the

4. That is to say that they were seen to be twists of reality that did not relate to ordinary experience--the ordinary experience of the white community. I use the term in a very limited fashion to refer to the work of Austrian novelist Franz Kafka who focused on the bizarre and exposed conventional assumptions.

5. Daniel L. Boxberger, To Fish In Common: The Ethnohistory of Lummi Indian Salmon Fishing (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989).

United States, we must understand the political and economic factors that have shaped their societies. Ethnohistory, or historical ethnology, can combine anthropological theory with historiographic methods to shed light on this problem.⁶

I began to see that the story of Lummi students trying to make their way through Ferndale High School in the 1970s could best be told using a similar model that could draw on the strengths of studies from both educational anthropology and the history of Native education. I became even more convinced of the value of this research path when Lummi community members, who often had a sophisticated understanding of the setting, urged me to do my study in a way that could contain the voices from both sides of the cultural barricade. Lummis that I interviewed urged me to interview not just Natives, but also white teachers and administrators. Meanwhile, the non-Native view of things was a bit different as one teacher complained that I should be looking at how things are today instead of "dragging that old stuff up." Native people feel they have a stake in having their history at Ferndale High School told. Conversely, some non-Natives feel they have a stake in not having the history told. As mentioned earlier, many non-Natives felt uncomfortable talking about the conditions of Indian-white conflicts at the high school and in the community.

The Problems of Revisionism

6. Ibid, 9.

From the historian's perspective James Axtel is probably the most prominent advocate for ethnohistory. In his essay "Ethnohistory: An Historian's Viewpoint" he has asserted its significance as "a bona fide historical enterprise demanded by the stubborn 'colonial fact' of Indian-European contact in North America and a valuable addition to the historical repertoire that did not require a treasonous shift of allegiance to Anthropology."⁷ Although anthropology allows us to view the workings of culture, ethnohistory allows for a more extensive use of documents, secondary literature, and published narratives than a strict ethnography. This permits stories to be told as an interface with other convergent lines of evidence to explain the nature of historic change within a setting. Helen Codere summarizes that "ethnohistory is taken to mean studies of cultures and societies over time, using all available data and conducted by someone with historical knowledge and anthropological sensitivities about the cultures and societies concerned."⁸ This last aspect of ethnohistorical studies, sensitivities about the people concerned, is the most problematic one.

7. James Axtell, "Ethnohistory: An Historian's Viewpoint," chap. in The European and the Indian: Essays in the Ethnohistory of Colonial North America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 3.

8. Helen Codere, Review of The Garland American Indian Ethnohistory Series, ed. David Agee Horr, In Ethnohistory, 31, 4, (1984): 323.

Some writers, in an attempt to offer a more sympathetic, revisionist approach to Indian history, have been long on advocacy and short on scholarship. Vine Deloria puts it well:

"Revisionist" seems to be the label applied indiscriminately to people taking the Indian side of the story. This classification is merely an effort to influence the manner in which we consider historical fact, not a true statement of the writer's intent. In many respects the writing that most needs revision is that which seems to favor Indians. It is not accurate, it is simply too generalized and tends to mislead Indians into adopting liberal myths instead of conservative myths. A true revisionist would seek more precise interpretation of data regardless of the orientation of the writer, and there are very few of these people writing Indian-white history.⁹

Although historians have typically not included Indian voices in their writings, some of the most recent work on Native responses to schooling attempt to remedy this situation.¹⁰ But, as David W. Adams has asserted,

Ethnohistory requires more than simply being attentive to Indian viewpoints and behavior. In the end it requires the historian to reconstruct as much as possible the entire thought-world of the tribal universe, and in the case of educational historians, to give special attention to the multitude of ways in which tribal elders transmitted valued cultural knowledge across generations. It requires also that they make an effort to reconstruct the precise nature

9. Vine Deloria, Jr., "Revision and Reversion," in The American Indian and the Problem of History, ed. Calvin Martin (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 85.

10. See Jean Barman, Yvonne Hebert, and Don McCaskill, eds., Indian Education in Canada: The Legacy (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1986), and David Wallace Adams, "From Bullets to Boarding Schools: The Educational Assault on the American Indian Identity," in The American Indian Experience: A Profile, ed. Phillip Weeks (Arlington Heights Illinois: Forum Press Inc., 1988), 218-239.

of the cataclysmic conflict that occurred when white and Indian worlds collided in the classroom.¹¹

Hearing the voices of Indian people telling the stories of their schooling experiences may be valuable in the "renewal" process, but it alone is not sufficient. We also need to hear the voices of the teachers and administrators in order to understand the conflict in values and goals that animates the reciprocal interactions between whites and Indians.

Celia Haig-Brown's Resistance and Renewal: Surviving the Indian Residential School uses the narratives of students to tell the "Indian side of the story." But, it tells us very little about the deeper structure of Indian schooling because it offers no insight into the motivations and cultural orientation of the non-Native players in the drama. This creates an inaccurate view of Indian education as it ignores the problematic structure of counterpoised interpretations of Indian schooling. As one former residential school supervisor expressed it, "there is no attempt to balance the author's interpretations of events with opinions from anyone who might have a different opinion or interpretation such as former teachers or supervisors."¹²

11. David W. Adams, Essay Review: "Before Canada: Toward an Ethnohistory of Indian Education," History of Education Quarterly 28 (1988): 103.

12. Celia Haig-Brown, "Border Work," in Native Writers and Canadian Writing: Canadian Literature Special Issue, ed. W.H. New (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1990), 237.

Of course, contending viewpoints about a particular event or setting can be extremely difficult to sort through. It can be worse than listening to the "opinions of the six men of Indostan."¹³ Nonetheless, it is the task of the ethnohistorian to offer an inclusive depiction of a setting that allows both whites and Indians to speak from their own particular ethos. Otherwise, in the attempt to correct the conventions of a white-centered Indian history, we hazard to drift toward a position of advocacy rather than inquiry. Reginald Horseman has stressed that, "there is a danger that requests for history written from a Native American point of view can lead to ethnic propaganda rather than sophisticated analyses of the total Native American past."¹⁴

As we search out a more sound history of Native education which incorporates a wide variety of documentation, we must maintain the ability to make critical distinctions and judgements. Francis Paul Prucha, in his article "Doing Indian History,"¹⁵ is properly wary about the new "revisionist" Indian history and he asks for a certain fairness to both sides. But Prucha neglects to factor in the

13. John Godfrey Saxe, "The Blind Men and the Elephant," in The Poet's Craft, ed. Helen Daringer and Anne Eaton (Yonkers-On-Hudson, New York: World Book Company, 1935), 57.

14. Horseman, "Recent Trends and New Directions in Native American History," p. 143.

15. Francis Paul Prucha, "Doing Indian History," in Indian-White Relations: A Persistent Paradox, eds. Jane F. Smith and Robert M. Kvasnicka (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1987) 1-10.

fundamental power differentials that define the zone of Indian-white relations in schools. His contention that "when judgement is necessary, however, we must take care to judge all parties alike"¹⁶ is far too narrow and fails to consider that the cultures are linked together through a one sided history of basic power inequities. Eber Hampton, a Chickasaw from Oklahoma, has written that "Prucha ignores the internal tension between paternalism and rapacity that motivates white policy towards Indians. The winter of Indian education cannot be understood without seeing its place in a system of white domination."¹⁷ This fixation on "balanced portrayals" becomes irrelevant if instead we set our sights on attempting to explain the aims of each group and how those goals are acted upon by individuals coming from a particular cultural perspective. An ethnohistory, like good scholarship from any discipline, should give us cogent explanations, not necessarily "balanced accounts." Angie Debo made this same argument saying, "I simply want to dig out the truth and record it. I am not pro-Indian, or pro-anything, unless it is pro-integrity. But sometimes I find all the truth on one side of the issue."¹⁸

16. Ibid, 8.

17. Eber Hampton, "Toward a Redefinition of American Indian/Alaska Native Education" (Ed.D. diss., Harvard Graduate School of Education, 1988), 70.

18. Angie Debo, "To Establish Justice," *Western History Quarterly* 7 (October 1976): 405, quoted in Terry P. Wilson, Teaching American Indian History (Washington, D.C.: American Historical Association, 1993), 25.

Individuals

The stories of individual agents making ethical decisions from their dwelling place within a culturally erected historical setting gives us the richest kind of information about the dimensions of a culture. Dorothy Lee has written that "cultures may inhibit to a greater or lesser degree; but I believe that generally speaking, culture offers a guide to the individual, and possibly provides limits within which the individual can function in his own way."¹⁹ Each Lummi student fashioned a unique response to the conditions of life at Ferndale High School out of the possibilities presented by their home culture, the culture of the school, and the climate of the 1970s.

The field of social history is rich with possibilities for examining the role of individuals in an educational ethnohistory. Social history, according to Robert G. Burgess, has been "influenced, shaped and stimulated by the methods, techniques and questions of other social sciences."²⁰ The aspects of social history that can enrich ethnohistorical studies are 1) an emphasis on place with descriptions of the unique features of a setting, and 2) the autobiographical or life history approach to penetrating the historical terrain.

19. Dorothy Lee, Freedom and Culture (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1959), 2.

20. Robert G. Burgess, "Personal Documents, Oral Sources and Life Histories," in Field Research: A Sourcebook and Field Manual, ed. Robert G. Burgess (London, UK: George Allen & Unwin Ltd. 1982), 131.

Life history studies provide insights about how individuals managed within the structures and changes of a community, or, as Mandelbaum puts it, "how the person copes with society, rather than how society copes with the stream of individuals."²¹ The life history of Don Talayesva, as written by Leo W. Simmons,²² provides one of the best examples of an autobiographical account of schooling from the Native perspective. Originally published in 1942, it is compelling and highly personal--although not without some problems with regard to questions of "voice."²³ A number of anthropologists have noted the ways that life history approaches can inform the larger thematic questions of a setting. Examples of this work include that of Margaret B. Blackman, Julie Cruikshank, and Luisa Passerini.²⁴

21. David G. Mandelbaum, "The Study of Life History," *Ibid*, 146.

22. Leo W. Simmons, ed., Sun Chief: The Autobiography of a Hopi Indian (London: Yale University Press, 1942).

23. See David Murray, "Autobiography and Authorship," chap. in Forked Tongues: Speech, Writing and Representation in North American Indian Texts (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 75-76. Murray offers a good discussion of the problems of what he sees as an essentially "colonialist" enterprise: writing about an "alien" culture. Although he points out that a vivid picture of Don Talayesva's life emerges, he questions the means by which Simmons extracts the information.

24. Margaret B. Blackman, During My Time: Florence Edenshaw Davidson, A Haida Woman (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, Ltd., 1982); Julie Cruikshank, Life Lived Like a Story (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990); and Luisa Passerini, Fascism in Popular Memory: The Cultural Experience of the Turin Working Class (London: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

Some historians have indicated that the ways individuals adapt to settings reveal the pressures and possibilities of a time and place. It is an insider's view into an historical setting. Each time an individual is confronted with tensions, decisions must be made and those decisions are constituted within an amalgam of internal and external constraints and opportunities. Mandelbaum explains that "we can then look to the main opportunities and limitations that the person faced at each juncture and ask how and why the person adapted his behaviour (or failed to do so) at this point, what he tried to change and what he tried to maintain."²⁵ Neil Sutherland has pointed out that the adaptations made by people in the course of their lives are told about in scripts. These scripts all have social, political, and cultural components embedded in them.²⁶

Educational anthropologists have examined individual response and adaptations to culture conflict situations. George and Louise Spindler are the most prominent for identifying cultural transmission and cultural conflict as interlocking concepts.²⁷ Henry T. Trueba, in commenting on the Spindlers' work, has said "the Spindlers view American

25. Mandelbaum, "The Study of Life History," p. 150.

26. Neil Sutherland, "When You Listen to the Winds of Childhood, How Much Can You Believe?" Curriculum Inquiry 22, 3 (1992): 235-256.

27. Henry T. Trueba, "The Dynamics of Cultural Transmission," in Healing Multicultural America, eds. Henry T. Trueba, Cireno Rodriguez, Yalli Zou, and Jose Cintron (Washington, D.C.: Falmer Press, 1993), 13.

culture as a dialogue between individuals and collectivities."²⁸ In their classic work Dreamers Without Power: The Menomini Indians, the Spindlers put sizable emphasis on individuals and adaptation to the changes that are brought about by aspects of Indian-white relations in the mixture of modern and traditional tribal life. Their focus resonates back and forth between the individuals and the tribe's socio-historical situation. They put weight on the varieties of transitional adaptive strategies that are employed by different individuals.

George Spindler, Steven Boorish, and Henry Trueba have all written about the concept of "cultural compression," a phase marked by increased cultural stress and constricted role definitions for individuals.²⁹ Trueba describes this as "the variations in emotional intensity experienced by humans in their transition from one status to another."³⁰ Cultural compression is a suitable concept for examining the situation for Native students in public school classrooms where the values and expectations are not only different

28. Ibid, p.14.

29. George Spindler, "The Transmission of Culture," in Education and Cultural Process: Anthropological Approaches, ed. G.D. Spindler (Prospect Heights Illinois: Waveland Press, 1987) 303-333; Steven Boorish, "The Winter of Their Discontent: Cultural Compression and Decompression in the Life Cycle of the Kibbutz Adolescent," in School and Society: Learning Content Through Culture, ed. Henry T. Trueba (New York: Praeger, 1988), 181-200; and Henry T. Trueba, "The Dynamics of Cultural Transmission."

30. Ibid, p.16.

from the home environment, they are often opposite. Moreover, Trueba discusses the need to look both at the macrosociological level and at micropsychological impact. In order to understand racism in schools and its consequences of alienation for individuals we must recognize the uniqueness of each setting while keeping in mind the larger themes that are played out locally.³¹

The predicament that Lummi students found themselves in during the 1970s at Ferndale High School was how to maintain an identity in a climate that was politically and culturally hostile to their Indian-ness. Each individual had their own way to cope with the pressures of daily classroom interactions. Richard King's treatise The School at Mopass offers insights that are transferable to settings like those at Ferndale.³² King explains that "To maintain an equilibrium within their own peer group and in their relations with the impersonal adult society, the Indian children adopt the mechanism of creating a school self that functions only within the school boundaries. If this artificial self is not consciously developed, it is at least partially recognized and consciously controlled. The

31. Henry T. Trueba, "Peer Socialization among Minority Students: A High School Dropout Prevention Program," in School and Society: Learning Through Culture, eds. Henry T. Trueba and Concha Delgado-Gaitan (New York: Praeger, 1988), 214.

32. A. Richard King, The School at Mopass: A Problem of Identity (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1967).

children sustain themselves with the conviction that their "real self" is not this person in the school at all."³³

Robin Riddington has written about the significance of personal experience in ethnohistorical studies. He maintains that we must obtain information from the past by recognizing the validity of personal experience without violating scholarly traditions.³⁴ In this way, individual accounts can be integrated with a detailed analysis. Riddington explains that "narrative gives voice to the people and events on which any generalizations and abstractions must be grounded. Narrative presents rich detail. It refers to actualities."³⁵ But, narratives must be utilized with other kinds of context information. Renato Rosaldo further emphasizes this point, saying "good narratives make their analyses as they go along. In reconstructing the past it is foolish to rely solely on oral traditions (or, for that matter, any other single line of evidence). Instead one should use as many possible convergent lines of evidence as one can."³⁶

Donna Deyhle's study of Ute, Navaho, and Anglo high school students focused on how Indian students turned to

33. Ibid, 88.

34. Robin Riddington, "Fox and Chickadee," in The American Indian and the Problem of History, ed. Calvin Martin (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 135.

35. Robin Riddington, Trail to Heaven: Knowledge and Narrative in a Northern Native Community (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1988), xiii.

36. Renato Rosaldo, "Doing Oral History," Social Analysis, 4 (September 1980): 93.

break dancing to express their uniqueness and "achieve a kind of success in an otherwise indifferent or negative school and community environment."³⁷ John Ogbu's widely recognized work describing individual variations in adaptive strategies among voluntary and involuntary minorities lays groundwork for investigating the complex variables that prompt Indian students' response to schooling. This is particularly significant in describing the assorted forms of resistance that are enacted in the classroom by Native pupils.³⁸ Rosalie Wax, Murray Wax, and Robert V. Dumont studied Sioux high school students at the Pine Ridge reservation in the 1970s.³⁹ Their work focused on the problems of individual and communal identity and has some significance for my study of Lummi students. Rosalie Wax's well known work "The Warrior Dropouts" concentrated on the identity problems of Sioux teenage boys and the dilemma of engaging in resistance to the whiteman's education.⁴⁰

37. Donna Deyhle, "Break Dancing and Breaking Out: Anglos, Utes, and Navajos in a Border Reservation High School," Anthropology and Education Quarterly, 17 (1986): 111-127.

38. John Ogbu, "Understanding Cultural Diversity and Learning." Educational Researcher, 21, 8 (November 1992): 5-14.

39. Murray Wax, Rosalie Wax, and Robert V. Dumont, "Formal Education in an American Indian Community," in The Emergent Native Americans: A Reader in Culture Contact, ed. Deward E. Walker, Jr. (Boston: Little Brown and Company Inc., 1972), 627-642.

40. Rosalie Wax, "The Warrior Dropouts," in Native Americans Today: Sociological Perspectives, eds. Howard M.

Patterns of resistance and their manifestation in language have been the focus for a number of sociolinguists: Dell Hymes, Susan Phillips, and Courtney Cazden have all discussed the nature of linguistic inequality and the socio-political features of language in the classroom.⁴¹ In my study I found that not only were Lummi students handicapped by speaking a form of English that was heavily influenced by the Straights Salish dialect, but there were constraints placed on how reality could be described within the context of the classroom. The nature of economic resources--in particular, discussions about the fisheries--was framed by the language of the teachers, administrators, and the white community of Ferndale.

The Lummi way of speaking about many things, especially the salmon, was deemed unacceptable within the context of the school. Edward Sapir established that the linguistic behavior of a given society showed "an unconscious patterning of the types of endeavor that are classed as economic, there is even such a thing as a characteristic

Bahr, Bruce A. Chadwick, and Robert C. Day (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1972), 146-154.

41. Del Hymes, "Sociolinguistics and the Ethnography of Speaking," in Language, Culture, and Society: a Book of Readings, ed. Ben G. Blount (Cambridge, Mass.: Winthrop Publishers Inc., 1974), 335-369; Susan Phillips, The Invisible Culture: Communication in Classroom and Community on the Warm Springs Indian Reservation (New York: Longman Press, 1982); Courtney B. Cazden, "Problems for Education: Language as Curriculum Content and Learning Environment," in Language as a Human Problem ed. Einar Haugen and Morton Bloomfield (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1974), 137-150.

patterning of economic motive."⁴² The context of this economic motive is one of the key ingredients in the story of Lummi education at Ferndale High School.

Ethnohistories of Native education need to seek historical information from both young and old informants. Oral history that is done with younger individuals tends to dwell upon the problems faced by Indians living in contemporary society. C. Gregory Crampton, in writing about projects in American Indian oral history, notes that "we recognize that the most valuable, and most easily verifiable, information is obtained when individuals speak from their own experiences."⁴³ In order to understand the larger meaning of these individual accounts though, they must be framed within the culture conflict essence of Indian-white relations. Each individual Lummi student, starting their public school journey, launched a canoe into this historic ocean.

Native American Schooling as Indian-white Relations

Bernard Sheehan has said that, "ultimately, all history seeks to lay bare the sources of human motivation. In the analysis of Indian-white relations, this question becomes

42. Edward Sapir, "The Unconscious Patterning of Behavior in Society," in Language, Culture, and Society, ed. Ben G. Blount (Cambridge: Winthrop Publishers, 1974), 43.

43. C. Gregory Crampton, "American Indian Oral History," in Smith and Kvasnicka, Indian-White Relations, 122.

particularly relevant."⁴⁴ This is because, as Peter Nabokov has put it,

one cannot dream up two more contrary ways of life and systems of belief than those represented by Native American and European societies. The enormous differences in religious values and practices, in the conduct of family and social life, in concepts of property ownership and land use, in traditional attitudes toward work and leisure, made intimacy between Indians and Europeans all too rare. Much of the time they viewed each other as total barbarians.⁴⁵

The history of Indian schooling is about the interaction between two groups and two contrasting ideologies. The historic themes of the relations between Indians and whites are replayed in the classrooms and halls of the schools. Although the surface features of these relations have shifted through the changing social dynamics of both cultures, the subterranean dimension continues on with such perennial patterns of differences as those mentioned by Nabokov above.

The ethnohistory of Lummi education in the 1970s is framed by developments in Indian-white relations as the explosive political climate of the fishing wars became the undercurrent of daily life at Ferndale High School. In order to understand the context of Indian-white interactions at the high school it is crucial to comprehend the history of

44. Bernard Sheehan, Seeds of Extinction: Jeffersonian Philanthropy and the American Indian (New York: Norton, 1974), x.

45. Peter Nabokov, Native American Testimony: A Chronicle of Indian-White Relations from Prophecy to the Present (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1991), 69.

local, state, and federal policy that these relationships are entwined with.

For an assessment of the Native response to schooling in the Pacific Northwest it is necessary to have a grasp of the complexities of federal Indian policy related to the fishing controversy. Alvin M. Josephy, in Now That the Buffalo's Gone, has surveyed this history and gives particular attention to the white "backlash" against Native fishing rights victories in the courts.⁴⁶ This backlash was felt by Lummi students in the classrooms in the manner they were treated by angry white students and anti-Indian teachers. Boxberger clearly establishes the role that teachers and administrators played as one of the largest groups within the ranks of non-Native fishermen. Bruce Miller and Rudolph Ryser have done research on white reactions to Indian treaty rights and the Indian counter-response.⁴⁷

For Lummi students at Ferndale high school, the 1970s were years that involved an intense identity struggle. Steven Cornell has pointed to the way that "the political

46. Alvin M. Josephy, "The Great Northwest Fishing War," chap. in Now That the Buffalo's Gone: A Study of Today's American Indians (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1982), 177-212.

47. Bruce G. Miller, "The Press, the Boldt Decision, and Indian-White Relations." American Indian Culture and Research Journal 17:2 (1993): 75-97; Rudolph C. Ryser, Anti Indian Movement on the Tribal Frontier, Occasional Paper #16 (Kenmore, Washington: Center for World Indigenous Studies, 1991).

resurgence of the last few decades has been a cultural resurgence as well."⁴⁸ The tribe was engaged in a cultural revitalization that amplified the differences between white and Native ways of seeing the world. The section on spirit dancing in chapter six sheds light on how these differences were talked about in Coast Salish communities.

Lummi high school students, caught up in the mixture of politics and the renewal of Indian sacred traditions had to shift identities quickly as they entered the high school building where they found a combination of passive and active hostility to their Indian-ness. Lummi students and parents found themselves struggling not just within the historic region of Indian-white relations, but against the structure of the public schools; this structure reflected the temperament of the community of Ferndale.

Sense of Place

While many of the themes of Lummi education are transportable to other settings, a number of them are unique to the location of Whatcom county and the Lummi reservation in the 1970s. The nature of the conflict between Indians and local whites, the antagonisms between the state of Washington and the federal government, and the historic and spiritual connection that Lummi people have with the landscape have to be recognized. And they have to be somehow linked to the dynamics of life within the unique place that

48. Steven Cornell, The Return of the Native: American Indian Political Resurgence (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 212.

the school occupies. Heather Huyck contends that "history happens in places--real physical spaces that themselves affect the events and processes we call history. These spaces whether rooms, river valleys, or entire continents, help us analyze past events even as they help us understand our predecessors' actions and decisions."⁴⁹ We must come to recognize that each place and time are unique and, as Clifford Geertz has written, that "the shapes of knowledge are always ineluctably local."⁵⁰ The drama is acted out on the stage of this local landscape.

Many of the threads of Indian-white conflicts go back to the earliest contact times. David G. Tremaine's work on settlement patterns and economic relations of Lummi, Nooksack, and white up to 1890 provides useful background for understanding early social developments between Indians and whites.⁵¹ Additionally, a master's thesis by Don Newman Taylor offers some insight into the ways Lummi participated in the Ferndale economy and how that participation changed in the 1960s because of Affirmative Action opportunities for

49. Heather Huyck, "Beyond John Wayne: Using Historic Sites to Interpret Western Women's History," in Western Women: Their Land, Their Lives, Lillian Schlissel, Vicki L. Ruiz and Janice Monk (Albuquerque, NM.: University of New Mexico Press, 1988), 304.

50. Clifford Geertz, Local Knowledge: Further Essays In Interpretive Anthropology (New York: Basic Books, 1983), 4.

51. David G. Tremaine, Indian and Pioneer Settlement of the Nooksack Lowland, Washington to 1890. Occasional Paper #4 (Center for Pacific Northwest Studies. Western Washington State College, 1975).

Indians to work at the Intalco Aluminum plant. Newman's work points to how a growing interest in minorities and the fact that Lummi were economically depressed caused Intalco to have an interest in them.⁵²

Although it is important to recognize the uniqueness of the predominantly white community of Ferndale, many of the values, attitudes, and approaches to life are typical of a northwest American small town. Arthur J. Vidich and Joseph Bensman have outlined some of the themes of such a small town in a way that pays particular attention to schooling and village politics.⁵³ Such topics as the political activities of the school board and the ways communities define what is normal are relevant to the situation of Lummi at Ferndale High.

The contemporary Indian culture of the Pacific Northwest has been investigated by both historians and anthropologists. Claudia Lewis did a detailed study of contemporary family life among a Coast Salish community. She examined underlying motives and value systems that allowed individuals to adapt to changing social conditions.⁵⁴

52. Don Newman Taylor, "Changes in the Economy of the Lummi Indians of Northwest Washington," (M.A. thesis, Western Washington University, 1969).

53. Arthur J. Vidich and Joseph Bensman, Small Town in Mass Society: Class, Power, and Religion in a Rural Community (Garden City NY.: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1960).

54. Claudia Lewis, Indian Families of the Northwest Coast: The Impact of Change (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).

Dorothy Haegert collected a number of narratives from Coast Salish and Northwest Coast elders about family life, childhood, and adaptations to schooling and modern life.⁵⁵ Both of these works provide ethnographic information about the context of modern life for Indian people in the Northwest.

In the domain of ethnographies of Indian schooling, Harry Wolcott's A Kwakiutl Village and School could serve, in a qualified fashion, as a model for ethnohistorical studies of Native education because he gives a detailed sense of place, includes so much of the historic backdrop in his study and because he implicitly and explicitly discusses the structure of power that engulfs the village setting.⁵⁶ Furthermore, in his concluding reflections, Wolcott offers insights and questions that could point out a course for those wanting to embark upon an educational ethnohistory:

A breakthrough in my own thinking about formal education at Blackfish Village came about in the metamorphosis of my original research orientation. I had proposed to investigate what it is about village life that makes Indian pupils so refractive to formal education and why Indian pupils fail in school. As I observed and participated in village life and in the classroom, I realized that posing the query in such terms narrowed the perspective of the search. There is another question to ask, one which can be considered an alternative but which is, I think, better regarded as a

55. Dorothy Haegert, Children of the First People (Vancouver: Tillicum Press, 1989).

56. Harry F. Wolcott, A Kwakiutl Village and School. (Prospect Heights, Illinois: Waveland Press, Inc., 1984).

complement to my original orientation: How do the schools fail their Indian pupils?⁵⁷

Because my study concentrates on the 1970s, it is both historical and current; it illuminates themes that are ongoing in the policy discussions about Indian education. Robert G. Burgess has cautioned against doing ethnographies where historical data is neglected arguing that "the field researcher is in danger of misinterpreting the present if historical sources are ignored."⁵⁸ More recent historical settings can effectively employ oral histories since, as Vansina notes, oral history has a contemporary focus. This differs from oral tradition where the themes are no longer directly connected to the present setting.⁵⁹

For reasons that will be explained later, it is vital to consider the contrast between white and Indian ethical and spiritual values from early times to the 1970s. Wayne Suttles has done some of the most extensive research on the Coast Salish and writes about the significance of winter dances, potlatching, and summer canoe races for contemporary life and the maintenance of identity.⁶⁰

57. Ibid, 131.

58. Robert G. Burgess, "Personal Documents, Oral Sources and Life Histories," 131.

59. Jan Vansina, "Oral Tradition as Process," from Oral Tradition as History (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 12.

60. Wayne Suttles, "Post Contact Culture Change Among the Lummi Indians," British Columbia Historical Quarterly, 18 1 and 2, (January-April 1954): 29-101; "The Persistence of Intervillage Ties Among the Coast Salish" in the Emergent Native American: A Reader in Culture Contact, ed. Deward E.

Some teachers considered Lummi students' behaviors to be strange and mysterious, connected to forces and beliefs that they could not understand. At the same time Lummis, in the high school classroom, felt forced into a way of seeing the world that was uncomfortable and occasionally traumatizing. Often this school induced trauma was treated in a traditional manner.

Several former faculty members at Western Washington University have given accounts of how Lummi students' participation in the winter spirit dancing affected life in the classroom. There were taboos and rituals that Lummis had to observe while going through initiation and rites of passage. The reactions of administrators and teachers when Indian students needed to be absent from school to participate in traditional ceremonies or the frequent funerals at the reservation reveals much about the Ferndale community's lack of acceptance for Lummi cultural values.

Wolfgang G. Jilek did a study of modern Coast Salish healing practices with a particular emphasis on the Lummis. He concluded that the increase in participation in the winter dancing during the 1970s was partly a response to the identity crises that creates spirit sickness in teenagers.

Walker (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1972); "Affinal Ties, Subsistence, and Prestige Among the Coast Salish" in Issues in Cultural Anthropology, ed. David W. McCurdy and James P. Spradley (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1979), 665-667; "Private Knowledge, Morality, and Social Classes Among the Coast Salish" in Indians of the North Pacific Coast, ed. Tom McFeat (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1966), 166-179.

Much of this cultural confusion, resulting in what Jilek calls "anomic depression," stemmed from traumatic encounters at the high school.⁶¹

June McCormick Collins and Pamela Thorsen Amoss have done extensive research with Coast Salish peoples exploring the link between traditional healing practices and the predicaments of contemporary Indian life.⁶² The initiation of teenage dancers was essential in order to "overcome sickness and faulty behaviour contracted by exposure to an alien culture."⁶³ Many Lummi students went through the "depatterning and reconditioning procedures in the initiation process"⁶⁴ and returned to the classroom more detached than ever from the white man's schooling.⁶⁵

The best ethnohistorical examination of schooling in the context of Indian-white relations in Puget Sound can be found in Vine Deloria's Indians of the Pacific Northwest:

61. Wolfgang G. Jilek, Indian Healing: Shamanic Ceremonialism in the Pacific Northwest Today (Surrey, B.C.: Hancock House Publishers Ltd., 1982).

62. June McCormick Collins, Valley of the Spirits: The Upper Skagit Indians of Western Washington (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1974); Pamela Thorsen Amoss, "The Persistence of Aboriginal Beliefs and Practices Among the Nooksack Coast Salish" (Ph.D. diss., University of Washington, 1972).

63. Wolfgang G. Jilek, Indian Healing: Shamanic Ceremonialism in the Pacific Northwest Today, 104.

64. Ibid., 105.

65. Spirit dancing is considered sacred and private. It is not to be talked about--especially to non-Natives. See chapter six for more information about this topic and how it is dealt with.

From the Coming of the white Man to the Present Day.⁶⁶ Much of the research for this book was done while Deloria was teaching in the College of Ethnic Studies at Western Washington University in Bellingham where he worked with local tribes such as the Lummi on history and treaty matters. Deloria points to the historic themes of tensions between Washington state and federal support for Indian tribes. He examines the behavior of both whites and Indians and looks at the context of treaties and schooling issues, such as the closing of the reservation day schools. His introduction to the book offers a story which underscores the need to recognize the distinctive qualities that define each place.

The Indian Education Act of 1972 funded a number of oral histories which probed the topic of schooling and produced some rich narratives. Ann Nugent brought forth several accounts of life at the Lummi Day School, at Tulalip and Chemawa residential schools, and some comments about going to school at Ferndale in the 1940s and 1950s.⁶⁷ These stories show how Lummi elders were caught in a transition between the traditional culture and "a type of life conditioned by the ever-encroaching white population,

66. Vine Deloria Jr., Indians of the Pacific Northwest: From the Coming of the White Man to the Present Day (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1977).

67. Ann Nugent, Schooling of the Lummi Indians Between 1855-1956 (Ferndale, WA: Lummi Historical Publications, 1981); Ann Nugent, ed., with Eva Kinley, Lummi Elders Speak (Lynden, WA.: Lynden Tribune Press, 1981).

between turn-of-the-century life and contemporary life."⁶⁸

Listening to these voices, we can hear some of the same descriptions of Indian-white conflicts that Lummi high school students in the 1970s heard from their grandparents.

The federal projects coming from the Office of Economic Opportunity and the other "war on poverty" programs generated a number of descriptive documents which contain narratives, analysis, and noteworthy contextual details. Newspapers have, of course, always been an important source of disclosure about the attitudes and values of the dominant society. Letters to the editor and the editorial pages are points of reference for getting the mood of the time. All of these sources provide illustrative and convergent lines of evidence in describing an historic setting.

The state of Washington and the federal government published documents with testimony and recommendations about dealing with the problems Indians were having in the public schools. Are You Listening Neighbor?: Report of the Indian Affairs Task Force sketches the climate of the times as it examines the problems of Indian schooling during the fishing wars.⁶⁹ But, aside from my own interviews with former teachers and students, the most directly applicable testimony comes from the transcripts of a civil rights

68. Ibid, 5.

69. "Are You Listening Neighbor?... Report of the Indian Affairs Task Force And The People Speak, Will You Listen? (Olympia: State of Washington, 1978).

hearing held in Seattle in 1978. The hearing was focused on fishing rights and devoted a substantial section to the difficult relations between the Lummi tribe and the Ferndale School District as a result of the fishing controversy. The essential aspects of Indian-white relations are revealed in the statements of Lummi students, tribal leaders, and school personnel. This document shows the undercurrent of clashes in perspectives and values between Lummis and school officials.

Teachers conducted themselves at the intersection of institutional power and concern for the welfare of individual students. Some teachers that I interviewed complained that they wanted to treat their Lummi pupils with more understanding and compassion, but were unable to negotiate past the conditions of "institutional racism" that permeated the Ferndale schools. In other words, the environment of the school created boundaries that defined and restricted the cross-cultural interaction between white teachers and Indian students.

We must begin to recognize that Indian-white relations are framed not only by reciprocity, but by what Henry Giroux calls "lived antagonistic relations situated within a complex of socio-political institutions and social forms that limit as well as enable human action."⁷⁰ Giroux sees

70. Henry A. Giroux, Ideology, Culture, and the Process of Schooling (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1981), 26.

resistance to the educational system as a response rooted in "moral and political indignation."⁷¹ The ethnographers of schooling have been criticized--with the usually noted exception of Paul Willis⁷²--for ignoring the "structural landscape against which meanings were formed, negotiated, or sustained."⁷³ Moreover, without a glimpse into the embedded patterns of power relations that are both cultural and historic, such ethnographies can be more confounding than revealing about the deeper structure of Indian education.

What using an ethnohistorical method means as we explore the lived experiences of Indian students in the public schools is that, as Calvin Martin explains, "historians are now in a position to rewrite virtually the entire pageant of Indian-white relations from the perspective of another, equally valid, equally serious reality--an American Indian reality--using the ethnohistorical approach."⁷⁴

Eventually, of course, we must come to use whatever combination of materials and disciplinary approaches are most useful in confronting the deep and often elusive themes

71. Henry Giroux, "Theories of Reproduction and Resistance in the New Sociology of Education: A Critical Analysis," Harvard Educational Review, 53 (1983): 289.

72. Paul Willis, Learning to Labour: How Working-class Kids Get Working-class Jobs (London, England: Saxon House, 1977).

73. Ibid., 13.

74. Calvin Martin, "The Metaphysics of Writing Indian-White History," 28.

of Indian education. Reginald Horseman has stipulated that "effective histories of the white-Native American reaction in the twentieth century require sophistication in working with both archival and oral materials, but, in working on twentieth-century history, anthropologists and historians have usually pursued separate paths."⁷⁵ An ethnohistory of Native American education is now required as a way of weaving the previously unmatched threads into a clearer picture of the whole.

75. Horseman, "Recent Trends and New Directions in Native American History," 143.

CHAPTER III

INDIANS AND WHITES: A CLASH OF ATTITUDES

In 1976 Russell Means, leader of the American Indian Movement (AIM) and probably the most well known Indian activist in the United States, had a rifle pointed at him and was beaten up in Bellingham the day before giving a speech at Western Washington University. The man who attacked him was charged with second degree assault and released the afternoon of the day Means was scheduled to speak. Whatcom county prosecuting attorney Dave McEachran explained saying that the suspect "looked like he was a pretty stable guy" and, "there is nothing political as far as we can see."¹

Nevertheless, the chief of police stationed officers in the audience and a S.W.A.T. squad was standing by that night. Means, who understood just how explosive the anti-Indian backlash had become in Whatcom county as a result of the fishing wars, apologized to his audience, "sorry about my face, I got worked over last night." Then he said, "You know, when there is a 30-30 pointed at me which says 'welcome to the state of Washington,' then I have to ask why?"²

The battles, in the courts and on the waters, over Native fishing rights during the 1970s have been referred to

1. Linda Schild, "Russell Means claims 'setup,'" Bellingham Herald, October 31, 1976, 1.

2. Ibid.

as the fishing wars.³ Russell Means had not come to talk about the fishing wars though; he said he was "not informed on its legalities."⁴ He came to talk about how colonization had affected Native peoples. But Whatcom county was embroiled in the politics of fishing and anti-Indian factions were hostile to anyone connected with the cause of Indian treaty rights. Means recognized that he was a target for anti-Indian venom saying, "I've been set up before, and I'll tell you one thing--I don't enjoy getting shot at."⁵

The community of Ferndale, because it was adjacent to the Lummi reservation, was more enmeshed in this kind of explosive clash between Indians and non-Natives than any other town in Whatcom county. Ferndale High School was where Lummis and whites both attended, and because the school was the only place where Indians and whites interacted with each other in a sustained fashion. The classrooms, halls, and grounds became the most concentrated setting for the strife that was incited by the fishing wars.

The Lummi world collided with the white world at the high school in much the same way that Indians and whites had been in conflict for a hundred years; it was a clash of

3. See Alvin M. Josephy, "The Great Northwest Fishing War," chap. in Now That the Buffalo's Gone: A Study of Today's American Indians (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1982), 177-212.

4. "Mean's life threatened," Western Front (Western Washington University), November 2, 1976, 1.

5. Ibid.

cultures and a clash of attitudes. Many whites in Whatcom county believed that the federal government had collaborated with Indians to help them win fishing rights battles in the courts. They were also provoked by the proliferation of federal economic development grants for the reservations during the 1970s. Likewise, Lummis viewed local whites with suspicion and fortified traditional values along with an assertive political posture in response to what they perceived as an assault on their identity as Native people.

On the surface, the issues and political climate of the 1970s brought dramatic and vicious changes to Indian-white relations. Under the surface, the conflicts in values and ways of seeing the world were unchanged since whites first began to settle in the land of the Coast Salish peoples. The clash between Indians and whites was both cultural and political:

Cultural clash is what results when people with different value systems occupy the same geographic area. The clash becomes greater when these two value systems are not only different, but opposing. Matters become further aggravated when one culture imposes its system of values on the other. The intensity of the clash reaches optimum fahrenheit when the values under attack are basic to a people's identity and so numerous as to envelop every turn of life.⁶

The political aspects of the clash culminated in the landmark U.S. v. Washington decision where U.S. Judge George Boldt in 1974 ruled that Native Americans could take up to

6. "Are You Listening Neighbor?"...Report of the Indian Affairs Task Force, State of Washington publication, 1978, 5.

50 percent of the salmon catch at their traditional fishing sites. From the Indians' perspective, the Boldt decision was a reasonable way to restrict an overcrowded fishing industry. Something had to be done. Ann Nugent has stated that "restricting non-treaty fishermen to 50 percent of the catch was the means to rectify the overcrowded conditions."⁷

The controversy about Native fishing rights was focused on the interpretations of treaties made in the 1850s. The Boldt decision was an attempt to resolve issues and confrontations that were more than a hundred years old. The clash was rooted, as Fay Cohen has reported,

in encounters between the Northwest tribes who reaped abundant salmon from the rivers at their doorways and the white settlers who began entering the region in the mid-nineteenth century. When the United States government negotiated treaties with the tribes to permit white settlement, the Indians retained their all-important rights to the fish. Treaty negotiators told the tribes, "This paper secures your fish."⁸

The view of Indian treaties in small Northwest fishing towns like Ferndale was that they may have had some relevance when they were written, but that they were being misinterpreted by federal courts and judges to unfairly favor the Natives. At a conference on fisheries held at Western Washington University June 19, 1977 Bill Lowman, representing the Puget Sound Gillnetters Association, stated

7. Ann Nugent, The History of Lummi Fishing Rights (Bellingham, Washington: Lummi Communications, 1979), 53.

8. Fay G. Cohen, Treaties on Trial: The continuing Controversy Over Northwest Indian Fishing Rights (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1986), ix.

that "now with the Boldt decision they (Puget Sound Indians) now acquired rights which would certainly cause Governor Stevens (who signed the treaties) to roll over in his grave."⁹

Meanwhile, Lummis had an opposite attitude about the treaties, and about the significance of past agreements with the government:

The Indians of Washington State are today only one generation away from the bitter fighting that followed the trampling of treaties and the perfidy of the white government official. They have heard the tragic stories from the lips of their grandparents who were there. They know their children will read only the white man's faithless interpretation of their history in the public schools all Indians in this state attend, and so they pass on to their young the story of the rape of the Northwest as it was recited solemnly to them in their youth.¹⁰

Larry Kinley, a Lummi tribal chairman, recalled that "growing up in our tribe, our elders always talked about the treaty and how important it was to our people."¹¹ Concluded on January 22, 1855, the Point Elliot Treaty established the original boundaries and size of the Lummi reservation: 12,562.94 acres. It was enlarged by executive order to

9. Manfred C. Vernon and James W. Scott, Fisheries in Puget Sound: Public Good and Private Interest, Occasional Paper #9 (Bellingham: Center for Pacific Northwest Studies, Western Washington State College, 1977), 60.

10. "Are You Listening Neighbor?"..., 9.

11. Kurt Russo, ed., Our People ...Our Land: Reflection on Common Ground: 500 Years (Bellingham, WA.: Florence Kluckhohn Center, 1992), 25.

13,000 acres on November 22, 1873.¹² The treaty also contained a federal guarantee that the tribes of Puget Sound would be able to fish as they always had.

Language issues plagued the treaty process and foreshadowed the values conflicts that would continue up to the present day. Territorial Governor Isaac Ingalls Stevens insisted on using the Chinook jargon to conduct the treaties even though individuals were present who could translate from English to the Native languages. Chinook jargon, a conglomerate language developed for fur trading, had a vocabulary of 300 words or so. It was a crude language, useful only for the most rudimentary trading and bartering transactions. It advantaged Stevens and the whites by defining land and resources in simple commodity terms. No aspect of the Natives' cultural or spiritual sensibilities could be discussed with such a language. Nevertheless, the Indians were able to communicate the all important role of the salmon in their lives; they gave away a great deal, but reserved their traditional fishing grounds. The language used in the 1855 treaty was the focus of the controversy about the Boldt decision of 1974. The phrase "in common," used to describe how the Indians were to share the salmon with the settlers, was eventually quantified to mean fifty percent of the catch. This interpretation of the phrase was

12. Robert H. Ruby and John A. Brown, A Guide to the Indian Tribes of the Pacific Northwest (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1986), 111.

what became contested and eventually became a keynote of the fishing wars in the Pacific Northwest.

The white settlers did not see salmon as important, they were more interested in good land for farming. Decades later, when salmon became a more valuable resource due to improved canning methods, Indians continued to define the fishery in terms of their cultural and spiritual heritage; whites wanted to express the situation in an economic language not entirely different from the way Chinook jargon was used in the original treaties. Vine Deloria, Jr. has written that "the treaties may be classified either as sophisticated forms of theft, or as some of the best real estate deals ever made."¹³

Misunderstandings about the concept of property rights created the most steadfast impasse to cross-cultural communication between Lummi and whites. Larry Kinley reported that

our culture did not deal with 'property rights', a concept that came with the Europeans. Our people were stewards that were here to take care of things and pass it on to future generations. We did not have a right to sell it because it was not a commodity. I can imagine our people negotiating and saying. "Let's see now, you want our land. Don't these white people know that we don't own land?"¹⁴

13. Vine Deloria, Jr., "The Lummi Indian Community: The Fishermen of the Pacific Northwest," in American Indian Economic Development, ed. Sam Stanley (The Hague: Mouton Publishers, 1978), 97.

14. Kurt Russo, ed. Our People ...Our Land: Reflection on Common Ground: ..., 27.

As the region became settled, Lummis worked for whites in the coal mines, lumber camps, and the canneries. They also hauled passengers and freight up the Nooksack river and did odd jobs of every sort for the new settlers. But Indians could never understand why white settlers pushed them off their traditional camping grounds. The Lummi concept of property was collective and the whites were violating it at every turn. Herman Olsen, a Lummi elder, recalled a traditional camping place and how they were moved out:

A white fellow moved in there. They homesteaded the whole thing. They just plain homesteaded it wrong and everything. Then on the other side of the bay, what there was left, the Lummis moved across, just a stone's throw across the bay; they had two great big houses there. Then they had some more small houses, cabin-like, that they stayed in and that got homesteaded so the Lummis just lost out there too. White people came and homesteaded the darn place and never even left their ground for the Lummis....they had a nice place there where they went to camp and fish. It was all taken away by homesteaders.¹⁵

As more and more white settlers came to Whatcom county competition increased for good farming land, timber, and other resources. As the best spots for homesteading were eventually taken, many whites began to covet Indian land. An Indian agent wrote in 1864 that "white settlers here and coming into the Territory justly complain that such large bodies of rich, unoccupied lands are withheld from them, and are not used by the Indians."¹⁶

15. Ann Nugent and Eva Kinley, Lummi Elders Speak (Ferndale, WA.: Lummi Historical Publications, 1982), 66.

16. Vine Deloria, Jr., Indians of the Pacific Northwest (Garden City, New Jersey: Doubleday & Company, 1977), 86.

The federal government provided white settlers and businessmen with a legal means for getting the Indians' land. This was the Dawes Act.

The General Allotment Act of 1887, known as the Dawes Act, was a federal policy which had a damaging effect for Lummi and all other Native Americans. The intent was to speed up the assimilation and civilizing process by dividing the reservations up into individual plots of land. When all the land was divided up and allotted to individual Indians the surplus could be sold to homesteaders. Part of the goal was to break up the tribal group and weaken extended family relationships. The federal government would maintain a paternalistic relationship with allotted Indians for a period of twenty-five years. After that time individual Indians could sell their allotments if they were declared "competent." Homesteaders, railroadmen, and real estate speculators were eager to have individual Lummi declared competent so they could buy the land and develop it. In some cases businessmen coerced federal officials to reduce the waiting time from twenty-five years to ten years so that they could get hold of particularly valuable pieces of land.¹⁷ Approximately three million reservation acres were lost as a result of the Dawes act in Washington, Oregon, and

17. Robert H. Ruby and John A. Brown, Indian Tribes of the Pacific Northwest, 266.

Idaho.¹⁸ The Lummi tribe lost 5,000 acres of individual allotments.¹⁹

Whites saw Indians as competitors for the resources and the coming of statehood for Washington in 1889 meant that the federal government would be less able to protect Native people from local whites. It was much easier for citizens to influence politicians in Olympia than far away in Washington, D.C.; the federal government was viewed as meddling and often opposed to regional interests. The federal government was ambivalent: on the one hand, federal officials were eager to give some of the responsibility for supervising Indians over to the state, but on the other hand, they realized that Indians would become victims to the appetites and aggressions of whites. Washington state politicians would not be motivated to protect Native people.

Washington was admitted to the Union by the Omnibus Bill of 1889. The timing, two years after the Dawes Act, meant that statehood worked to amplify the effects of the allotment policy in removing Indians from their land. Statehood had an immense impact on Native peoples. While Washington was a territory, government officials had to carry out the federal laws of the United States and recognize the status of the Lummi tribe as set out in the Point Elliot Treaty. The new state government wanted control

18. Ibid, 268.

19. Vine Deloria, Jr., Lummi Indian Community, 117.

of Indian lands and did not regard the treaties with the same respect as federal officials did. There were jurisdictional problems; the federal courts generally ruled in favor of Native rights while state courts seemed to favor the elimination of Indian rights. The state was determined to reinforce and extend its authority, especially as there was tremendous pressure to open up unallotted reservation lands to logging.²⁰

Throughout the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century Lummi watched waves of settlers arrive to snatch up the land and resources. One of the most shocking and confusing displays of white attitudes, from the Lummi perspective, was the way settlers treated the salmon. Farmers pitchforked spawning salmon out of the Nooksack river and used them by the wagonloads for fertilizer or as feed for hogs.²¹ Even after canning methods were perfected and non-Indian fishing became more profitable, whites still wasted a tremendous amount of salmon. Ronomus "Toddy" Lear, a Lummi elder, recalled when he was "really young, the traps owned by white people would take in all the fish, but they dumped their humpbacks, the pinks. They just dumped thousands of them and they were dying since they had been kept in the traps so long; they drifted to shore and died.

20. Vine Deloria, Indians of the Pacific Northwest, 103.

21. Lottie Roeder Roth, History of Whatcom County vol 1 (Chicago: Pioneer Historical Publishing Company, 1926), 661.

They had the whole Legoe Bay just covered with dead fish. After they drifted away the rocks were still oily from the fish....I remember all the Indian people down on the beach there, watching the fish."²²

As fishing became more profitable for whites the jurisdictional conflicts between state and federal governments centered on Indian fishing rights. Vine Deloria has stated that the "history of the Indian fishing rights struggle has seen this strange alignment many times. The Supreme Court and the reservation people seem to hold the same theory of how a treaty is to be interpreted, and the white population and the state and lower federal courts often hold the opposite and incorrect view....From 1905 on, Indians would be in court almost continuously trying to defend their fishing rights against the intrusions of the white fishermen."²³ Land speculators, lumber companies, and fishermen were able to have things pretty much their own way with the new state government of Washington.

Not only was the state government different from early territorial times, but the non-Native people who came to Washington seemed to have more insensitive attitudes toward Indians. Vine Deloria explained that "in general the longer a person had lived in the territory the better he got along with the Indians and the more he loved the lands and peoples

22. Ann Nugent and Eva Kinley, Lummi Elders, 25.

23. Ibid, 108.

of the territory. The new arrival, on the other hand, saw only the possibility of making a quick fortune, thus causing most of the ill will between the races."

From the turn of the century on, the federal government tried to turn more and more of Indian affairs over to the state of Washington. The state government was eager to support the acquisition of Indian lands by whites because it meant that the land could then be taxed by the state; Indian land held in trust by the federal government was not subject to taxation by the state.

White farmers bought some of the best Lummi farming land and then hired Lummis to work in the fields, especially during harvest time. But, as land was sold for low prices and Lummis were unable to compete with advanced technology in the fishing, Lummi people found what seasonal work they could, picking hops, doing jobs for whites in Ferndale and Bellingham, or working for the canneries. The years 1900 through the 1930s were a bleak period for the Lummis. Not only had much land and resources been lost, but cultural survival was deeply threatened by children being sent off to schools that attempted to strip them of their Indian-ness.

The federal government wanted the state to assume responsibility for the schooling of Native children.

Tuition payments were authorized by Congress in 1890 to some public schools enrolling Indian children. By 1912 more Indian children were in public schools than in

government schools, and the number of government schools with Indian children began to decline.²⁵

Putting the state in charge of Indian education meant that the reservation day schools were closed and Native children were sent to local public schools where they received an unfriendly welcome.

The Meriam Report of 1928 outlined the catastrophic results of the Dawes Act and the residential schools.²⁶ Produced from a Senate investigation on corruption in the Indian service,²⁷ The Miriam Report embarrassed and outraged liberals throughout the United States as it exposed the deplorable conditions of contemporary reservation life. By the 1930s, programs were put in place to reverse some of the effects of assimilationist policies and reinvigorate tribalism in a modern fashion. The efforts to rectify the damage caused by previous government policy culminated in the passage of the Indian Reorganization Act (IRA) in 1934. Tribes were encouraged to form corporate structures based on

25. Jeanne Eder and Jon Reyhner, "The Historical Background of Indian Education," In Teaching the Indian Child: A Bilingual/Multicultural Approach, ed. John Reyhner (Billings, Montana: Eastern Montana College, 1988), 41.

26. Lewis Meriam, The Problem of Indian Administration (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press. 1928, reprinted by Frank C. Miller, N.Y.: Johnson Reprint Corp., 1971). Frederick J. Stefon, "Significance of the Meriam Report of 1928," in The Indian Historian, 8, 3 (Summer 1975), 2-7, provides context information about the impact of this famous report.

27. Estelle Fuchs and Robert J. Havighurst, To Live on This Earth: American Indian Education, (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1973), 10.

a model developed primarily by commissioner of Indian Affairs John Collier.

Lummis initially rejected the Collier plan in 1934, but then eventually formed a tribal government structure in 1937.²⁸ The IRA fostered economic development through the tribal structure, but then contradicted itself by promoting relocation to cities and urban economic centers. It had a significant impact on Indian-white relations because it allowed the federal government to buy land and put it into trust on reservations. Local whites who were having hard times during the depression did not like to see the federal government giving their land to Indians.²⁹

After World War II, Lummi veterans returned home having seen other lands that were engaged in economic development programs. These veterans were determined to build up the reservation. But, the mood of Congress had changed with regard to Indians. Once again the combination of the federal government wanting out of the "Indian business" and the state of Washington wanting more control over Indian land and resources worked against the tribes. The congress, in 1953, under the influence of a Republican administration, began the policies of termination and relocation.

"Termination" was intended to sever tribal relations with

28. Barry Stein, The Lummi Indians: Economic Development and Social Continuity (Cambridge, Mass.: Center for Community Economic Development, 1975), 7.

29. Vine Deloria, Indians of the Pacific Northwest, 153.

the federal government. This scheme would withdraw support for reservations and move Indians to cities where they could find jobs or be trained for jobs. Although the Lummi reservation never actually faced termination proceedings, the threat loomed and influenced tribal response to assertions by county and state governments concerning land usage, zoning, and jurisdiction issues. Tribes such as the Lummi were afraid that a strong self-determination stance would provoke government officials to initiate termination proceedings. The fear of termination made Indians much less assertive than they might have otherwise been throughout the 1950s.

Relocation was a federal policy to remove Indians from reservations and place them in cities where they received job training. A great many Lummis were relocated to urban areas such as Seattle, Spokane, San Jose, Cleveland, Chicago, and Atlanta; this created a population drain on the Lummi reservation.³⁰ Lummis who were relocated found themselves in the lower class neighborhoods of urban centers. The jobs that they found paid poorly and their living conditions were demoralizing. One relocatee reported "that in the late 1950s 'there were probably more Lummis in San Jose than there were on the reservation."³¹ One third of

30. Daniel L. Boxberger, Ethnohistory of Lummi Indian Salmon Fishing, 127.

31. Ibid, 130.

the tribe was moved off the reservation into cities during the 1950s.³²

Public Law 280 (P.L. 280), also passed in 1953, was enacted as a way of increasing state jurisdiction in civil and criminal matters on Indian reservations. P.L. 280 was coordinated with the termination policy to put reservation affairs under state control in preparation for the abolition of the special relationship with the federal government. Lummi, along with other tribes of the Pacific Northwest, were opposed to a severing of their relationship with the federal government. As Boxberger has put it, "Many tribes feared that local prejudice and unfair treatment by their respective states would place them in an even worse situation than under federal jurisdiction."³³

In the 1960s federal policy changed from termination and assimilation to a policy of encouraging tribal people to return to the reservations and participate in economic development there. This time the government initiated programs aimed at "Indian self-determination." Most of these programs came out of aspects of Lyndon B. Johnson's "Great Society" anti-poverty legislation.

Alvin M. Josephy has stated that "with increasing assertiveness, starting about 1961, the Indian peoples began to ask for, and then demand, the right initially to

32. Barry Stein, The Lummi Indians, 6.

33. Ibid, 129.

participate in the devising of policies and programs for themselves, and by the end of the 1960s the right to initiate, frame, and implement the policies and programs themselves."³⁴

Municipal and county government officials in Whatcom county, representing the sentiment of local whites, were upset and resentful that so much of the federal anti-poverty money was directed to the Lummi. They were also alarmed at the way reservation leaders were taking charge of the programs; in the past federal projects were all supervised by white administrators. Whites did not think Indians were competent to manage such large scale projects. A letter to the March 6, 1964 Bellingham Herald is representative of white attitudes in Whatcom County at the time:

...too many of the industrious, ambitious, able, and competent Indians have left the reservations and successfully integrated themselves into the white man's economy. Believe me, I have plenty of Indian friends whom I respect and value who have done so. This condition has resulted in too few left who are capable of responsible management of reservation affairs.³⁵

Resentment about Lummi receiving federal public works money when other applicants in Whatcom County received none prompted Bellingham city attorney Pat Brock to announce that court action would be taken "to block distribution of the

34. Alvin M. Josephy, Jr., "The Historical and Cultural Context of White-Native American Conflicts," The Indian Historian, 12, 2 (Summer 1979), 6-14.

35. Clifford C. Crocker, "Segregating Indians An Archaic System," letter, Editorial Page, Bellingham Herald, March 6, 1964.

money."³⁶ The federal government's response was to try to calm non-Native hostility by putting Indian tribes and county governments in different categories with regard to competition for federal Economic Development Administration grants for small cities and rural areas. Nevertheless, the Bellingham Herald reported that the situation with regard to the Lummi "incensed local authorities."³⁷

In 1966 the situation for Lummi began to change in a direction to fortify tribal perspectives. An Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) funded Community Action Program (CAP) began on the reservation. "This provided the first full-time salaried job for a Lummi on the reservation in the history of the tribe."³⁸ The O.E.O. program opened up the door to other agencies and by 1971 over four million dollars was committed to Lummi economic development. "Reservation activity attracted new programs in public assistance, Indian health, law and order, adult education, alcoholism control, land acquisition (the first in 100 years), youth programs, legal assistance, water rights, service for the elderly, Lummi history and culture programs, new housing programs,

36. "Federal jobless aid goes only to Lummi," Bellingham Herald, December, 1976 23, 1.

37. Linda Schild, "County won't compete with Lummi tribe for EDA money," Bellingham Herald, 26 April, 1977, 4.

38. Barry Stein, The Lummi Indians, 7.

community center development, and total reservation planning."³⁹

The most important of all the proposals which came to Lummi during this time was the aquaculture project. This was a large scale plan to expand the tribe's economic base by growing and harvesting seafood products. Barry Stein recounted the origins of the project:

The aquaculture venture began in the fall of 1968 with discussions between Dr. Wallace Heath, a marine biologist teaching at Western Washington State College in nearby Bellingham, and the LIBC (Lummi Indian Business Council). Dr Heath, in connection with his teaching and research, had often spent time on the Lummi reservation and particularly on the extensive tide-lands. He was also aware of the funds that were then available through both private and government agencies for economic development programs. It seemed to him that a significant venture in the controlled harvesting of seafoods -aquaculture- might be possible on the tribal tidelands, and further, that oysters, salmon, and trout would be good candidate species.⁴⁰

Whites who had bought property on the tidelands where the aquaculture sea pond was to be built formed an organization called the Lummi Bay Beach Association (LBBA) and attempted to kill the project.⁴¹ At a meeting to discuss criticisms and concerns about the project, tribal chairman Vernon Lane began his speech by saying, "you all know me, we went to Ferndale High School together. I'm a carpenter, but would you hire me or any other Indian to do a job for you? You know you wouldn't. Lummis are tired of waiting for

39. Ibid, 8.

40. Ibid, 18.

41. Ibid, 23.

whites to give them a job. Indians are tired of waiting for whites to help them. We are now going to help ourselves."⁴²

Opponents were determined to block the project. They wrote letters to congressmen, gathered petitions, and tried to stop the Army Corps of Engineers from issuing a licence for construction. Vine Deloria described the anti-Indian character of the protests:

The opponents probably lost their case when they waxed poetic about the evil intentions of the Lummis. Some had the tribe deliberately putting oysters on the beaches to cut the feet of recreationists, others claimed that roving bands of Indians would attack the people using the beaches. Some claimed it was a plot to cut off the wind, others maintained that all wildlife would be removed and the smell from the fish would pollute the whole county. The most astounding objection, however, was that Indians, unlike many of the protestors, paid no taxes. The Lummis, however, pay everything but real estate taxes -but what paying taxes had to do with creating a research pond for aquaculture was puzzling, even to the Corps of Engineers.⁴³

The aquaculture project brought world-wide attention to the Lummi tribe: "Shirley Temple Black brought a delegation from the United Nations to visit the project while it was being built."⁴⁴ But, the success of the Lummi tribe in economic development and in winning fishing rights battles produced an anti-Indian backlash which was sharply felt at the high school.

In the 1970s, as the Lummis were experiencing a cultural and economic renaissance, the surrounding white

42. Interview with Alvin Ziontz, June 16, 1995.

43. Vine Deloria, Jr., Lummi Indian Community, 141-142.

44. Ibid.

community began to react. As Native people were refining and defining their identity, small town white Americans were then, inadvertently and awkwardly, forced to define themselves in contrast. The anti-Indian backlash was not just a reaction to felt injustices with regard to fishing rights and land resource management, it was also an awakening of the semi-dormant themes of earlier contact times when Natives were a significant political force in the region.

In many respects, even the acknowledgement of a clash of cultures was a contentious issue. Throughout the 1970s whites wanted to define the conflicts as political; they did not want to validate claims about cultural difference. In 1977, Whatcom county commissioner Terry Unger defended his backing of the all-white Lummi Property Owners Association by saying, "I have a deep seated sense of fair play. I have to be an advocate of the property owners." Unger stated that the problems were "political, not racist."⁴⁵ There was a "widespread belief that Indians are 'just like everybody else,' that all differences have disappeared and Indians are 'fully assimilated,' that the two cultures have indeed blended into one, or more accurately that Indians have adopted the dominant pattern."⁴⁶

45. Rick Cocker, "Flagrant, subtle racism a fact of life for many," Bellingham Herald, March 10, 1977, 5.

46. American Friends Service Committee, Uncommon Controversy (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1970), 67.

These attitudes were linked to American mythology about a cultural "melting pot." To utilize the concept of culture in describing the backlash setting was to privilege the Natives' perspective since the original treaties were signed between representatives of two distinct cultures. The backlash ideology focused on a language of "equality" of American citizens, Indian and white. The intent of this language was to deny the Native Americans their historic relationship to the federal government as sovereign peoples. Spencer Sahmaunt, Education Specialist for the Portland Area Bureau of Indian affairs, elucidated one of the core problems in Indian-white relations.

Non-Indians are generally unaware of the special relationship that American Indians have with the Federal Government. Even when aware, it is difficult for them to fully understand and to accept the fact that the special benefits are compensation for property and a way of life that were taken from them.⁴⁷

Lummi students were acutely aware of the way that the anti-Indian backlash filtered into every aspect of relations between Indians and whites; the climate at the high school was replete with cynical perspectives about Lummi culture and tribal economic development. One teacher openly displayed the literature of anti-Indian groups such as the Interstate Congress of Equal Rights and Responsibilities (ICERR) on his desk in the classroom. In September of 1976, 150 people gathered at Ferndale High School to hear a speech

47. "Are You Listening Neighbor?"..., 69.

by Howard Gray, a founder and board member of the ICERR.⁴⁸ In this case the high school was actually used as the meeting place of the most visible and powerful anti-Indian group in the United States. Teachers who belonged to, or were sympathetic to, the ICERR did not consider themselves to be racist, they saw the problem between Lummis and whites to be a political and economic one. These fishermen/teachers, like their counterparts in the Ferndale community mentioned earlier, subscribed to populist ideology that portrayed themselves as underdogs in the fishing wars.

The ICERR, which was called the "most serious threat to Indian people" by the Seattle chapter of the Native American Solidarity Committee, asserted that "the constitutional rights of all Americans must supercede the treaty rights of some Americans."⁴⁹ The emphasis on Native Americans having special rights was used as a central part of the ideology of the anti-Indian movement. Slade Gorton, Washington State senator, found a voice in harmony with the anti-Indian backlash when he sarcastically referred to Indians as "super-citizens." He used this term often as a valuable political strategy to gain the favor of groups such as the

48. Linda Schild, "Non-Indian reservation residents oppose bill," Bellingham Herald, September 17, 1976, 1.

49. Statement from the Native American Solidarity Committee (Seattle Chapter) to the U.S. Civil Rights Commission Hearing (August 25, 1978), 645.

ICERR which had a Washington, D.C. office very close to the Capitol.⁵⁰

Anti-Indian groups targeted Congressman Lloyd Meeds so that he barely survived a 1976 re-election challenge. He was elected only after an absentee ballot count. Constituents in the Second District (which includes Whatcom County) thought he was too supportive of Native American treaty rights. The Bellingham Herald on April, 17, 1977 ran a headline: "Meeds restyles image".⁵¹ The article pointed to how the congressman has been responding to what the voters wanted him to do: "He has dropped the chairmanship of the Interior Committee's Indian affairs subcommittee."⁵² Basically, Meeds, who previously had a reputation for listening to the tribes and treating Native people with respect, chose to distance himself from all Indian issues as a result of pressure from the anti-Indian element in northwest Washington State: "His staff believes that his honesty about the political futility of trying to get anti-Indian legislation passed in Congress has been misinterpreted as neglect, ambivalence or ineffectiveness."⁵³ That same year, 1977, Meeds called for a federal audit of the Lummi Aquaculture School. According to Meed's staff members it was

50. Ibid. 696.

51. Bill Dietrich, "Meeds restyles image," Bellingham Herald, April 17, 1977, 1.

52. Ibid.

53. Ibid.

to determine if the school's program was "sound and cost effective."⁵⁴

During the 1970s two books were published which were influential in formulating and coalescing anti-Indian attitudes in Ferndale and Whatcom County. Indian Treaties: American Nightmare, by C. Herb Williams and Walt Neubrech, tried to convince readers that the entire fishing resource was in danger of being wiped out by Indian treaty fishing.⁵⁵ Bill Lowman's book 220, million Custers served up a conspiracy theory about collusions between Indian tribes, the big oil cartels, and the federal government.⁵⁶ Many whites in Ferndale, suspicious of federal government meddling in local affairs, were easily convinced that Indians were a pawn in some battle between "regular American citizens" like themselves and the government in Washington, D.C.

Bruce Miller has explained how newspapers operated to fuel anti-Indian attitudes during the 1970s: "Newspaper reporting in this location helped protect the interests of the dominant ethnic group and affect public attitudes by providing particular perspectives on the issues. This is not

54. Dick Beardsley, "Aquaculture school will remain open for quarter," Bellingham Herald, April 22, 1977, 3.

55. C. Herb Williams and Walt Neubrech, Indian Treaties: American Nightmare (Seattle, Washington: Outdoor Empire Publishing, Inc., 1976).

56. Bill Lowman, 220, Million Custers (Anacortes, WA.: Anacortes Publishing Co., 1978).

to suggest, however, that the management or staff of either newspaper acted conspiratorially. Indeed, the reporting may have reflected unexamined biases of the white reporters and an internalization of prevalent images of Indians."⁵⁷ The print media manipulated public attitudes responding to the demands of the non-Native community and leaving that community inadequately informed about the details and context of federal Indian/white relations. The consequence was to confine and frame the discussion about contested resources such as fish.

The predominant media images were of Indians who were antisocial or who challenged the status quo by bringing up treaty issues (which inherently are litigious, having to do with the legally binding division of resources within the region); these evidently were regarded as reportable, public issues only when Indian claims to a greater share appeared.⁵⁸

Vine Deloria criticized the Bellingham Herald's coverage of Lummi economic development saying, "the letters of white critics were usually published in the paper at length, while Lummi replies were often not printed at all, or relevant points were deleted."⁵⁹

Not all non-Natives were critical of Lummi projects and prerogatives. Some non-Natives became trusted friends of the Lummi as they contributed their support and expertise to

57. Bruce Miller, "The Press, the Boldt Decision, and Indian-White Relations," American Indian Culture and Research Journal, 17,2 (1993), 76.

58. Ibid, 84.

59. Vine Deloria, Indians of the Pacific Northwest, 140.

the tribe. Dr. Wallace Heath, an instructor at Western Washington University, for example, was central in helping the Lummis establish the aquaculture project. Heath got along well with Lummis and felt that he had something to learn from them. It was his connections with the foremost people in marine biology that gave the aquaculture project such credibility in the scientific community.⁶⁰

But, Wallace Heath was exceptional in his understanding and sensitivity to Indian people since Western Washington University was not a place that supported Lummi perspectives. Indeed, not only were a number of university faculty commercial fishermen, there was a prevailing condescending attitude toward Lummis by the academic community in general. WWU scientists removed the bones of Lummi ancestors during construction of a sewer system for the city of Blaine in 1975. The anthropology department would not agree to return the remains to the Lummi tribe for reburial until 1980. Kenneth Cooper, a Lummi tribal member, lamented, "We can never ever say how bad it hurt to say they were dug up."⁶¹

To counter prevailing prejudices, Indian leaders at Lummi and throughout the state of Washington asked that more information about the contemporary life and culture of

60. Vine Deloria, Jr., Lummi Indian Community, 130.

61. Linda Hosek, "Compassion for the dead gives strength to the living," Bellingham Herald, September 14, 1980, 1B.

Native peoples be included in the curriculum. Frank B. Brouillet, Washington state Superintendent of Public Instruction, made the following remarks in 1978:

The Superintendent of Public Instruction has no direct responsibility to deal with the principals in the current salmon fishing controversy. However, it is likely that there would now be less misunderstanding about this issue had the public schools previously included more detailed studies of the history of the Indian treaties in their curricular offerings in the domain of Pacific Northwest History.⁶²

The Washington State Superintendent's office was aware of the tensions for Indian students in public school classrooms as a result of the anti-Indian backlash. In 1978, the Superintendent's office produced a booklet of lessons called Understanding Indian Treaties As Law. The introduction to the booklet shows that its authors understood just how uptight the classroom climate was at the time: "Educational programs focusing on Native American treaties are controversial. At the same time controversial materials satisfy a fundamental requirement of relevance. Most citizens of the United States today have opinions about the current status of those treaties. Some of those opinions are informed, but a great many are emotional with little foundation in fact."⁶³

The booklet was assembled by Indian educators from eleven western Washington school districts, working in

62. "Are You Listening Neighbor?"..., 70.

63. Russel Lawrence Barsh, Understanding Indian Treaties as Law (Olympia: State Superintendent of Public Instruction Office, 1978), v.

conjunction with the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission. No one that I spoke with recalled this curriculum guide ever being used at Ferndale High School. One non-Indian educator remembered the reaction to the booklet in towns like Ferndale:

Needless to say, once the story of this project got into the daily newspapers there was a hue and cry from several sports writers that 'propaganda' was going to be forced on teachers. Obviously, when Indian people write some teaching units it is labeled 'propaganda.' When non-Indians write curriculum (or texts) for two hundred years, it is 'education!'⁶⁴

The conditions for Lummi students at Ferndale High School were created from the wash of emotions and the history of Indian-white conflicts that were embedded in the small town community of Ferndale. For Lummis, the anti-Indian backlash that they experienced at the high school and in the community was more than just an unleashing of hostility about Indian fishing rights, it was an attack on their way of life. As Sam Cagey, Lummi tribal chairman, pointed out, the Boldt decision was not the cause of the trouble between Indians and whites, it was only a "catalyst" for age-old conflicts between two very different communities.⁶⁵

64. "Are You Listening Neighbor?"..., 114.

65. Editorial, Bellingham Herald, March 13, 1977, 12.

CHAPTER IV

A BRIEF HISTORY OF LUMMI EDUCATION

Because no institutional structure for education existed among the Northwest Coast peoples, discussions of Native educational history focus almost entirely on Indian-white relations around the policies of schooling. It should be recognized, of course, that Indian people, such as the Lummis, engaged in educational practices before whites imposed schooling on them.

Traditional tribal education placed a great deal of emphasis on the different stages of life and the sorts of teaching required for passage into the next phase of one's life journey. There were no great expectations for children up to the age of puberty. Parents and elders were generally very patient and small children played, wandered through the village, or watched adults as they chose. Adults would let them try activities such as carving, basketmaking, or fishing, but usually children were not given a disciplined training in such activities. Jo-Ann Archibald has written about the principles and practices of traditional First Nations education:

First Nations people straditionally adopted a holistic approach to education. Principles of spiritual, physical, and emotional growth, as well as economic and physical survival skills, were developed in each individual to ensure eventual family and village survival. Certain learning specialities in these areas were emphasized, including independence, self-reliance, observation, discovery, empirical practicality, and respect for nature.....The success of this system

depended on the strength and wisdom of parents and elders.¹

The teachings of elders emphasized the development of tribal identity and serving the collective well-being while the residential schools attempted to eliminate tribalism and the cultural values that nourished it; the goal of the schools was to assimilate Indians as individuals and break up the collective identity.

The early legacy of formal Lummi education was dominated by a mixture of government and church sponsored schools dedicated to civilizing the Indians. It was an assimilationist project designed to produce "so many lanterns of civilization and Christianity."² The belief of the Federal government was "that the shortest road to civilization is to take children away from their parents and, insofar as possible, to stamp out the old Indian life."³ From 1870 to 1935 the boarding schools in the Pacific Northwest were oriented toward the eradication of Indian-ness in the students who attended.

1. Jo-Ann Archibald, "Locally Developed Native Studies Curriculum: An Historical and Philosophical Rationale," In M. Battiste and J. Barman, eds., First Nations Education in Canada: The Circle Unfolds (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1995), 289-290.

2. Robert H. Ruby and John A. Brown, Indians of the Pacific Northwest (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1981), 237.

3. Lewis Meriam, The Problem of Indian Administration (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press. 1928, reprinted by Frank C. Miller, N.Y., Johnson Reprint Corp., 1971, 15.

There is a sharp contrast between what going to residential school meant for Lummis before the 1930s and what it meant for them in the 1970s. Chemawa Boarding School at Salem, Oregon, in the 1970s, became a place where Indian high school students could find safe haven from the prejudice of the public schools. As the public schools were engaging in a visible and invisible assault on Native students' identities, Chemawa was a place where Lummis could celebrate their cultural distinctiveness. It was ironic that this occurred in an institution that had, at one time, attempted to extinguish those Indian aspects of their parents' and grandparents' characters. Indian parents, in the 1960s and 1970s were reclaiming Chemawa and using it for their own purposes.

In this chapter I first discuss the early education for Lummis at Tulalip Residential School. Next, I sketch out the significance of the closing of the Lummi Day School which pushed Indian pupils into hostile Ferndale classrooms. Then I examine the role of Chemawa and why Lummis left Ferndale to go to school there. Finally, I point out some of the ways Lummis responded to the conditions of schooling in the Ferndale district in the 1970s.

Puget Sound Indians, from the 1890s to the 1930s, attended Cushman boarding school in Puyallup; St. Georges in Tacoma; Chemawa in Salem, Oregon; and Tulalip, near Everett, Washington. For Lummis, up to the 1930s, the most notable of these schools was Tulalip boarding school which was operated

by the Sisters of Providence. Here, the teachers attempted to rid Indian children of the "burden" of their language, religion, and nearly every visible aspect of their culture. It was a streamlined program for assimilation into the lowest rung of the societal ladder. It was implicitly expected that Indians at these schools would become laborers and domestic servants, never doctors, lawyers, or any other kind of professional; academic instruction was minimal and students spent the major portion of the day working at jobs which maintained the school. Advanced education and training was non-existent at these institutions. As Carolyn J. Marr, librarian at the Seattle Museum of History and Industry and coordinator of the Tulalip Indian Boarding School Exhibition of 1993 stated, "a few critics feared that job training at rudimentary levels would condemn the Indians to permanent inequality. But few government officials thought that Indians were capable of more."⁴

In 1889, Lummi tribal leaders and parents petitioned federal authorities to build a day school on the reservation.⁵ As noted in the Chronicles from the Sisters of Providence, the Lummi Day School caused concern among the

4. Carolyn J. Marr, "Assimilation Through Education," (Program from Tulalip School Exhibition) (Seattle: Museum of History and Industry, 1993), 4.

5. Ann Nugent, Schooling of the Lummi Indians Between 1855-1956 (Ferndale, WA.: Lummi Historical Publications, 1981), 7.

Tulalip nuns about their own continued government funding since the Lummis were a significant faction at Tulalip:

The government opened a school on the Lummi Reservation not far from Tulalip. We feared we would lose a good number of Indians we had from the Lummi tribe. The government also kept us in suspense for several months not renewing our contract and putting forth several objections....The government school on the Lummi Reservation hurt our enrollment.⁶

Government officials and church leaders alike were opposed to Lummis having their own school. They wanted all Indians in the region to be schooled at Tulalip. Along with the need to fill the enrollment at Tulalip in order to get federal contract money, there was a belief that Indian children should be removed from the home and community to erase their tribal identity and replace it with a new one; this could best be done at a boarding school away from family influences.

As Lummi Elders recalled,⁷ one of the most emphasized goals of the Tulalip School was the eradication of the tribal language; English only rules were strictly enforced and punishments for "talking Indian" were severe. As successive generations of pupils were away from their reservations during important formative years for their cognitive and cultural development and, as they were detached from family members and elders who were then unable

6. Sister Bernadine of Sienna, Superior, "Chronicles of Steilcomm," 1890-1891, Sisters of Providence Archives, Seattle, Washington.

7. Ann Nugent and Eva Kinley, Lummi Elders Speak (Ferndale, Washington: Lummi Historical Publications, 1982).

to teach them the language, use of the Native languages declined. Without the language as a means to convey the information from one generation to the next, channels to the deeper structure of the culture deteriorated. Isadore Tom, a Lummi elder and healer, talked of how the loss of the language meant that people had lost access to the insights of the elders: "We were forbidden to talk our language and when we got caught we were punished. That is why, I believe our people drifted away and I look at you children and you are a long ways from what our people taught us."⁸

Lummi adolescents in the 1970s had all heard elders tell of the days when they were sent far from home and stripped of all that was familiar to them. They had heard the stories of how children were punished by the nuns and priests for speaking their own Straights Salish language and honouring traditional ways. Talk about schooling was, and continues to be, an important part of Lummi oral tradition.

In the 1970s a number of oral history projects, funded by grants from the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, documented the schooling experiences of Lummi elders. Schooling of the Lummi Indians Between 1855-1956 and Lummi Elders Speak, both edited by Ann Nugent, should be

8. Isadore Tom, Transcript of a speech given at Fairhaven College Auditorium for the Lummi Management Training Workshop September, 5, 1972, W.W.U. Continuing Education Records Grant Files 1971-1973, Vol II, Lummi Management Project, Western Regional Archives, Bellingham, WA, 1.

considered part of the Lummi oral (and written) tradition.⁹ Although I personally spoke with Lummi elders as well, much of the information about Tulalip used here was assembled from the Nugent sources.

Lummi pupils were beaten and abused at Tulalip; parents complained that "their children were being beaten with broom sticks."¹⁰ Charles Milton Buchanan, the superintendent in the 1920s, admitted "that he clubbed children who resisted medical examinations but rationalized that it was necessary to get the job done."¹¹ Buchanan "denied that children became sick or died from beatings, but he admitted he did whip them for bedwetting but only after repeated warnings had failed."¹² Superintendent Buchanan also "admitted to using balls and chains for children who ran away. The inspector (E.M. Sweet) reported that they had three balls and chains: one weighing 47 pounds and two weighing 31 pounds each which the children wore for 30 days as an alternative to jail."¹³

9. Ann Nugent, Schooling of the Lummi Indians; Ann Nugent and Eva Kinley, Lummi Elders Speak.

10. Ibid, 17.

11. Ibid. Ann Nugent examined documents photocopied by the Bureau of Indian Affairs at Tulalip and sent to the Lummi archives in the 1970s. This information on Buchanan's disciplinary measures was drawn from official correspondence from BIA inspector E.M. Sweet Jr., in 1918. See "Bibliographic Note" for more information about the Lummi archives.

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid.

Buchanan was a complex personality. At the Tulalip school he was seen as a domineering autocrat caught up in a zeal for "civilizing" Natives. But, as a Bureau of Indian Affairs administrator he "was unusual in being a champion of Indian rights, especially treaty fishing rights."¹⁴ Although he was often harsh and even cruel with Indians in general, he could be highly supportive of favorite individual Indian students at Tulalip. He especially encouraged singing and other musical endeavors. He is remembered with ambivalence by some Lummi elders. Ronomus "Toddy" Lear recalled an incident at Tulalip when he escaped Buchanan's retaliation:

Then I went to Tulalip Indian School for a short time in 1918. World War I was going on. The school here at Lummi closed down. I don't know why. Just temporary. All the kids here had to go down to Tulalip to finish out the term. Dr. Buchanan was the Superintendent of Tulalip. He was a pretty rough character. The first days I was there some of the kids broke into the commissary and stole some bitter chocolate. Why, he was mad. He went into the dining hall right at dinnertime and he said, "All the skunks stand up." I just got there. So I stood up. There was one girl there who was older. She told me to sit down. She happened to be a relative of mine. I was sure thankful she told me to sit down. He sure punished them. He turned them black and blue. Strapped them, and whipped them. He was rough. They couldn't even eat the chocolate they stole. It was too bitter. But Buchanan always treated me good.¹⁵

Even if some Indian pupils could escape the punishments at Tulalip, they often could not escape the epidemics of influenza and tuberculosis. Carolyn J. Marr has written that

14. Boxberger, Daniel L., To Fish In Common: The Ethnohistory of Lummi Indian Salmon Fishing (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), 90.

15. Ann Nugent and Eva Kinley, Lummi Elders Speak, 98.

"many parents feared having their children taken to boarding schools because they knew that diseases such as tuberculosis and influenza had taken the lives of many students."¹⁶ Lummi students contracted tuberculosis which plagued the school in the 1920s. "In 1922, of the 240 children at Tulalip, 17 went to a tubercular sanatorium and 16 went home because of tuberculosis."¹⁷ One Lummi elder recalled that her "brother was put in jail in the basement of the workshop which had a dirt floor and was damp."¹⁸

The Miriam Report in 1928 exposed the conditions of schools like Tulalip.¹⁹ Consequently, the federal government began to abandon the attempts to use boarding schools to extinguish tribalism and assimilate Natives. Tulalip was closed in 1932 as a result of reaction to the Miriam Report findings. In the 1930s and 1940s the push from Congress and the Bureau of Indian Affairs was to get Indians into public schools.²⁰ By the 1950s federal policy was aimed at abolishing Indian tribal relations with the government. In

16. Carolyn J. Marr, "Assimilation Through Education," 4.

17. Ann Nugent, Schooling of the Lummi Indians, 27.

18. Ibid, 18.

19. See Lewis Meriam, The Problem of Indian Administration.

20. Margaret Connell Szasz, Education and the American Indian (Albuquerque, NM.: University of New Mexico Press, 1974), 89.

congruence with this policy, more aggressive efforts were made to get Indians into off reservation schools.

The Lummi Day School

At the turn of the century, as Native leaders began to acknowledge the benefits of formal schooling, they requested a school on the Lummi reservation. Often Lummi parents would not see their children for three years or more while they were away at Tulalip or Chemawa. Buchanan was unsympathetic to Lummi parents and resisted the Lummis' push to get a day school; he wanted them to come to Tulalip.

For fifteen years the Lummis requested that a school be built on their reservation.²¹ The original day school, built in 1891, was flooded by the Nooksack River in 1896. Finally, the Lummis were able to appeal directly to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs in Washington, D.C. who "disagreed with Buchanan's statement that the Lummis didn't deserve a day school." He urged Buchanan to "look into the matter with a more open mind."²² In 1910, the Lummi Day School, a one-room structure with a capacity of 40 students, was built on the reservation by the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

A much larger school building was constructed in 1931 on the same site. By this time there were three teachers and 75 students in all grades attending.²³ A few Lummis went to

21. Ann Nugent, Schooling of the Lummi Indians, 23.

22. Ibid, 24.

23. Ibid, 41.

the Ferndale schools after 1935 but most preferred to go to the Day School or even to far away Chemawa.

The Lummi Day School was a lively community center as well as a school. There were concerts and banquets, women in the community used the school's sewing machines, and haircuts were given to children who could not afford a barber. Once a week movies were shown to parents and children. The movies cost 10 cents and the parents sold popcorn. "The students took pride in their school and its grounds. They planted a flower garden around the building and kept it up."²⁴

The environment of the day school was supportive and nurturing. Even if the teachers were strict with discipline, they evidenced concern, affection, and even respect for the family and culture that the Lummi pupil came from. Bill James, who now teaches Lummi language for Northwest Indian College, reflected on how comfortable it felt to be among other Lummis at the day school: "The classes were very good in this sort of environment because we all come from the same background; we're very comfortable with each other. It was much easier to learn this way. We were family. We all come from the reservation. It made it easier to learn in our own environment."²⁵

24. Ibid, 51.

25. Bill James, interviewed in "Lummi Day School Memories" produced by the video class of Northwest Indian College, 1991.

In 1941 the Whatcom county school districts were reorganized and the Lummi Day school was incorporated into the Ferndale School District. Lummi parents were against becoming part of the Ferndale district, but they had no choice. Ferndale school officials promised that there would always be a Lummi on the school board as a consolation to anxious parents, but Earl Thomas, who served from 1951-1963, was the last Lummi to be a member of the Ferndale school board.²⁶

Then, in 1956, Frank Alexander, Superintendent of the Ferndale School District, closed the Lummi Day School; he cited the 1954 Supreme Court's *Brown v. Board of Education* decision arguing that he would not allow a segregated school in his district.

Throughout the United States, school district administrators were eager to get the federal money allocated for each Indian student admitted as part of the Johnson O'Malley program,²⁷ but white parents in rural districts like Ferndale did not want Indians integrated into their schools. Ernest Schusky commented on the general community

26. Ibid, 47. In 1975 Jack Cagey, a Lummi, tried to get elected to a board position. He ran against Nelda Sigurdson who represented a conservative element of the Ferndale community. Cagey lost the election.

27. The Johnson O'Malley Act of 1934, amended in 1936, provided reimbursement to states for the education of Indian pupils. Local districts then received the money from the state.

dynamics and motivations of administrators when Indians have been integrated into public schools:

Neighboring schools frequently are reluctant to accept Indians because of still existing prejudice. Only when the federal government's contribution -in the form of tuition for Indian pupils- more than covers the cost of education, do local schools seem quite willing to accept Indian children. In too many cases, Indian parents rightfully fear that their children will be the victims of prejudice.²⁸

Lummis asked that white children be allowed to attend the Day School as a way of integrating the school and solving the problem, but, according to former principal Harris Gonsolves, the white community objected stating that they did not want their children to be in the minority.²⁹ Losing the school was a severe blow to the community, but for Lummi students who had to go to Ferndale, it was a shock that had far reaching effects on their general feelings of security and identity.

Ironically, integration, a policy used in the southern states to combat discrimination and prejudice, had the opposite effect on Indians in the Pacific Northwest. Different minority groups have very different histories and needs. Butterfield and Pepper have elaborated on this theme:

No two minority groups share the same experience. Neither have all minorities been discriminated against in the same manner. A remedy to redress the injustices suffered by one minority group can be, unintentionally, a further form of discrimination when applied to "help" a different minority group. Such is the case with the

28. Ernest Schusky, The Right To Be Indian (San Francisco: The Indian Historian Press, 1970), 33.

29. Ibid, 52

public schools desegregation policy when applied to American Indians. In implementing such policies, each distinct group must be examined in light of its own unique set of circumstances, and not simplistically lumped together as "minorities."³⁰

When the day school closed, some parents sent their children to boarding schools or to Assumption Catholic School in Bellingham rather than allow them to attend Ferndale. As one Lummi woman recalled, "I went to Assumption for the first two years after the day school closed; it was supposed to be a higher level of education, but the nuns were extremely strict."

Josie Jones was in the fifth grade at Lummi Day School when it closed. She recalled going to Ferndale then: "It was a big change from Lummi; it was scary. There were a lot of snotty remarks. We were looked down upon. I felt uncomfortable, so I didn't perform as well. The Ferndale teachers were also prejudiced against us. We fell behind as a result and we never could catch up. I finally dropped out in the eleventh grade."³¹

The closing of the day school, sending Lummis to Ferndale, came at a particularly bad time since the school district was experiencing an enrollment explosion as a result of the opening of the Mobil refinery in 1952. Staff and facilities were stretched tight and Lummis arrived to a

30. Robin Butterfield and Floy Pepper, "Improving Parental Participation in Elementary and Secondary Education for American Indian and Alaska Native Students," Washington D.C.: Commissioned Papers, Indian Nations At Risk Task Force, 1991, 16.

31. Ann Nugent, Schooling of the Lummi Indians, 53.

school environment that was experiencing the stresses of an almost boom-town growth. Moreover, the competition over the salmon fishery was creating tensions between Indians and whites which were felt at the high school as an anti-Indian prejudice.

The conditions of prejudice had escalated, partly, because so many whites, especially teachers, were competing with Lummis for a dwindling salmon resource. The uncontrolled admission of non-Native fishermen in Puget Sound reached its peak in 1955,³² the year before the Day School was closed. This produced a situation where some fishermen, especially those without the latest technology, were getting proportionately less fish. Consequently, the Lummi students arrived at Ferndale at a time when discontent about the decline of the fishing was accompanied by a growing resentment toward Indians.³³ Troubles between Indians and whites, fueled by fishing competition in the 1950s, were a harbinger for the much more explosive climate of the 1960s and 1970s. Lummis, who encountered whites on the water and in the community, knew their children would receive a hostile reception when they arrived at the Ferndale schools.

32. Don Newman Taylor, "Changes in th Economy of the Lummi Indians of Northwest Washington"(M.A. Thesis, Western Washington University, 1969), 42.

33. Ibid.

Chemawa

In the 1960s, as the environment of the public schools grew more hostile due to tensions between Indians and whites over fishing rights battles, Chemawa boarding school in Salem, Oregon became a safe haven for Lummis; it was a place where they could celebrate their heritage without fear of the kind of prejudice they endured at Ferndale High School.

Lummis have a history of mixed emotions about Chemawa. Of course it was a long way from home and family; parents usually did not want their teenage children to be such a distance away. But, Lummi students often wanted to go to Chemawa to escape Ferndale. Chemawa was seen as a way for Native students to reaffirm their Indian-ness. Consequently, going to Chemawa was seen as a positive move--especially since Ferndale was a site inclined to crush legitimate Native identity. Separation from family and community was very hard on Lummi students, perhaps even harder on their families. One woman who was having an extremely traumatic time attending Ferndale said that she had "wanted to go to Chemawa," but her mother "didn't want us away for so long, she couldn't stand to part with us." So many Lummis spoke about Chemawa that I made it a point to visit the school to learn as much as I could about what it might have been like for Lummi students who attended in the 1970s.

Chemawa Boarding School is located several miles north of Salem on an open landscape surrounded by Willamette valley farms. It was raining the morning I arrived which

made the green fields and clusters of trees seem unnaturally dark and gloomy as I drove the half mile or so from the main highway to the red brick institutional complex. It felt a long way from the familiar Nooksack river and Bellingham Bay. I went inside and the secretary called for an administrator to come and talk to me. I told him that I was looking for any records having to do with Lummi students during the 1970s. He said he recalled that time very well:

Lummi came to Chemawa then because of the Boldt decision. Students used to talk about the prejudice they faced at Ferndale High School. It was a different time than now. The Lummi who came during that period quickly became the leaders of the school. They weren't kids from broken families or caught up with alcohol abuse. Almost all of the Lummi students graduated. I would say that they were extraordinary students who had a different profile from the other students then and now. As a group they were outstanding athletes and they became leaders in all facets of school life. When they came we had to teach them all of the things about participating in leadership roles in the school. Back home they had never done anything like been in student council; they had never been anything like student body president. They learned quickly; on the whole I would say that Lummi were dominant -especially in sports, but in other activities as well- from about 1976 to 1983 or so. It was common knowledge then that they had been pushed out of the public school by the Boldt decision stuff.

It was a long drive from Salem back to Bellingham. I did not arrive until late at night. Along the way I remembered the story one Lummi man told of how he and his little brother ran away from Chemawa because they were so homesick. They hitchhiked during the winter in the wind and rain and slept under railroad bridges. They rejoiced to get back to Lummi, but only stayed for a little while. Being far

from home at Chemawa was still better than going to school at Ferndale.

The decision to attend Chemawa was a difficult one for Lummi students. They grew up hearing the stories from parents and grandparents about the military format of the school--and the harsh discipline. The stories about Chemawa were mostly accounts of loneliness and homesickness. One woman, an elder who attended in the 1930s, told me that "at first I thought my family didn't want me and that's why they sent me away. At Chemawa we had to march in weird clothes. The patterns of the clothes were the same as on the mattresses." Vernon Lane, who was president of the student body at Chemawa in 1949, reported that "when I first went to Chemawa at the age of 14, I was never so sad in all my life."³⁴

Chemawa was established by congressional appropriation in 1880.³⁵ Like other boarding schools of the time, it was oriented toward assimilating and "civilizing" Native people. In the early decades of the century many tribal leaders were opposed to boarding schools. They were seen as places where Native children were stripped of their Indian-ness and subjected to numerous abuses; students became "human sacrifices on the altar of American acculturation."³⁶ After

34. Ann Nugent, Schooling of the Lummi Indians, 49.

35. Szasz, Education and the American Indian, 10.

36. Ibid.

the 1940s though, concerns about boarding schools began to shift. Rather than being compelled to send children to Chemawa, Northwest tribes were being told that students should attend the public schools instead. Chemawa was reserved for students from remote rural regions, primarily Navajos and Alaskan Natives. In the 1970s Native people from the Pacific Northwest struggled for the right to continue sending their students to Chemawa. In the 1970s the tribes of the Pacific Northwest, alarmed by the anti-Indian backlash in the public schools as a result of the fishing wars, demanded that more of their students be permitted to attend Chemawa. Margaret Connell Szasz points out that "these demands showed that Indians were not necessarily opposed to boarding schools; In many cases they preferred to send their children to a school attended only by Indians."³⁷

Patrick McKeehan showed that even in 1933, when the school was threatened with closure as a result of the Miriam Report (Tulalip was closed as a result of the Miriam Report), Native people argued for Chemawa's continuation since the public schools were seen as adverse places for Indian students. A bulk of the arguments for keeping Chemawa open had to do with fears about having Indians under unfriendly state jurisdiction in the public schools.³⁸

37. Ibid, 166.

38. Patrick M. McKeehan, "The History of Chemawa Indian School" (Ph.D. diss., University of Washington, 1981), 163.

After the Indian Reorganization Act (IRA) of 1934, the school was relegated to serving strictly vocational goals. Making Chemawa a vocational school was to appease the states so there would be no competition for the strictly academic schooling provided by the public schools.³⁹

In the 1960s, as Native people assumed a more assertive stance on fishing rights and land management issues, they also began to demand schools where Indian culture and values would be the centerpiece of their children's education. In this regard, Ray Barnhardt and John Connelly reported on how attitudes about boarding schools had changed dramatically in the Pacific Northwest:

Despite the long history of criticism leveled against boarding schools, there is prevalent in the Northwest the feeling that Indians should "... recapture Chemawa for the Northwest," to have it provide all that has been viewed as valuable, eliminate all that has been disturbing, and add much of what should or could have been there.⁴⁰

At Chemawa, in the 1970s, there was acknowledgement, and even a celebration of traditional and contemporary Native ways. The public schools, by contrast, had become the places where Indian culture was under harassment. And, more importantly, the forces of assimilation were much more amorphous and difficult to identify in the public schools

39. Ibid, 164.

40. Ray Barnhardt and John Connelly, "Chemawa Indian School." NSAIE, Series 1, No. 15, Part C, p. 2. quoted in Estelle Fuchs and Robert Havighurst, To Live on This Earth: American Indian Education (Anchor City, NY.: Doubleday Press, 1973), 244.

than they had been in the boarding schools of a few decades before.

The "War on Poverty" and Education Programs

The Lummi reservation in the 1970s was bustling with activity as a result of the "War on Poverty" programs coming out of the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) and other agencies of the federal government. All of these economic development programs had educational components linked to them. Guy Senese has explained that education and economic development have always been part of a package deal for Indian reservations.⁴¹ The federal government would not initiate educational programs without an accompanying economic development segment which was usually oriented toward vocational training. In reverse fashion, all tribal economic development programs that were supported by federal monies were required to have a training and education program designed to produce "suitable" administrators and technicians. So it was at Lummi in the 1970s. The aquaculture project, to which millions of federal dollars were committed, established the School of Aquaculture which eventually became Northwest Indian College. The Lummi newspaper, the Squol Quol, was launched from a journalism class provided by a Community Action Program grant. During this time the education committee of the tribe submitted

41. Guy B. Senese, Self-Determination and the Social Education of Native Americans (New York: Praeger, 1991).

proposals to the Office of Indian Education for programs under the Indian Education Act, Title IV parts B and C.

Many Lummis graduated from the Upward Bound Program at Western Washington University and continued on to post-secondary education as a result. After-school tutoring programs were established on the reservation and the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) provided money to train teachers and counsellors. Bruce Miller has pointed out how these CETA education programs produced some of the present tribal leaders and how the income from these training programs helped to revitalize traditional Coast Salish culture.⁴²

These federal education/economic development projects built up the confidence of the tribe and helped Lummis gain technical skills and political sophistication. The Lummis became more assertive with regard to issues of tribal sovereignty and affirmed values associated with an Indian identity. They challenged the Ferndale school district in 1976 for the right to receive the \$32,000 dollar Johnson-O'Malley contract funds directly from the BIA instead of having the money channelled to the state and then to the Ferndale district.

The tribe, in 1976, proposed a contract where Lummis would be in control of personnel and curriculum for the

42. Bruce Miller, "An Ethnographic View: Positive Consequences of the War on Poverty," American Indian and Alaskan Native Mental Health Research Journal, 4, 2 (Winter 1990).

Indian education program at Ferndale. Superintendent Dennis Peterson refused the offer and there was no Johnson-O'Malley program during the 1976-77 school year. Peterson, at a civil rights hearing in Seattle, reported that "the basic problem arises over, I guess you would say, perhaps jurisdiction over curriculum and the hiring of personnel."⁴³ Peterson went on to say that the main objection to having the Lummi supervise Indian education at the high school was that the curriculum might not be appropriate.

A report submitted to the Ferndale School District on November 18, 1976, shows more about what the tribe wanted, and what the district wanted:

The Johnson-O'Malley Parent Committee is now asking the Lummi Tribe to contract for the Johnson-O'Malley program. The Tribe would then loan their employees to the district, however, even though the district would be consulted on the hiring of employees and the design of the program, the district would not have the final authority to approve or disapprove. Under the new agreement, the Johnson-O'Malley program would cease to be a district program and would be a Tribal program.⁴⁴

Peterson told the civil rights committee that steps were being taken to mediate the tensions between teachers and Lummi students. One step mentioned was a course on Native learners which was being offered at Western Washington University. Civil Rights Commission Chairman

43. American Indian Issues In The State Of Washington, Hearing Held in Seattle, Washington before the United States Commission on Civil Rights, October 19-20, 1977, Volume I: Testimony, 110.

44. Minutes of the Regular November 18, 1976 School Board Meeting, Ferndale School District, 2.

Arthur S. Flemming then spoke directly and frankly to Superintendent Peterson: "I was going to ask you, as superintendent, do you feel that if that strategy is developed, implemented in an effective way that it could contribute to maybe a lessening of some of the tensions that exist in the community between Indians and non-Indians? I'm not just thinking of children and young people now, but I'm thinking of their parents." Peterson replied, "Yes, I think it can help. But as you imply, it's a very -it's a problem that has very broad ramifications."⁴⁵

The ramifications Peterson referred to were that, in the midst of the fishing wars, and in the wake of the Boldt decision, the climate of the school and the Ferndale community was steeped in anti-Indian sentiments. There was no politically safe or easy way for a superintendent to mediate between two groups that were as thoroughly opposed to each other as Indians and whites were during that time. Peterson would continue to serve the interests of the most powerful and influential groups in the Ferndale community while offering perfunctory support for Lummi students.

45. American Indian Issues In The State Of Washington, October 19-20, 1977, 111.

CHAPTER V

EDUCATION AND THE FISHING WARS

Then he prayed to the salmon: "Welcome, swimmer I thank you because I am still alive and you have come back to our good place. Now, go home and tell your friends how you have arrived here and bring them all back, so that I may get some of your wealth, oh friend, oh Supernatural-One!"¹

At Ferndale High school throughout the 1970s and beyond, the central theme that defined Indian-white relations in and out of the classroom was the fishing rights controversy. At one of the 1990 Indian Nation At Risk Task Force Hearings, an Indian parent reported that

our kids going into ninth grade at the high school are facing institutionalized racism and cultural insensitivity. This is especially true in areas where there is competition between the non-Indian and the Indian communities for a treaty resource, such as in the Pacific Northwest where the tribes are fishing tribes. Some of the teachers are commercial fishermen themselves, and thus there is a lot of antagonism because they are competing during the summer months for money.²

The climate of the fishing wars was embedded into every aspect of life for Lummi students. At the civil rights hearing held in Seattle on October 19-20, 1977, one of the central questions asked was, "since Judge Boldt's ruling in 1974, has there been any change in the school district in

1. Peter R. Gerber, Indians of the Northwest Coast (New York: Facts On File Publications, 1987), 137.

2. Robin Butterfield and Floy Pepper, "Improving Parental Participation in Elementary and Secondary Education for American Indian and Alaska Native Students," in Indians Nations At Risk Task Force Commissioned Papers (Washington, D.C.: Department of Education, 1991), 7.

terms of Lummi students?"³ Ferndale High School, during this time-period, provides us with a look at one of the most unusual situations in the history of education: teachers were competing with their students for a scarce economic resource, the salmon.

Schooling has been one of the methods of confining the cultural--and especially the political and economic--prerogatives of Native peoples. In the East and the Great Plains region Native children were put in boarding schools to get them off the land and away from the cultural influences that would continue to knit them to the land. In these regions, land was the main resource which was fought over.

In the Pacific Northwest, from the turn of the century up to the 1930s, the reservation lands had been cut down to tiny parcels where tribes maintained a sense of traditional community while being surrounded by a surging and aggressively growing white society with powerful appetites for all the resources of the region. From 1853 to 1855 territorial governor Issac Stevens had made treaties with the Puget Sound tribes to remove them from their land and clear the way for white settlement. The treaties of Medicine

3. Hearing before the United States Commission on Civil Rights, American Indian Issues In the State of Washington, Volume I: Testimony, by Arthur S. Flemming, Chairman (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977), 120.

Creek and Point Elliot left Indians with essentially one resource which they reserved for themselves: the fish.

The Salmon People

The salmon are so central to the lives of Coast Salish people that they are often referred to as the "salmon people." Their intimacy with the salmon was embedded into the Lummi life-pattern. Lummi elder Dora Williams Solomon reported that, "When the first netload of salmon was caught in a season, each child would carry one fish, with it laying across his arms. Each child would bite the fin on the back as he carried it to the beach. This was the first salmon ceremony to show respect for the salmon."⁴ Traditional lifeways and tribal economics were organized around the salmon.

During the long winter months the Coast Salish peoples of Puget Sound subsisted on the stores of dried salmon, berries, roots, and game. Their lives were centered on the salmon. In the Spring, the first salmon ceremony honoured the salmon and reaffirmed its spiritual, cultural, and economic importance for the village. Andy Fernando, former chairman of the Upper Skagit Tribal Community, wrote that

when the salmon was cooked, everyone would gather to eat. It mattered not whether there were ten villagers or a hundred: each would share equally in the fruit of the first catch. The meal finished, leaders would recount the village stories of great fishermen and hunters of fact, legend, and myth -or all three combined. The headmen and women would speak of the

4. Ann Nugent, ed., Lummi Elders Speak (Lynden, Washington: Lynden Tribune, 1982), 19.

importance of the first salmon ceremony, of sharing the first catch, harvest, or kill, of the high status bestowed to those villagers who were given the gift and the power to provide food for the village.⁵

Salmon was at the heart of the rituals, thoughts and beliefs of Pacific Northwest Indian people. Coyote, an important culture hero, gave the people along the Columbia river instructions for honouring the salmon: "Every spring the salmon will come up the river to lay their eggs. Every spring you must have a big feast like this to celebrate the coming of the salmon. Then you will thank the salmon spirits for guiding the fish up the streams to you, and your Salmon Chief will pray to those spirits to fill your fish traps."⁶ Fay Cohen points out that "tribal legends speak of the salmon world and the tribal world as closely connected and similar in structure."⁷ Fishing, for Washington's coastal tribes, is an identity issue, a religious issue, and an issue of physical survival.

From the 1850s to the 1950s a number of conflicts developed between Indians and whites over the salmon. The Lummi could not compete against non-Natives in the fishery. Early on it was fish traps and then eventually other technological changes that shifted the balance toward the

5. Andy Fernando, Introduction to Fay G. Cohen, Treaties on Trial: The Continuing Controversy over Northwest Indian Fishing Rights (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1986), xx.

6. Ella Clark, Indian Legends of the Pacific Northwest (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1953), 97.

7. Fay G. Cohen, Treaties on Trial, 23.

white commercial fishermen who could afford the larger vessels equipped with the machinery and the increased power needed for drum seining or power blocks.⁸ Consequently, "The total Indian catch of Puget Sound was less than 3 percent of the total 1935 to 1950 salmon harvest."⁹ As Indians were driven out of commercial fishing they became wage laborers in the canneries. Eventually even those jobs became difficult to obtain. From 1930 to 1950 there was deep poverty on the Lummi reservation.

But, in the 1960s the winds from Washington, D.C. were shifting as a result of the civil rights movement. Puget Sound Indians began to use the media to gain support for their cause of defending their fishing rights. The public was shown images of police squads brought in to arrest Native people for conducting "fish-ins."¹⁰

Federal programs focusing on fisheries management began to change the atmosphere on reservations. Where there was once resignation and despair there grew a mood of optimism and excitement. Anthropologist Bruce Miller spoke to a Coast Salish woman who told him that people were "hearing there

8. Boxberger, Daniel L., To Fish In Common: The Ethnohistory of Lummi Indian Salmon Fishing (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), 141.

9. Ibid, 119

10. Alvin M. Josephy, "The Great Northwest Fishing War," chap. in Now That the Buffalo's Gone: A Study of Today's American Indians, (Norman: University of Oklahoma, Press, 1989), 193-203.

was action here, that something was changing. They wanted to get involved."¹¹

As Indians began winning fishing rights battles in the courts, Native economies grew and there was an accompanying growth of confidence in affirming traditional cultural values. The revival of Native identity was growing strong and, as it was linked to the economics of fishing, it provoked a potent reaction from groups of non-Natives who were in a position to lose some of their political, economic, and cultural advantage.

The struggle over the fisheries in Washington State defined nearly every aspect of Indian/white relations. And, in many ways this fishing battle propelled the culture conflict problems of small towns like Ferndale into violent collisions.

In 1974 Judge George H. Boldt decided that a fair and equitable portion of the annual fish harvest within the meaning of the Northwest treaties must be construed as half of all the fish taken each year. This amounted to "ten times what the state of Washington claimed Indians had been 'stealing' from non-Indians."¹² The news of this court

11. Bruce Miller, "An Ethnographic View: Positive Consequences of the War on Poverty," American Indian and Alaska Native Mental Health Research: the Journal of the National Center, 4, 2 (Winter, 1990) 66.

12. The Institute for Natural Progress, "In Usual and Accustomed Places: Contemporary American Indian Fishing Rights Struggles," in The State of Native America: Genocide, Colonization, and Resistance, ed. M. Annette Jaimes (Boston, Mass.: South End Press, 1992), 223.

decision outraged non-Native fishermen and created open hostility toward Lummiis.

One of the most overlooked aspects of what came to be called the fishing wars is the effect it had on the culture conflict atmosphere in the schools. This climate of outrage about Indian fishing rights was a part of what everyone lived with at the high school. As one teacher said, "Lummiis were getting overt harassment. This was because of the economics of the Boldt decision." This occurred not just because the Ferndale community was dependent upon the salmon for a substantial portion of its income, but because teachers, administrators, and students were all fishing.

In the 1960s, and especially in the 1970s, higher salmon prices created an incentive for more non-Natives to enter the fishery. Boxberger has pointed out that these fishermen were "often school-teachers and administrators or worked in other occupations with annual vacations that allowed them to fish during the relatively short salmon season."¹³

This meant that teachers and their Lummi students were competing for the same fish during the summer. As the price for salmon was high and teachers could stand to make a large portion of their yearly income from fishing, they reacted strongly against suggestions that Indians had a right to a larger portion of the catch. It is difficult to say just how

13. Boxberger, Daniel L., To Fish In Common, 141.

many people at the high school were directly involved in the fishing. One administrator I spoke with said that "teachers fished off and on." Most informants put the number somewhere between 6 and 10 teachers out of a faculty of 30 or so. But, a Lummi elder pointed out that even if a teacher wasn't actually fishing on a boat, they would probably have family and friends that were making money from the salmon. The Bellingham Herald reported in 1968 that,

"More persons are probably employed in some way with the fisheries and related industries in Whatcom County than in any other segment of the economy. The industries provide hundreds of summer jobs for college students and teachers and are beginning to provide career opportunities in some exciting fields." ¹⁴

As tensions escalated around the fishing rights controversy, the high school became a battlefield. If white teachers and students had a difficult time understanding Lummis before, the fishing wars of Puget Sound defined a political as well as a cultural gulf that most non-Natives could not or would not cross.

At the high school, students who had internalized the values of their parents grouped together around more than simple ethnic identity. They chose sides based on their political orientation to the fishing rights struggles. An administrator reported that "some of the kids would wear tee-shirts with slogans that were hostile to Indians. There were tee-shirts that had comments about Judge Boldt. They

14. "Fishing, Logging Form Industry Base," Bellingham Herald October 7, 1968, 26.

were certainly influenced a great deal by their parents and their parents' friends. If they were from a white fishing family, then the Boldt decision probably gave a focal point to what was felt anyway." Student identities developed into a combination of ethnicity and economics such that racial slurs were mixed with expressions about justice and injustice related to the fishing treaties.

Some of the more progressive minded teachers were aware of the atmosphere of prejudice and racial tension, but uncertain how to proceed to change things since these attitudes grew to be more and more centered around economic relations between whites and Indians. This was not simply irrational prejudice, but rather an expression of the counterpoised ideological stances of students and their parents. Ferndale district elementary counselor Paul Kidwell noted the development of these relations and he "compared the attitudes of Indian and white children towards each other to those attitudes of blacks and whites in the South when he was a child. Indians refer to whites as 'honkies,' while whites call Indians 'fish heads.' Kidwell noted that most of the labels revolve around the fishing occupation."¹⁵

At times, the fishing rights controversy in Whatcom county was expressed in more than just angry words: There were two incidents in September 1973. Lummi fishermen were shot at while gillnetting in the Bay, at the Cherry Point

15. Marla McCallister, "Fishing Issue Raises Race Problems Among Kids," Western Front, November 19, 1976, 3.

and the Chuckanut area.¹⁶ And the Western Front, in July of 1974 reported that "several fishermen in Blaine and Bellingham admit to storing firearms aboard their boats this summer in anticipation of trouble."¹⁷

Most non-Natives, and especially fishermen, had little understanding of the Lummi's historic and traditional relationship with the salmon. Alvin Josephy has put it well: "The symbiotic relationship between the people and the fish kept the world in harmony, and the Indians' lives, cultures, and spiritual values revolved around that relationship. Despite acculturation and assimilation, the sense of that bond still remained deeply ingrained among them, as if the disappearance of the fish would mean, also, the disappearance of the Indians."¹⁸

But, to have acknowledged the Lummi claim to a unique tradition with regard to the salmon would have been difficult for a number of teachers who were actively trying to discredit Indian cultural perspectives on the fisheries. As one former teacher reported, "There were plenty of teachers who resented the Boldt decision."

16. Charles Nacke, "Lummi's tribal income rests on salmon, herring industries," Western Front, November 19, 1976, 2.

17. Jim Schwartz, "Bellingham fishermen resisting fishery rug," Western Front, July 25, 1974, 4.

18. Alvin M. Josephy, "The Great Northwest Fishing War," 180.

It was in these teachers' economic self-interest to downplay any unique or pronounced Native cultural values with regard to the salmon since this was the cornerstone of the court decisions favoring the Indians. The same teacher mentioned above also noted that, "Some of the teachers' attitudes were partially an unwillingness to accept the fact that Indians had a separate culture." He said that some of them would "belittle Indian culture by simply ignoring its existence. To ignore someone's culture is to belittle it."

The fishing rights conflict in the Pacific Northwest was a centerpiece of the "Red Power" movement which swept across the United States and included the takeover of Alcatraz, the Trail of Broken Treaties, and the occupation at Wounded Knee, South Dakota. This movement was about developing Indian nationalism and self-determination. It was a rejection of the policies of termination and the ideology of assimilation. From the beginning of this movement, education was targeted as the pivotal component of progressive change.

As Indian leaders began to assert themselves and to examine their surroundings within the context of the Red Power movement, they realized that the public schools worked against their goals of sovereignty and a revival of the traditions of their people. Much of this awareness for critiquing the schools came out of the fishing rights struggles. As Guy B. Senese puts it,

The Indian radicals who took the island (Alcatraz) realized, as well as did the architects of termination, how important education is to the prosecution of any political policy. Yet the emphasis for the developing Indian nationalist movement was education in sovereign self-determination, not self-help and economic competency.

The Indian nationalist definition of self-determination emphasized tribal control of resources and economic development and the restoration of treaty lands. Many of the earliest struggles of the 1960s centered around fishing rights on the Northwest Coast, principally in Puget Sound and the middle Columbia River.¹⁹

But how the fishing wars of the 1960s and 1970s most affected education was in the way that the backlash movement was felt in the classrooms. While some teachers were openly hostile to Indian perspectives, others, who might have been more sympathetic, were cautious not to offend the parents of white students who were angry about the outcome of the fishing rights decisions. For many whites in Ferndale "it seemed as though the United States Government had entered into a conspiracy to deny them their rights while giving Indians new rights."²⁰ Attempts to discuss the fishing rights controversy often ended up in explosive classroom situations with students shouting names at each other. One Lummi student remembered "a civics class discussion when one of the top students came in with a big grudge on his shoulder. He was mad about the fact that Indians were to be

19. Guy B. Senese, Self-Determination and the Social Education of Native Americans (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1991), 146.

20. Rudolph C. Ryser, Anti-Indian Movement on the Tribal Frontier, Occasional Paper #16 Special Issue (Kenmore, Washington: Center for World Indigenous Studies, 1991), 16.

allowed 1/2 of the catch of salmon when the non-Natives represented a much bigger fleet than Indians. The teacher debated with the student; he was so mad. They argued and argued, and then the teacher got mad at him [the student]."

Throughout the 1970s parents and students were reading articles in the local newspapers which fueled anti-Indian attitudes.²¹ Comments such as "How long must the white man atone for whatever sins his ancestors committed in depriving the Indian of his land and fishing grounds?"²² allowed William R. Lewis, the editor of the Lynden Tribune, to ignore the fact that the fishing rights were reserved for the Lummi, not given to them.²³ He could then go on to say, "With the Judge Bolt (sic) decision the native Americans have been given half of the commercial fish resource."²⁴

Many whites, teachers and students alike came to school filled with such misinformation. These media images of Indians, internalized by a number of white students and teachers, fueled old attitudes and prejudices which created the climate of antagonism at Ferndale High School. These

21. See Bruce G. Miller, "The Press, the Boldt Decision, and Indian-White Relations."

22. William R. Lewis, "Second Class Citizens," Lynden Tribune, Wednesday, 21 April, 1976, 2.

23. This is, of course, the all-important distinction that those opposed to Indian fishing rights refused to consider: that Native Americans had aboriginal rights to the fishing grounds and reserved those rights for themselves as part of the Point Elliot Treaty. The treaty did not "give" them anything, it only clarified what was already theirs.

24. Ibid.

same fishermen/teachers, as one teacher reported, "claimed that this pinko judge was giving away their livelihood. And I remember again and again hearing about how the Lummis were able to put a net across the river as if the non-Indians were being robbed. These fishermen/teachers talked as if they were being cheated and robbed--and the Lummi students took the heat for it."

White students were hearing their parents and community members say things like,

This Indian deal, you know, the Indians are always crying the blues and they always been so abused... Do you know if Hitler had taken over, those Indians wouldn't have no rights at all. And all us guys, you know. I'm an ex-veteran. We went over there and fought to preserve their lives and now they act like this. It just galls me.²⁵

Meanwhile, Lummi students heard their family members talk about the ways of the white men. Herman Olsen, a Lummi elder reported that,

Some of the best reef net locations in the sound were all driven out by the white men with their fish traps. That's the way they got rid of the Indians. They just plain squeezed them out of their fishing grounds. They belonged to the Indian and the white men took them. They just up and grabbed them. Just plain selfishness.²⁶

Some teachers and students told me about how "everyone had to avoid mentioning what was on everyone's mind," the fishing wars. In other words, fishing was seldom talked

25. "Passage interview: talking with an old-time gillnet fisherman," interview by Billy Patz, Northwest Passage 11, 3, July 8-29, 1974, 4.

26. Ann Nugent, ed., Lummi Elders Speak, 26.

about openly and rationally; it was mentioned in sarcastic remarks, slogans, and innuendos. In reflecting on the effects of the Boldt decision, one teacher noted, "I don't remember a lot of conversation about that, which is pretty amazing--actually. I think there's a couple of reasons for that. One, I was a woman, they would talk about fishing stuff among themselves; two, politics stayed out of the teacher's room." Another woman who taught at Ferndale remembered "whites were making comments about shooting at the seals, 'ha ha ha, we were just shooting at the seals' as they boasted about intimidating Lummi in their boats on the water with guns. The seals just happened to be close to the Lummi boats."

Non-Natives in Ferndale never understood how different life was for Indian fishermen compared to their white counterparts. One Lummi student reported that,

The white fishermen used to complain about how they had to pay the bankloan on their boat and that it was hard to make enough money to do that. I used to say, "give me a bankloan!" For the Indian, the guys he had to sell to were white, it was a white market, and the bankers were all white. They would ask for collateral. Well, it's like when you apply for your first job and they tell you to get some job experience first and then you might be considered for the job. How are you going to get job experience unless somebody gives you a job. So the Indian fisherman goes fishing in a little boat on the river cause that's what he can afford. And, you always hear that Indians are lazy and won't work. The real fishermen here were always the Lummi. They taught the rest of them how to fish.

Many whites in Ferndale had a cynical and negative view of Lummi as traditional fishermen. One non-Native fisherman expressed an all too common attitude:

The Indian claims that this is their accustomed fishing grounds but in the old days--if they ever did fish--they didn't have the equipment they have now. Now they have these huge 10-ton anchors. Years ago the Indians - if they ever did--they fished up on the shore in a little canoe and just threw a little mud hook out to hold you. They didn't catch much fish, but they caught enough to eat. The Indians, they're trying to work this Boldt decision right to the hilt and get everything they can out of it. For years they've already been doing illegal things and we haven't squawked too much. Now they're going hog-wild with this Boldt decision. They're going to try to do all kinds of screwy things. They're going to try to claim that half the bay belongs to them²⁷

As the climate became more tense at the high school, Lummi students dropped out to go fishing. Tribal leaders and school district officials alike recognized a problem although they may not have agreed on its sources. A program was established in the mid 1970s called "The Herring Fishing Program" which was a coordinated effort between the Lummi Education Committee and the Ferndale School District. Students who participated could work on credits at the Lummi Education Center and still be involved in fishing at the same time. Pat Wenke, Teacher/Coordinator of the Lummi Education Center, wrote: "Many parents told us that, for a variety of reasons, they wished for their offspring to fish. We then offered these students the same educational services we offer to any school dropout, believing that working toward even one credit is preferable to earning no credits."²⁸

27. Billy Patz, "talking with an old-time gillnet fisherman," Northwest Passage 1974, 6.

28. Squol Quol 3, 17, May 2, 1975, 4-5.

Most Lummi boys wanted to be fishing; they were adrift in the classrooms and at home on a fishing boat with their fathers, uncles, and brothers. The school would have felt an alien enough environment without the wash of anti-Indian sentiment and misunderstanding about the treaties. Add these factors and it is easy to understand how difficult it must have been for Indian students. Willie Jones remembered how it felt to be in school, longing to be out fishing: "There are many things that can stress the human body and mind. I know I was stressed in school because I was trying to live up to someone else's expectations. I personally didn't have my whole heart in it. My mind was out on a purse seine boat with my dad."²⁹

In the wake of the Boldt decision and earlier fishing rights victories, the Lummis attempted to resurrect a modern equivalent of their traditional fishing economy. There was a great deal of discussion about how to maintain a continuity with traditional values and still utilize modern education and technology. Fishing was still bound to be central to the people's cultural and spiritual life, but now it would have to be managed by people with a college education and technical expertise. Most tribal leaders recognized that the hatcheries, aquaculture, and commercial fishing programs would require sophisticated abilities in administration, biology, and technology. The tribe wanted Lummis to be in

29. Willie Jones, "From the editor...", Squol Quol 4, 6, February 13, 1976, Back Cover.

charge of the projects and that meant a push for higher education. Meanwhile, most Indians were not even making it through Ferndale High School.

Some Lummis did attend college and university though. Many returned to the reservation to work on federal programs and development grants. These educated Indians often made the link from traditional values to modern problem solving.

Contemporary Northwest Indian fishing is a striking amalgamation of traditional patterns and modern technologies. Many of the same communities that gather each year to participate in the First Salmon Ceremony--welcoming the returning fish and honoring the natural cycle of life--also rely on sons and daughters sent to universities to learn biology in order to run state-of-the-art hatcheries.³⁰

As education at the high school was discouraging, educational programs on the reservation were producing dramatic results, especially on the attitudes of Lummis who had done poorly at Ferndale. Vine Deloria Jr., who was teaching at Western Washington University in Bellingham wrote about the effects of fisheries education within the aquaculture project. For the first time Lummi people had a reason to be enthusiastic about the prospects of education.

The idea of the project so excited the young Lummis who had heard of it that another six enrolled to study business at Bellingham Technical School. In one summer the whole concept of education had changed for the young people of the tribe--and so had their perception of their roles in life.³¹

30. The Institute for Natural Progress, p. 228.

31. Vine Deloria Jr., "The Lummi Indian Community: The Fishermen of the Pacific Northwest," in American Indian Economic Development, ed. Sam Stanley (Chicago: Mouton Publishers, 1978), 1978.

But, when Lummi students, motivated by an awareness of increasing job opportunities for educated Indians, tried to do more advanced work at the high school, they were often discouraged by counselors and teachers. Most counselors had little confidence in Indian students' abilities to succeed in college preparatory courses and they stereotyped Lummis as being more suited for trades or vocations that required less education. One Lummi student noted how discouraging it was to talk with a high school counselor: "I remember this counsellor I had. When I told him that I wanted to take some college prep courses, he got a little uneasy and said 'Why don't you become a mechanic?'"

In the classrooms, Lummi students were blocked from voicing their perspective on the salmon by more than the sometimes racist and hostile attitudes of teachers. There were invisible aspects to the surviving traditional culture which could not be incorporated into a class discussion. The historic and spiritual position of the salmon for Lummis was always central to their way of life. This way of life departed greatly from the non-Native view where the fish were thought of simply as an economic resource. The two ways of talking about the fishery were incompatible with each other. Or, as the authors of Uncommon Controversy put it, "An Indian attempting to convey his feeling and knowledge about fishing rights in a non-Indian setting such as a court of law is at a tremendous disadvantage, and stands in danger

of being not only misunderstood, but rejected as incomprehensible."³²

Language was a significant factor for Indian students in the classroom. Even though English is the first language in virtually all Indian homes in Puget Sound, the constructs of the Straights Salish dialect affected the thought styles of many Lummis who may have had no actual knowledge of the Lummi language.³³ The language and cultural differences already handicapped the situation, but the emotionally charged climate created by the fishing wars made it even more difficult for Lummi students to communicate with non-Native students and teachers. Without being able to talk about the salmon, one of the central features of family and tribal life, Lummi students were mostly silenced from talking about anything of importance while they were at school. Native students who expressed an opinion about fishing rights or treaties were in danger of being pounced on by testy teachers and belligerent non-Native students.

Lummi students were constantly reminded of the presence of anti-Indian attitudes in the high school. The backlash movement was a dominant theme in the culture of the town,

32. American Friends Service Committee, Uncommon Controversy: Fishing Rights of the Muckleshoot, Puyallup, and Nisqually Indians (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1975), 145.

33. Ibid. The use of both the Lummi language and English in homes is also discussed in Wayne Suttles, "Post-Contact Culture Change among the Lummi Indians," British Columbia Historical Quarterly, 18, 1 and 2 (January-April 1954), 91.

and in turn the culture of the school. A number of people in Ferndale had copies of the widely distributed book, Indian Treaties: American Nightmare. This book contained passages such as, "As for the biology of fish and wildlife, the perpetuation of species such as salmon was tied to superstitions and religious ceremonies such as the "First Fish (sic) Ceremony."³⁴ Such books as this showed a profound misunderstanding and even contempt for the spiritual values of Native people. But, in citing the same book, Bee and Castile suggest that although this literature may have fueled anti-Indian sentiment, it was also an accurate reflection of the outrage about what some non-Natives thought were special privileges enjoyed by Native Americans.³⁵ Whatcom county commissioner Terry Unger spoke for his non-Native constituents when he "stated that he supports the bill which abrogates all Tribal Treaties in the United States."³⁶

34. C. Herb Williams and Walt Neubrech, Indian Treaties: American Nightmare (Seattle, WA.: Outdoor Empire Publishing, Inc., 1976), 56. Williams was a game and fisheries agent and this book was designed to move non-Natives to take action against Indian fishing rights. They even offer ready made postcards in the back of the book to send for "future information about legislative action."

35. George Pierre Castile, "Indian Sign: Hegemony and Symbolism in Federal Indian Policy," in State and Reservation: New Perspectives on Federal Indian Policy, eds. George Pierre Castile and Robert L. Bee (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1992), 182.

36. Squol Quol 5, 21, November 10, 1977, 2.

The U.S. Civil Rights Commission held a hearing October 19-20, 1977, in Seattle dealing with the problems of the anti-Indian backlash in the wake of the Boldt decision. These hearings were prompted by the fishing wars, but they covered a number of related aspects of Indian/white relations. One substantial section was about the educational climate for Lummi students in the Ferndale School district. When asked by Civil Rights Committee Chairman Arthur S. Flemming what the relations were like between the tribe and the Ferndale School District, superintendent Dennis Peterson testified that, "We have a number of problems that we're working on, but, basically, I think we have a good relationship."³⁷ One teacher reflected on Peterson's testimony at the time by saying, "He was lying. That's his job. I would see him as being like the head of a big tobacco company nowadays who could stand up and say there's no evidence that smoking is harmful to your health. He knew which side his bread was buttered on. I don't know if he knew better, but he didn't want to."

Even teachers sympathetic to Indian students could not understand how Native values had anything to do with modern technology and economic development. To them, fishing was still just a way of making money. The inextricable aspects

37. Hearing before the United States Commission on Civil Rights, American Indian Issues In the State of Washington, Volume I: Testimony, by Arthur S. Flemming, Chairman (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977), 107.

of the spirituality of the salmon and the lifeways of the Lummi people would remain invisible to even the most supportive of teachers.

CHAPTER VI

"IT WAS TWO DIFFERENT TIMES OF THE DAY, BUT IN THE SAME PLACE": LUMMI STUDENTS AT FERNDALE HIGH SCHOOL

High School is a powerful moment in an individual's life. For Native people it represents a locus where ideas about the social, cultural, and political structure of the dominant society are crystalized, reinforced, or modified. To one extent, the high school mirrors the social relations of the larger society, but in another fashion, it is a world and a sub-culture unto itself. For Lummis, home and community values were tested as they came up against the norms and values of the school. Survival in school required the ability to "walk in two worlds." Natives were often pushed to repudiate substantial elements of their tribal identity. What the non-Native world called thrift, the Indian translated as stingy; ambition in the white world was arrogance and egotism in Indian country.¹

Negotiating between these mutually contradictory worlds would have been ordeal enough for the individual Lummi student, but the high school was also the site where tensions and struggles were played out between the tribe and the town of Ferndale. Lummi students found themselves in the middle of a battlefield that was doubly cultural and political.

1. "Are You Listening Neighbor?"...Report of the Indian Affairs Task Force, State of Washington publication, 1978, 7.

Stories of encounters with teachers, administrators, white students, and parents were told to me in themes and scripts that have an almost mythic quality to them. Lummi students described for me a school landscape that was distinctly apart from the experiences of white students. The segregated worlds of the high school paralleled the separate realities of the Lummi reservation and the community of Ferndale. As one Lummi student put it, "It was two different times of the day, but in the same place."

By 1975 Indian-white relations at the high school had become so heated that students were polarized into opposing camps based on ethnicity. The Ferndale school newspaper, The Eagle Eye, asked, "Is it because of the whites that so few Indian students participate in sports? Have you noticed how the groups separate in classrooms?"²

The editors of the paper and the journalism class conducted a survey on the prejudice at Ferndale High School. After getting the responses from 30 Indian students, they turned their attention to white students to try "viewing the opposite side of the problem."³ The editors reported that "unfortunately, less than half of the surveys were answered and returned. Those that were returned were so negative we felt that printing them would only add to the problem. But,

2. "Prejudice exists ... let's solve it," The Eagle Eye, Ferndale High School, Ferndale, Washington, December 19, 1975, 2.

3. Ibid.

we also feel that we can't just drop it here. We believe this is a serious problem and something must be done."⁴

The journalism students were determined to try and solve the problem of prejudice at Ferndale High School. In January 1976 another survey was given and the results published in the Eagle Eye. This time "693 surveys (73 percent of the student body) were returned."⁵ The responses from this survey are highly illuminating for understanding something about the mood in the halls and the classrooms:

The actual reportings of prejudice related incidents (threats, shoving) were many, with name-calling leading the list. Over 200 students had encountered this. Second was physical abuse, with 103 reportings. Fist fights ended up fourth on the list with 47 reportingsThe Main cause of prejudice, according to each group was student attitude....Second was government privileges with the Boldt decision and parental attitudes following in that order.⁶

The Eagle Eye concluded its survey by asking if the students would be willing to attend a "special projects class where students could suggest answers to the prejudice problems. Only one group replied yes." The majority of Indians agreed to participate "while non-Indians said no 337-235."⁷ The journalism students ended with a plea: "We have made an honest and sincere effort to do our part in

4. "Survey unveils differences," Eagle Eye, January, 28 1976, 1.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid.

solving this problem. Now we need the help of the administration, the community, and YOU!"⁸

The administration offered no response to the survey. The prevailing approach was to ignore the pressures and maintain the status quo. One administrator that I spoke with thought it was strange to refer to Ferndale High School as a "cross-cultural school." The school was focused on serving the predominantly white community of Ferndale; Lummi were seen as outsiders.

The hostility around the Boldt decision and the unwillingness of whites to accept that Indians did not want to be like them made it impossible for the two groups to have any meaningful cross-cultural communication. Ferndale High School, like all public schools, was set on the idea of assimilating Indians into "mainstream" society. Aside from what the Boldt decision did to stir up animosities toward Lummi, there was still a deeper layer of conflict around the efforts at assimilation and the Indian resistance to it. Whites simply could not understand or accept how different Indians were from the way they wanted to see them. One social studies teacher said, "Everyone wants to think that other people are just like themselves, not a different culture." Alvin Josephy has explained that currently Indians are

still posing to the white conqueror a challenge that
not all non-Indians, particularly in the United States,

8. Ibid.

wish happily to tolerate, even, indeed, if they understand it; acceptance of the right to be Indian. That right suggests, at heart, the right to be different, which in the United States runs counter to a traditional drive of the dominant society The best-meant aim of the non-Indian is to get the Indian thoroughly assimilated into white society Moreover, difference, to most non-Indians in the United States implies being inferior, and most people with a guilt complex about Indians wish they would stop being inferior so the guilt complex would go away!⁹

For the Lummi teenager, the tribal world was, in most respects, an opposite one from the world of the school. At school Indian students were placed on the bottom of the pecking order by both white students and teachers. But at home, and within the reservation community, young adults found themselves in a position of rising status and responsibility. A Lummi adolescent boy often operated a fishing boat and was beginning to take charge of other adult activities in the household and the tribe. He was paid much attention to by Elders in preparation for his leadership role in the family and community.

Whereas at the school Lummi students were made to feel insignificant, at home they were held in high regard, watched closely, and given all the assistance the family could provide. The Lummi teenage girl was being prepared for her role not just with regard to marriage and children, but also as a conveyor of traditional knowledge and as a vital link in the fishing economy working with the nets and preparing and selling fish. Little children were not given

9. Alvin M. Josephy, Jr., The Indian Heritage of America (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969), 347.

nearly the attention that adolescent and adult children were accorded.

Wayne Suttles noted the way Lummi childhood is balanced:

It is my impression that the white attitude toward little children is "nothing is too good for them," but toward the marriage of a grown child, "well, if you think you're old enough to get married, go ahead, but don't expect any help from us; you're on your own." But the Lummi attitude may rather be, toward little children, "Let big sister take care of little brother, and don't worry about big sister; she can take care of herself," and toward the marriage of a grown child, "We'd better give them part of the place or a new car; what will people think of us if our children are poor?" The difference, if this impression is correct, is probably one of identification of parents and children; white parents may feel that they are judged by their small children, but after these have reached maturity they can no longer be held responsible for them, while Lummi parents may feel that small children are not yet important enough to add anything to the family prestige but that grown children are.¹⁰

The way Lummi childhood experiences contrasted with those of white students was not understood--or often misunderstood--by non-Natives at the high school. Teachers, especially, did not understand how different the conditions of life were for Lummis in contrast with their white student counterparts--even in the most obvious and ordinary ways. One Lummi woman recalled that teachers could not understand why she did so poorly on intelligence tests:

There were pictures we were supposed to identify, but they were pictures of things we didn't have in our houses. Like, there were pictures of a kitchen sink and a tap. Well, we didn't have a tap in our house. There

10. Wayne Suttles, "Post-Contact Culture Change among the Lummi Indians," British Columbia Historical Quarterly, 18, 1 and 2 (January-April, 1954), 91-92.

were other pictures; there was one of a heater, well, we had a wood stove and I had never seen a heater like that--or an air conditioner, well, I didn't know what an air conditioner was. I knew what a pump was; I knew what a well was; we had kerosene lamps, I knew what those were. We lived on the north side of the Nooksack at the old village then. We didn't have plumbing. We didn't have electricity. We used the water from the river to wash our clothes and take baths in and we used to go to the church to haul our drinking water. A lot of people still hauled water at that time. I remember taking that test and not knowing what a lot of stuff was. I did terrible on those tests.

In the 1970s when most non-Native families in Ferndale lived in comfortable homes with central heating, washing machines, and an assortment of conveniences, many Lummi homes lacked plumbing or electricity. There was deep poverty on the reservation and Lummi families often rented houses from whites who had purchased reservation land. One Lummi woman reported that her family lived in a house they "rented from a lawyer who had bought the house and land as an allotment. We lived in that house for many years and finally, the year I graduated from Ferndale, that lawyer paid for a toilet to be installed."

For some Lummis, living off of the reservation produced a different set of problems: problems of identity. One woman told me that "there was one teacher who was very supportive and helpful to me because my family had moved off the reservation. She said she was glad to see an Indian who was trying to make something of herself by getting away from the reservation. Some Lummis at high school criticized me because I didn't live on the reservation."

The Community Action Programs and Office of Economic Opportunity Programs of the 1970s were helping with housing projects and setting up sewer and water districts; these programs were providing some of the first full time jobs the reservation had ever had. Some of this federal grant money was helping to get a few people out of poverty, and the fishing was getting better for some Indians because of the Boldt decision. But, in general, Lummi family incomes remained desperately low. In 1977 more than one fourth of all Lummi families were on welfare.¹¹ In 1971, eighty percent of Lummi families lived on incomes below the poverty level.¹² One Lummi man recalled that, "for most of the time my parents had no car, and at times when they did have a car, they had no money for gas anyway."

Even students who came from families that were prosperous by the standards for reservation life found themselves in the low socioeconomic status group when they arrived at the high school. Indian students often experienced severe identity crises as they struggled for acceptance. One woman, who spoke for the experience of many Lummis, told of her efforts to be accepted: "My dad went fishing. He used to fish in the river and Lummi Bay all by himself. He caught enough that we always had good clothes. I

11. "A goal of self-determination," Bellingham Herald, March, 10, 1977, 2.

12. Lummi Indian Reservation Community Action Program Accomplishments (Salt Lake: University of Utah Division of Continuing Education, 1971), 1.

took pains to dress like everyone else, but I still didn't fit in. I remember wanting to fit in, to be like everyone else, but I couldn't do it. I could never be like the white kids."

As a prelude to talking about their high school days, former Lummi students would tell me something about grade school. One parent remembered that "little kids were being humiliated by being told they had to have a shower after they got to school; and that went on up into junior high." One man recalled a teacher who "hit me on the back of the hand with a pointer stick when I asked her to help me with division problems. She used that pointer a lot. And I was made to wear a dunce cap once. I had to swat flies while I wore that hat In the sixth grade, I had a really bad teacher then. She locked me in the closet and told me to do my work in there."

There was a common impression among Lummis that they often received more severe punishment than white students. Difficult to prove, it was nonetheless a recurring opinion in many Indian communities:

Bias is also manifested through corporal punishment, ridicule, and reprisals against Indian children. Although the majority of Indian parents spoke of beatings as a thing of the past, there still exist schools where corporal punishment is used. In every case, there is a wide disparity between the severity and frequency of the punishment inflicted on Indian children and that administered to white children.¹³

13. NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund, Inc., An Even Chance: a report on Federal funds for Indian children

When Indian pupils finally arrived at the high school they encountered a formidable cultural barricade. One woman remembered "trying to make friends with the white students and they were real snobby They wouldn't talk to us in front of their white friends. When they were alone they might talk to me and be friendly, but when they were around other whites, it was a different story."

One man reported that "the white teachers and white students would have lunch together. The white kids would make a kind of a huddle and get real tight. We didn't make that kind of a tight group. Especially in the hall, the white kids always walked in a tight huddle." Indians and whites were segregated by unseen and unspoken rules: "The bus would pick up both Indian and white kids," recalled one woman, "but the Indians would always sit at the back of the bus and whites would sit in the middle or the front of the bus. I don't know why, we just always sat that way."

Lummis created "cultural portraits"¹⁴ of the white students and referred to them as "farmers" (whites sometimes called Lummis "bobos"). Keith Basso has commented on the function of such cultural symbols: "It appears to be the case that in all Indian cultures 'the whiteman' serves as a

in public school districts (New York: NAACP Legal Defense Fund, Inc., 1971) 45.

14. Keith Basso, Portraits of the Whiteman: Linguistic play and cultural symbols among the Western Apache (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 5. Basso credits Clyde Kluckhohn for the use of this term in describing how caricatures are used as symbols to make sense of the world.

conspicuous vehicle for conceptions that define and characterize what 'the Indian' is not."¹⁵ In this case, there was a long and well known history of the federal government trying to make Indians become farmers. Lummis resisted farming because the agricultural cycles conflicted with the fishing season and Lummis saw themselves distinctly as a fishing people; not farmers. Fishing and farming were seen as oppositional endeavors which created opposing identities; farming was associated with whiteness.

One Lummi man who played football recalled how the caricatures were used: "At practice and in the locker room it was different; we would talk like teammates and make jokes about things. We might call the white kids stink farmers and they would say things about how we smelled like fish. The team had more togetherness, but back in the hall at school the white kids would only wave hi."

A very unusual story was told to me about one Lummi student who became friends with a white student. "He used to make a particular point of getting at opposite ends of the hall and greeting his white friend with yay bobo! And his white friend, blonde, tall, scrawny: yay farmer! And I think they made a point to do this out of a sense of purposeful critique. It was deliberate, a deliberate artistic effort," reflected the Lummi boy's mother. Such examples of creative theatre were exceedingly rare at Ferndale High.

15. Ibid.

Lummis also saw white students who "felt that they could run and do whatever they wanted to and get away with it--which, of course they could--because of who their families were." For the most part there was too much pressure from the cultural and political context for whites to become friends with Lummis. According to one Lummi woman, there were some "white kids who were pushed down and not thought of very highly by the other white kids; sometimes they would be able to make friends with the Lummis easier. The lower class white kids were able to make friends with the Indian students easier." From the perspective of Lummis, Ferndale High was a rigidly stratified school--and Indian students occupied the bottom layer.

Sports

The 1970s are recalled by both Indians and whites as the decade when Lummis began to be a significant presence on Ferndale's sports teams. One of the reasons that Lummis began to turn out for football, baseball, basketball, wrestling, and track is that a few Indian boys from successful fishing families (especially purse seining families) had acquired the means to purchase cars which they used to transport themselves and Lummi teammates to practices and games. "One of the main problems," as one man explained, "was that there wasn't any bus--not like they have now. There was no transportation to get home after school if you stayed for sports. The white kids had cars or their parents would come to get them. The first year I

played football, I didn't have any transportation. I walked home from practice every night that first week. I didn't get home in time to do my chores and that wasn't good. So, I had to quit."

I spoke to one non-Native individual, a former Ferndale public official, who said that although whites may have had some anti-Indian inclinations as a result of the Boldt decision, there was also at the same time a more positive feeling about Lummis because they were contributing so much on the athletic field. "This made people feel good about the Lummis." Ironically, the exercise of fishing rights, a main complaint of the white community which fueled racism at the high school, was the very thing that was producing opportunities to attenuate the racism by allowing Lummis to more fully participate in the school's activities. As a result of their visibility on teams, Lummi students gained a more positive image in the community. Plainly, the economic benefits acquired as a result of the Boldt decision created the opportunity for Indian students to give a good showing as athletes. Of course, it was often the same whites that were hostile to fishing treaties who were so pleased to see Lummis helping the Ferndale teams to win games.

Coaches were eager to have Lummis play on teams, but they had their own stereotyped ideas about Indians. The coaches recognized the transportation problems of Lummi athletes, but offered no solutions. One man recalled a telling incident:

There was another Indian on the team, but he wasn't a Lummi--a Nooksack, I think. [The Nooksack reservation is to the east of Ferndale; Lummi is to the west.] Well, the coaches called me over and said, "you could get a ride with that other guy." "But he's going the other way!" I said. Those coaches just never seemed to get it straight. They just assumed that all Indians knew each other and that they were all going the same way. It was always presumed that Indians travel together and whites travel together, but not Indians and whites.

Along with transportation problems, Lummi players often lacked the proper equipment for a particular sport. One man reported that he "couldn't afford shoes for running in so I ran barefoot on the gravel track. My feet were tough and once I got started I couldn't quit." Another man reported on the way some sports were more accessible to Lummis: "Baseball was too white. In football we got to mix it up and make contact. The baseball players kind of pushed me out. They'd say, 'go stand over there.' I never got a chance to show anyone how I could play."

Playing on a team was an important contribution to a small town high school like Ferndale; it was recognized as such. But Lummi players were only given an absent-minded and perfunctory show of appreciation. Indian athletes were not recognized the way white players were. One man remembered that "on game days there would be posters on my locker, but they didn't connect the name and the face. People at the school knew the name, but they didn't know me."

As I talked with former Lummi students about their high school days, I asked about whether they remembered any dating between Lummis and whites. Of course it is difficult

to report adequately on a theme that was both personal and controversial at that time. Everyone who spoke about the subject said that dating was rare across the cultural barricades. The high school was a thoroughly segregated world and, at dances such as the senior prom, Lummis went with Lummis and whites went with whites. One man remembered some "white girls who asked me out on a date. I said 'no way, that was trouble.' One of those girls got pregnant shortly after that. I don't remember any dating between Indians and non-Indians."

Fights

Naturally, in a terrain as divided by inter-ethnic tensions as Ferndale in the 1970s, there were numerous stories of fights. With rare exceptions, the fights occurred between Indians and whites. There were some conflicts between Lummi families--usually centered around the factionalism brought about by the federal development programs. But these skirmishes are not discussed in the context of life at high school. At the high school it was clearly a matter of whites against Indians and Indians against whites--whether individually or in groups. Fights usually occurred at school, on the school grounds, or at Pioneer Park on the west edge of town proceeding toward Lummi.

All of the Lummi men I spoke with had training in boxing and/or wrestling. Boxing was an important sport for the Lummis going back to at least the 1930s when principal

Jim McCarten of the Lummi Day School started the program. Many Lummis believed he "developed the best boxing team in the county."¹⁶ Boxing continued to be taught on the reservation throughout the 1970s and Lummi boys had a reputation for being tough fighters. Teachers were often surprised by Lummi boys who in the classroom were subdued and passive, but given the opportunity for combat came on very strong. One man recalled

having an argument with a white kid and [the teacher] made us put gloves on and go at it. He thought I was gonna get beat up because the other guy was so much bigger than me. Well, that guy came at me and started hitting me. I kind of held back for a little then I let him have it. By the time we were done I made his nose bleed and he had swollen eyes. The teacher stopped the fight when he saw that I was winning. You know, in wrestling too, they always put me with guys that were bigger than me.

From the Lummi perspective, most of the fights were started by whites who were venting racist hostility toward Indians. One man remembered a white student who "punched me one time. He was a real racist talker. He hated Indians. I threw him against the locker. He came up to me and said, 'you son-of-a-bitch,' and then hit me. I laid into him; it was around the lockers. He didn't come after me anymore after that."

Lummi boys were outnumbered in the halls and were often quickly surrounded and engulfed by white students. Lummi girls recognized the danger and usually tried to keep fights

16. Ann Nugent, Schooling of the Lummi Indians Between 1855-1956 (Ferndale, Washington: Lummi Historical Publications, 1981), 43.

from happening. A former student recalled the "time a friend and I saw an Indian girl get pushed down a stairway. We were going to see who did it and try to do something about it, but she said it was a bunch of white guys and that there were too many of them. She was trying to protect us."

It seemed to Lummis that whites were always trying to start fights. One woman recalled a typical incident:

There were some Indian kids who were getting off the bus and some white boys were watching them and they wanted to get them into a fight, but the Indian boys didn't want to fight. The white boys jeered at them saying "I smell fish, something stinks like fish around here." The Indian boys just ignored them and walked the other way. Stuff like that happened all the time in those days -and worse.

Some conflicts between Indians and whites escalated until they became gang fights which were usually staged at nearby Pioneer Park. These "rumbles" between groups of white and Indian teenagers were much talked about (but, never in the newspapers). As one Lummi man summarized those times, "It was, 'I'll get a bunch of my guys together, you get a bunch of your guys together, and we'll meet at Pioneer Park for a rumble.' That was the way it was." Another man remembered that "once there were 12 of us Indians and 70 white guys showed up; I remember getting our asses kicked."

Fights often happened after the high school dances. One man recalled a particularly bad night:

I went to a dance once--at Pioneer Park. Outside there were 15 white guys waiting for me and my brother. They circled us and I told my brother to just be brave and take the pain. They beat us bad and then they brought out knives, but they didn't use them. They just wanted

to scare us. I told them, "I'll get you guys one at a time." That made them back off, and they left.

Another man recalled an unusual rumble: "Once both sides agreed that it would be a fair fight between this one Lummi and this one white guy. Well, Bones was tough and he was beating this guy pretty good. I made a comment about it and this other white guy just sucker-punched me. The whole thing just blew up after that."

From the Lummi point of view the fights were unavoidable; Natives were under constant assault from belligerent white students who often parroted the anti-Indian biases of their parents. The Boldt decision gave more than enough justification to whites for venting feelings of resentment and spite toward Indians. In this strained climate, Lummis were often blamed by teachers for starting trouble in the classroom. One Lummi man told a story that was not unusual:

Once, when I went to pick up my brother near the music room, he told me he left something in the music room, but he wouldn't go in there because there were a bunch of white guys in there and they might beat him up. I wasn't afraid to go in there, but two guys hit me at the same time ... the teacher wouldn't do nothing. They always figured that we started it.

There was a common impression among Lummis that it was always much easier for an Indian student to get into trouble--or be blamed for any trouble. One woman noted that "a lot of Native kids went to the office a lot. If you got in trouble once then you got blamed for everything after that; you got labeled an instigator."

Academic Problems and the Curriculum

When Lummis talked about academic problems at Ferndale, the social studies curriculum was highlighted as an example of how the school was prejudiced against Indian students. History, especially United States history, was the most contested course in the discussions between the school board and Lummi community leaders. Not only did the history course require a great amount of cultural capital for understanding, explaining, and writing about the conventional knowledge most white students simply grew up with, it also contained assumptions about the moral structure of the status quo regarding Indian-white relations.

One administrator reported that "social studies was an area where Indian students would see clearly that teachers were not giving a truthful or accurate representation of history and culture--especially the nature of Indian-white relations. The social studies teachers tended, as a group, to be very opinionated. They probably thought, 'well, this is the way things are studied at our school.' Lummi students, at the same time, heard a lot about the prejudice of the teachers before they ever even came to the high school."

Both Lummis and whites seemed to recognize the significance of the history curriculum in defining the nature of Indian-white relations in the school and in the larger community. It was the location of a great deal of

struggle for Lummi students. Throughout the 1960s and the 1970s Lummi parents tried to get more Indian perspectives added to the social studies curriculum.¹⁷ Some teachers told me that there was resistance to Native curricula from non-Native teachers who were antagonistic to Native values. These teachers were referred to by Lummi students, parents, and other instructors as "the good old boys." They used the history classes to vent their anti-Indian hostility and buttress their one-sided view of Indian treaties. Rosemary Placid, an outspoken Lummi activist, pointed out why the curriculum was fought over and how it was embroiled in the larger political battles between Indians and whites: "If Indian history had been taught in schools, a thing like the Boldt decision never would have been made. People would have grown up knowing why the Indians are entitled to special fishing rights."¹⁸

Finally a compromise was reached between the district and the tribe. The high school would offer a course on Native American history which could be substituted for the U.S. history requirement. The course was open to both Indian and non-Indian students. Its goal was twofold: it would allow Lummi students to escape the hostile anti-Indian atmosphere of conventional U.S. history classes taught by

17. Carolyn Hugh, "Lummi may soon have more voice in school," Bellingham Herald, December 10, 1978, 1.

18. Rick Cocker, "Flagrant, subtle racism a fact of life for many," Bellingham Herald, March 10, 1977, 6.

the "good old boys" and it would show that the high school was being responsive to the tribe's request for more "Native" content in the overall curriculum. Barbara Elsner, a language arts and social studies teacher with a reputation for being benign toward Lummi students, was called upon to teach the class. It was presumed that Lummi students, silenced in the other history classes, would be able to achieve academically and participate energetically in the new Indian history class.

The class failed to provide a genuine Native perspective on United States history. Indian students told me that the class was a token gesture by the administration to appease the Lummis without agitating the school board and other powerful whites in the Ferndale community. The course was, to use the words of a former teacher, "a coloring book approach to Indian culture and history--fill in the blanks but don't reflect on the deeper meaning." Elsner taught a fairly two dimensional approach to history; she simply shifted the focus--but not necessarily the perspective--to Indian leaders and groups instead of Europeans. In November, 1976 she was interviewed by the Bellingham Herald about her ideas on curriculum revision which would make Lummis feel "more at ease." She offered an example: "When a math teacher makes up story problems, there should be some about counting oysters."¹⁹

19. Carolyn Hugh, "Lummi, Ferndale schools negotiating," Bellingham Herald November 23, 1976.

One Lummi woman recalled her experience in the Indian history class: "She expected us to know all these names and dates of Indian stuff from all over the place. It seemed just like regular history to me. She expected us to know a lot about these other tribes and I just didn't know that much about all that. I had a hard time in that class."

Lummi in Special Education

Lummi, like students from other tribes, were often diagnosed as slow learners and put in special education classes. Getting put into a special education class magnified the isolation and alienation an Indian student already felt at Ferndale. One woman, now enrolled at Northwest Indian College at Lummi, recalled what it was like to be a special education student:

I dropped out of Ferndale in the 11th grade. I didn't like special ed. I guess I don't know too much about what was going on in the rest of the school except for a p.e. class or something like that. I don't think I needed to be in special ed., but they thought I was slow so that's where they put me.... There were a lot of Indian kids in special ed. then. We didn't do much. Four periods or so each day just cooped up in one little room. And they didn't really teach us much; we just did workbooks and stuff like cutting and pasting things. I wanted to study English, but they said I couldn't do it. Here at Northwest Indian College I'm taking English classes and doing pretty good at it. I'll be taking the more advanced English courses next year I really love the subject of English. I think I could have done a regular English class if they would have let me.

In the 1970s, Washington State tribal leaders heard about

cases in the state where children with cultural and language handicaps were placed in with retarded students and treated as though they couldn't

learn....invariably the special class was regarded by the slower student as socially degrading....The Indian spokesmen called for preventive educational programs that would eliminate the need for "bonehead English" and other special education classes that type their children as slow learners.²⁰

Red Power and the Counter-Culture of the 1970s

The changes in American society that were brought about by the social and cultural movements of the 1960s were in full swing by the 1970s in Whatcom county. Indian students like other high school students were affected by the anti-war movement, the questioning of governmental authority, and experimentation with the boundaries of mores. But the renaissance of the 1960s and 1970s was, for Native students, only one of two social upheavals. The other was an Indian renaissance which interacted with the larger mainstream counter-culture, but persisted with a unique quality and direction of its own. This Indian counter-culture movement of the 1970s is usually referred to as the Red Power Movement.

This movement includes the Indian occupation of Alcatraz, the Trail of Broken Treaties march to Washington, D.C., the takeover of the town of Wounded Knee, and other milestones of recent native American history. At the same time each local Indian community, such as the Lummi reservation, was experiencing some form of cultural revival and political awakening. Lummi students, like their white

20. "Are You Listening Neighbor?"...Report of the Indian Affairs Task Force, State of Washington publication, 1978, 67.

counterparts, were affected by the sweep of new ideas and fashions dominating the media at the time, but being "alternative" was not as novel an idea for them. They had grown up in an old and established "counter-culture" to the extent that much of modern native America has developed as a culture of opposition to white America.

Along with the flurry of activity going on as a result of the federal development programs, there was a revival of traditional ceremonies and a refined sense of what it meant to be a Lummi. Teenagers, studying under Elders,²¹ played a central role in the renaissance in Coast Salish arts such as carving and basketry.²²

The Vietnam War was a central focus of the counter-culture, especially in the early part of the 1970s. One Lummi woman remembered being excused from English class to attend an anti-war rally in downtown Bellingham. Another man reported that "I was very much a part of the anti-war movement." For some Lummis, the rise of a popular counter-culture offered an additional mode for expressing an already developed "anti-establishment" attitude. A few found themselves being persecuted at Ferndale, now not just for

21. Even the term elder was popularized in the 1960s. Wayne Suttles told me that he couldn't remember hearing the term used at Lummi until the 1960s. "Before that, everyone referred to them as the old people." (Telephone conversation with Wayne Suttles, July 28, 1995).

22. Morrie Alexander and Al Charles, A Report: Master Carvers of the Lummi and Their Apprentices (Bellingham, Washington: Whatcom Museum of History and Art, 1971).

being Indian, but for being a "hippie" as well. One Lummi man recalled the year he "grew his hair long and was called into the office. They accused me of smoking marijuana just cause I had long hair and wore sandals with no socks."

The popular counter-culture of the 1970s caused many people to examine their values and ways of dealing with problems. One Lummi man recalled how he began to rethink his approach toward racial tensions at Ferndale: "Guys have a way of settling these sorts of things by sizing up the next guy; if you had a problem with what some guy said to you you would just tell him to meet you after school. But, I was beginning to question the idea of strength settling arguments. I was then reading Aldous Huxley who said that the man who uses his fists has run out of ideas."

In many respects, the counter-culture movement brought some Indians and some whites together in new ways. The environmental movement, which was advancing in the 1970s, began pointing to Native Americans as examples of human societies that had lived in harmony with the earth at one time. Moreover, Native images of reality and especially the concept of living close to Nature were promoted in the popular counter-culture media. Many urban white youth were attracted to images of Native people as keepers of wisdom; traditional Indian ways were seen as an avenue out of the alienation of a materialistic and self-destructive America. An invitation to the 1975 Rainbow Gathering (a counter-

culture convention) carried a message with a Native flavour to it:

But many of the children do not yet know their family, do not yet know it is our Mother the Earth who is sick, that it is we her children who are responsible, that we all need each other, for the issue is now survival, and the task of preserving life on this planet demands nothing less than planetary cooperation.²³

Ernest Callenbach's Ecotopia, a novel popular with the counter-culture of the 1970s, offered romantic images of Native Americans: "Many Ecotopians are sentimental about Indians, and there's some sense in which they envy the Indians their lost natural myth; keep hearing references to what Indians would or wouldn't do in a given situation."²⁴ The Northwest Passage's 1974 interview of author Frank Herbert shows more Native American connections in the counter-culture:

Fewer limits' seem to be the key words in describing Frank Herbert's own concerns. From his science fiction to his involvement with zen and sufi, from his use of Coast Salish mythology and power songs to the things he's doing with this house and land, Frank Herbert demonstrates his commitment to doing away with the self-limiting processes which we impose upon ourselves.²⁵

A number of students from Fairhaven College, an alternative experimental cluster college of Western

23. "Rainbow Gathering," Northwest Passage, June 2-16, 1975, 2

24. Ernest Callenbach, Ecotopia: The Notebooks and Reports of William Weston (Berkeley, California: Banyan Tree Books, 1975), 29.

25. Ladislav Brank, "An interview with Frank Herbert," Northwest Passage, 10, 4 (21 January--4 February, 1974), 4.

Washington University, worked on federal grant programs at the reservation and some students from Huxley College (environmental science cluster college of WWU) did their internships at the Lummi aquaculture project. Some of these white college students were seen as simply going "Native" without contributing or gaining much from the experience, but others are recalled by Lummis as having offered a great deal. One Lummi woman remembered that "VISTA (Volunteers In Service to America)²⁶ workers played a major role in helping Lummi kids during that time-period. The VISTA volunteers were providing a crucial transportation link to get teenagers to high school events."

At the same time that more whites were coming to the reservation to take part in cultural and political events, Lummi teenagers were participating in activities that brought them in contact with the larger counter-culture of the dominant society. One man recalled an important trip to California: "There was an Indian youth leadership conference that I attended in San Francisco. That changed my thinking about everything. I saw Timothy Leary speak; he was talking about free love and freeing your mind. I got hooked on all that stuff."

26. An explanation of how the Red Power movement is linked to the VISTA program is presented in Donald L. Parman, "Self Determination and Red Power," chap. in Indians and the American West in the Twentieth Century (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1994), 151.

The counter-culture put an emphasis on creating harmony between antagonistic groups; there was optimism that racial and ethnic accord could be achieved. Some Lummi students had hope that Indian-white tensions would be improved by a broadening of democracy and pluralism, that there could be mutual respect and a shared understanding of lifeways and values--even treaties. One man reflected on his optimism at the time and the impasse that the high school presented: "I thought things would change; there was this new society on the horizon. I had hopes that racism could be cured. All you needed to do was examine the evidence and ... I was really naive. At the high school you would always run up against the reality."

Spirit Dancing and Anomic Depression

Ferndale High School had become, for Lummis, a kind of psychic battleground where students struggled to protect their integrity and identity as they attempted to defeat the purposes of the school and yet remain there. For most Lummis, the experience of attending Ferndale was traumatic. Tribal elders, parents, and others noted the increase of chronic depression and distress among teenagers; they attributed much of the trouble to the pressure students were subjected to at school.

Although Lummis did not discuss the subject of spirit dancing in the context of schooling, a number of non-Native teachers spoke to me about the subject in reference to the culture-conflict environment of the high school. The

literature on the 1970s revival of spirit dancing illuminated what the teachers were trying to describe for me. Since the information about the smokehouse ceremonies is very private knowledge as it is sacred and personal, it would not have been respectful for me to have asked about the private experiences of Lummis in this regard; and I did not ask about it. Most likely, Lummis did not talk about such matters both because they are private and because they were not thought to be as directly connected to their life at school as the problems of racism, prejudice, and academic survival were. The winter dancing ceremonies was seen as an important schooling theme by the teachers, but not necessarily by Lummis.

The psychodynamics of attending Ferndale High School produced what Wolfgang G. Jilek has called "anomic depression." Jilek, a medical doctor who did most of his work with the Lummi, explains that "anomic depression is a psychic state precipitated by experiences of cultural confusion and relative deprivation." Further, it is "characterized by feelings of existential frustration, discouragement, defeat, lowered self-esteem and sometimes moral disorientation."²⁷ Jilek also noted that the specific socio-cultural dynamics of anomic depression which develop in North American Indians are different from those observed

27. Wolfgang G. Jilek, Indian Healing: Shamanic Ceremonialism in the Pacific Northwest Today (Surrey, B.C.: Hancock House Publishers, 1982), 52.

in non-Indian patients. "They are experienced in the particular context of the Indian-white relationship."²⁸

Traditional Lummi people referred to this disorder as "spirit sickness" and it was associated, as Jilek outlines, with the following:

a) acculturation imposed through western education; b) attempt at White identification ("identification with the aggressor" in psychoanalytic terms), or vying for acceptance by Whites; c) subjective experience of rejection and discrimination -awareness of relative deprivation in White society; d) cultural identity confusion; e) moral disorientation, often with acting-out behaviour; f) guilt about denial of Indian-ness - depressive and psychophysiologic symptom formation - inefficiency of Western remedies; g) diagnosis as spirit illness permitting reidentification with aboriginal culture via initiation into spirit dancing ("death and rebirth").²⁹

Spirit dancing among the Lummi and other Coast Salish groups during the 1970s was revived to reverse the effects of "spirit sickness" produced, to a degree, by the experience of being an Indian student at Ferndale High School. The focus of the winter dancing evolved to reaffirm traditional Lummi identity in contrast to the goals and purposes of the school which were oriented around assimilating Indians.³⁰

28. Ibid, 125.

29. Ibid, 55

30. In a sense, the "hidden curriculum" was exposed by the process of becoming a dancer, but this would have been articulated in a very unconventional language; still, it would have been recognizable to critical theorists.

The spirit dancing ceremonies, suppressed or outlawed in the Northwest at the turn of the century,³¹ were experiencing a tremendous revival during the late 1960s and 1970s. Claudia Lewis wrote about their revival: "In 1968 Ryan reported to me that people from communities on the mainland who hadn't danced for years were attending the island dances."³² If these events had lessened in importance for the previous generation of Lummis³³ they were taking on a new sense of purpose for the young people in the 1970s. The revival of the dancing during this period can be attributed partly to the increase of anomic depression among Lummis attending Ferndale High School. Jilek puts it this way: "We can, therefore, assume that anomic depression in its various manifestations is today a major factor in bringing young Indians into sya'wan (spirit dancing)."³⁴ A number of teachers that I spoke with noted the increase in Lummi students being away from school for smokehouse

31. In British Columbia the "Potlatch Law" was used as a legal weapon to suppress spirit dancing. This law remained on the Statutes of Canada until 1951. In Washington State the dances were outlawed, but then later attempts were made to turn the dances into a stage performance for Treaty Day as a way of arousing aversion to them as sacred practices. This had the opposite effect of "freeing the dances." (Jilek, Indian Healing, 14-15).

32. Claudia Lewis, Indian Families of the Northwest Coast: The Impact of Change (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 217.

33. Suttles noted the small number of people participating in these rituals during the 1950s. Suttles, "Lummi Indians," 91.

34. Jilek, Indian Healing, 104.

ceremonies, but none of them offered any explanation or speculation about why this activity might have been increasing.

Students who had been away from Ferndale attending smokehouse ceremonies³⁵ returned to school with a renewed sense of identity and a fortified self-esteem, but teachers noted that these same students were now more detached than ever from the activities of the classroom. One teacher reported that "when they came back they were in a different mode. And they didn't come back and say, 'what did I miss? I want to make it up,' not in the least. It was quite difficult to know how to handle that. And I had not a clue about what they had been through and they weren't going to tell me; I don't even know if they could articulate it."

A very few teachers noted behaviors and situations connected with initiation rituals and did their best to accommodate their Lummi pupils in the classroom. One woman teacher offered this account: "I had a girl in my classroom who was in her menstrual cycle and she was fearful of sitting next to another girl who was undergoing the rituals of becoming a spirit dancer But it was very simple to rearrange the seating once I understood what was happening." Jilek notes that, "In general, spirit power is considered to

35. It is not within the scope of this chapter to give detailed accounts or explications of the rituals which occur at smokehouse ceremonies. See Claudia Lewis, Indian Families of the Northwest Coast: The Impact of Change, for descriptions of the ceremonies and their context for modern Coast Salish families.

be potentially contagious Spirit illness can be contracted through close contact with a powerful spirit dancer."³⁶ This teacher was sensitive enough to take appropriate action. Other teachers were not so sensitive. One administrator reported that some of the "good old boys" refused to allow Lummi to wear hats in the classroom as required by tradition during initiation times.

One of the results of the increase in spirit dancing for Lummi students was that it fortified an oppositional identity at the same time that it reaffirmed a genuine Indian identity. Lewis noted that "not only are the Indians carrying on their own ceremonies--so totally at variance with the life of the White community at their doorstep--but in other aspects of their personal lives very divergent standards are operating."³⁷ Wayne Suttles asserted that, "perhaps most importantly, being a dancer is the most unequivocal symbol of being Indian."³⁸ But as the goal of the ceremonies was to build up the self-worth of young Indians, it was also to identify the forces at work to tear it down. The school was consistently pointed to as a force that must be opposed. The dances oriented the Coast Salish

36. Ibid, 60.

37. Claudia Lewis, Indian Families of the Northwest Coast, 7.

38. Wayne Suttles, "The Persistence of Intervillage Ties Among the Coast Salish," in The Emergent Native Americans: A Reader in Culture Contact, ed. Deward E. Walker (Boston, Mass.: Little, Brown and Company, 1972), 672.

student, as Amoss has maintained, toward the "preservation of the Indian group against the threat of assimilation by the social and economic system of the dominant culture."³⁹ Speeches were made at the smokehouses which outlined the need to resist an erosion of Indian identity by whites: "The white people have taken away our land, our game, our fish, but this is something they cannot take away."⁴⁰

As Lummis returned to Ferndale High School after being away for rituals and ceremonies connected with the spirit dancing, they had a renewed sense of their Indian identity, but they also returned with a sharp--if unarticulated--critique of the dominant society and the school which represented it. As Jilek has stated, "initiation into the ceremonial aims at a total personality change. It aims at the candidate's reorientation towards the ideal norms of traditional Salish culture which had moral standards superior to those of Euro-American civilization, as we know from reports of early ethnographers."⁴¹ Students came back from initiation not only reoriented around different moral standards than those of the white society, they often had a completely different conception of morality; as wealth.

39. Pamela Thorsen Amoss, "The Persistence of Aboriginal Beliefs and Practices Among the Nooksack Coast Salish" (Ph.D. diss., University of Washington, 1972), 208.

40. Suttles, "Intervillage Ties," 674.

41. Jilek, Indian Healing, 127-128.

Suttles, in discussing the various manifestations of wealth among the Coast Salish, explains that morality had a value and was actually measured as wealth among families. Indeed, as modern conditions made the survival of other Native values and forms of wealth more difficult, morality was the most tenacious: "Today, all that is left is moral value and this must be found in identity as an Indian."⁴² These traditional values were molded in the spirit dancer as a corresponding oppositional ideology was reinforced by the egregious anti-Indian behaviour of too many white teachers and students.

Lummis, in recognizing their own traditional heritage, and in establishing a healthy Indian identity, found it nearly impossible to participate wholeheartedly in the activities of the school. Teachers were unaware of what Lummi students had been through when they returned to school in such a detached mode. Amoss has stated that "the ceremonials are so exclusively Indian that the surrounding white communities are often not aware that such things are going on."⁴³ From the perspective of Lummis, these were private and secret rituals. As such, they could not be spoken of.

Even if Lummi students could have told their teachers about their experiences finding their song and their vision,

42. Suttles, "Intervillage Ties," 676.

43. Amoss, "Nooksack Coast Salish," 209.

there was no place inside the school where such a reality could exist. Isadore Tom, one of the most renowned Lummi healers, gave an account of his own personal quest in the book Lummi Elders Speak.⁴⁴ Since it is published, it is an acceptable source of information providing insights into what was involved in the personal quests of Lummi students:

I was taught to go out and seek my gift whether it was carver, hunter, great fisherman. My way of life. I was told when I started as a little boy: tell nature what you really want to be: carver, orator, leader, or the gift of healing.... A few years, later my father told me to go out and seek my gift. Stay in the woods, fast, go in the water. Swim early in the morning and evening. After I did what I was supposed to do, I received the gift of what I am doing now.

I was out two, three days and I came home. Then I thought I'd go out again that night. It was at Portage Point. The wind was blowing hard. South wind. Pretty soon thunder and lightening. Just as the thunder roared, my dad got up and said, "You better go out and swim." It was one o'clock in the morning. He told the direction I had to go.

When I got there I took my clothes off. The waves and white caps were fiery in the night... I dove three times under the water. The third time that was it. I met up with the spirit. The gift. I don't know if I fainted or passed out. I got my vision. A man was coming in from the deep water. He said, "Someone sent me to get you. I will take you out." He was a natural man, but he was the spirit.

I was asked to swim to the center between the three islands: Point Francis Island, Lummi Island, and Eliza Island. He said, "Don't be afraid. I'll take care of you." We were traveling on the surface of the water side by side until we got to the center between the three islands.

Then I went to the bottom of the sea. I looked ahead and there was a great big rock. This man was standing there. There was a door in the rock and we went inside the door. I entered into a little house. An old-fashioned Indian house made of thick boards. In the center was a fire and at the top the smoke was going

44. Ann Nugent and Eva Kinley, Lummi Elders Speak (Ferndale, WA.: Lummi Historical Publications, 1981).

out. There was an old man with white hair. He was a doctor....

Then he told me all these songs I sing for healing.... All the songs I now sing were the songs I heard at the bottom of the sea.⁴⁵

Lummi students who came back to school after having had a set of transcendent experiences as a part of the initiation and spirit dancing ceremonials were unsuitable pupils for what Ferndale expected them to do and be. They had experienced a complete realignment of their world-view. Teachers either ignored them or if they attempted to reintegrate them into classroom life they were bewildered by their detached behavior. Even the most thoughtful teachers "had not a clue about what they had been through."

The teachers who experienced any success with the most traditional Lummis were those that, as Wolcott prescribes, attempted to teach skills rather than values to Indian pupils.⁴⁶ However, in the anti-Indian climate of Ferndale High School it would have been exceedingly difficult to offer lessons that were value neutral for both Indians and whites. As the fishing wars had shifted white perspectives about Indians in an extreme direction, so too the evolution of the winter spirit dancing ceremonies had moved Native people to be more critical of the dominant society in turn.

45. Ann Nugent and Eva Kinley, Lummi Elders Speak, 89.

46. Harry F. Wolcott, A Kwakiutl Village and School (Prospect Heights, Illinois: Waveland Press, 1967), 130.

Suttles heard the term "white enemies" used at a dance which was "less a dance than a political rally."⁴⁷

Lummis, making their way through high school at Ferndale, encountered an ambivalent moment when they finally arrived at graduation time. Although they may have been pleased with their success, many felt an accompanying sense of guilt and anger about their friends who had dropped out or had been pushed out of school. It was an uncertain occasion to be graduating from this school. As one man put it, "When I actually found out that I was going to graduate, I refused to let the school have my senior picture to hang in the hall. I wouldn't submit it--and I wouldn't participate in the graduation ceremony. I didn't want to be associated with that school. I was angry because friends were not going to graduate. People were getting kicked out of school. Indian kids would get suspended, but white kids wouldn't. I didn't want to be a part of that." Another man reported that he refused to participate in the graduation ceremony because "they were just a bunch of Nazis and I wasn't about to become like them. I had my diploma mailed out to me."

Considering the way Native pupils were treated as inferiors by white students, teachers, and in the Ferndale community, the Lummi man's summary of his high school years

47. Suttles, "Intervillage Ties," 674.

actually appears to be an understatement. "It was two different times of the day, but in the same place."

CHAPTER VII

TEACHERS: FROM THE UNIVERSITY, TO THE COMMUNITY

A professor from Western Washington University told me this story. He was teaching a journalism class on the reservation and had given an assignment to the Lummi students to do an interview with someone; an elder, a friend, a family member, anyone. He said that "it was a standard beginning journalism assignment. Well, the first week went by and no one had done the assignment. I wanted to be especially patient and not appear coercive so I didn't say anything. The next week, and once again nobody turned anything in. After the third week I became frazzled and I said to the whole class, why hasn't anyone done an interview? There was then an extraordinarily long pause of silence; I just kept waiting. Finally, the most outspoken member of the class called me by my first name and said, "I don't think you understand us yet. From the time we were all very small and ever since, most of what we have learned has come from listening, not from asking questions. It is our way that we don't ask a lot of questions--we are taught to be quiet and listen to what our elders have to say. People only speak when they have something important to say, not to ask a bunch of questions. Our people are suspicious of someone who asks a lot of questions. That's why we're having a hard time doing this interview assignment.'"

At this point the professor paused reflectively before he resumed again saying, "I learned something then that I never forgot. As I drove from the reservation back to my

classes at the university I thought about how different these two worlds, these two cultures were. The mostly white students at Western always, always were full of questions, but most of them hadn't learned how to listen very well."

At Ferndale High School though, even the most sympathetic teachers were kept from knowing very much about their Lummi students by a tense climate of what one teacher called "institutional racism." New teachers starting out at the high school were shocked at the attitudes of older teachers toward Lummi students. Among the teachers I spoke with, four began at Ferndale in the early 1970s; each one told me an almost identical version of the same story. Each teacher, during those first few weeks of adjustment to being in a new place, listened to the talk about Indians. They told me they were shocked at what they heard and remembered thinking, "If I were a Lummi parent, there is no way I would send my child to this school!" Negative attitudes about Lummis seemed to run deep among many of the older teachers. This was manifested by low expectations of Lummi academic achievement and sometimes even open contempt for the heritage of Indian students. One Lummi student remembered that "teachers who were from outside the area were more supportive of Indian students."

At Ferndale High School there were two kinds of teachers: ineffectual, often liberal, ones who were unable to deal with the climate of racism, and anti-Indian ones who were referred to as "the good old boys." The most progressive teachers tried to create "safe classrooms" for

Lummi students. The teachers who were most prejudiced against Indians were often fishermen. Both groups knew very little about their Indian pupils.

One teacher who came from the Midwest to teach at Ferndale reported that he "didn't know anything about Indians. I had never seen one. When I got to the high school and saw Lummi students in the halls, I thought they must be Asian or maybe Eskimos. If I asked about Indian culture, well, people would come back to me and say 'culture, shit, the Lummis have no culture, the Lummis are just a bunch of losers. They're just a tribe down here on the coast that every other tribe along the western coast has come down and pillaged them--they're just a bunch of losers, they got no culture!' And that wasn't said with shame or apology. It was said as if that was historical fact."

As I talked with Lummis about the attitudes displayed by teachers during the 1970s the setting began to sound more like Mississippi than Washington State. Alvin Ziontz, a Seattle specialist in Indian Law, compared the "attitudes of some whites in western Washington with those of white Southerners fighting against open housing. Living in the Northwest makes people think they are good and things are different."¹

Indian people I spoke with told me that I should look at Western Washington University if I wanted to know more about how teachers formed some of their ideas about Indian students. At first I thought of it more as a general

1. Rick Cocker, "Flagrant, subtle racism a fact of life for many." Bellingham Herald, 10 March 1977, 5.

statement about the "whiteman's institutions" of education; how they are all connected. I was a little reluctant to get into an examination of the university in Bellingham since I saw it mostly as a digression; I was determined to keep my study manageable focusing only on the high school. But, a number of people were insistent that I investigate the link between teacher attitudes at Ferndale and the teacher training program at Western. Finally, I was told a story, well known among Lummis, about a Western education professor who taught her students that Lummis were genetically inferior and therefore less intelligent. The story was told to me many times both on the Lummi reservation and, eventually, in the private offices of faculty at Western.

At the civil rights hearing held in Seattle on October 19-20, 1978, Sam Cagey, the tribal chairman, tried to tell the committee the story of professor Martha Smith² who was preaching racism. He reported that, "This is part of the education problem we face. This is in the old Western Washington State College, which is now a university ... one of its tenured professors ... was teaching to her students that Lummis cannot achieve beyond a certain point because they're descendents of slaves."³ The committee stopped Sam

2. A pseudonym. Although I have photocopies of notes giving her real name as well as testimony from a number of individuals who gave her name, I found no official or published documents with Dr. Smith's real name. I have chosen to not use her actual name, but to use a pseudonym instead.

3. Hearing before the United States Commission on Civil Rights. American Indian Issues In the State of Washington, Volume I: Testimony, Arthur S. Flemming, Chairman

Cagey from going into more detail and decided to discuss the matter in executive session.

Academic Freedom and Racist Propaganda

Student teaching is a powerful and formative experience for the person who is entering the teaching profession. A number of scholars have studied the way values are acquired by teachers as they are trained in the universities.⁴ George Spindler noted that "the neophyte in training must reorient his value system wherever the conflict in values is encountered. This places many new teachers in training in a situation similar to that of acculturating populations all over the world."⁵ Some of the attitudes about Lummi students were formed during teacher training and the Professor Sam Cagey referred to was supervising a substantial number of student teachers at Ferndale throughout the 1970s. I spoke with some of those teachers.

One woman who was being supervised at Ferndale High School in the early 1970s said that Professor Smith came to observe her in the classroom: "She said to me--in the hall at Ferndale High School--privately--that when northern tribes raided Lummi for slaves, the most intelligent Lummis

(Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977), 133.

4. See Gerry Rosenfeld, "Shut Those Thick Lips" (Prospect Heights, Illinois: Waveland Press, 1983), 109; Young Pai, Cultural Foundations of Education (Columbus, Ohio: Merrill Publishing Company, 1990), 171; and George D. Spindler, The Transmission of American Culture (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959), 20-28.

5. George D. Spindler, "The Acculturation of the School Teacher," in Society and Education: Readings, ed. James Raths and Jean Dresden Grambs (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1965), 128.

were captured, leaving less intelligent people who formed the majority of the community. Because of this, Lummi students have learning difficulties."

At Ferndale, a man who was under Dr. Smith's supervision reported that "I was sitting in a classroom--I was a student teacher--and my supervisor from the college was sitting beside me. I was correcting some papers while the regular classroom teacher was conducting the class. It was a science class. And, my supervisor looked at me and said 'don't worry about the Indian kids, they're genetically inferior.' I said, 'what are you talking about?' and she said, 'a long time ago there were slave raids and they took the smart ones and left the dumb ones to breed.' It kind of made me boil inside--I was real angry and upset--but I'd put up with an awful lot to become a teacher and one wrong comment to her ... I knew many teachers that were good teachers got washed up if they didn't agree with her values. I was in a bind. Other good potential teachers were black-balled, so to speak, because they would argue with her when she would come on with some of her ridiculous ideas."

Another woman stated that "those were the days when you had to say everything was fine and just grin--if you wanted a job. Anything that went into your file stayed in your file permanently. So, a bad word from Martha Smith meant down the tubes. She had a lot of clout in this state."

Finally, in 1976, a sufficient number of complaints from students and Lummi parents had been lodged and a hearing was held at Western Washington University. I spoke

with a faculty member from the school of education who was at that hearing. I also spoke with a student who represented the Native American Student Union (NASU) at the meeting; she made photocopies of her notes for me. The Indian representatives at the meeting wanted nothing less than Dr. Smith's resignation, but, as the faculty member I spoke to reported, "Martha argued for academic freedom citing the Jensen studies⁶ and saying that 'common sense should prevail as no Lummi Indian has accomplished anything--including graduating from college.'" The committee took no action and Professor Smith was allowed to continue supervising student teachers through the end of the decade.

Many people at Western know of the above incident, but most are reluctant to talk about it. It is clear that Western Washington University was directly involved in influencing the attitudes of teachers at Ferndale High School by transmitting cultural values and legitimizing knowledge\power relations.

A faculty member found himself caught a bit off guard and away from the campus when I told him about my knowledge of this notorious incident. I told him that it looked as if the whole educational system cooperated with the way the Ferndale schools treated their Lummi students. He then blurted out: "Of course we were complicit! We were placing a

6. In 1969 Arthur R. Jensen launched an IQ controversy by publishing "How Much Can We Boost IQ and Scholastic Achievement?" in the Harvard Educational Review 39 (Winter), 1-123, also Straight Talk About Mental Tests (New York: Free Press, 1981). Jensen argued that 80 percent of intelligence is inherited.

lot of student teachers there [Ferndale]; we needed them" (referring to the education department needing Ferndale School District for the placement of student teachers).

The Anti-Indian Climate at Western

Ordinarily, it would be difficult to explain how a professor, who taught that Indians were genetically inferior, could be tolerated so quietly at one of Washington state's most prominent teacher training institutions. But, the climate of the university in the 1970s was full of the tensions of the fishing wars and anti-Indian rhetoric was commonplace in the local newspapers giving a quasi-legitimacy to feelings of vexation about Indians. A number of faculty were fishermen: the chairman of the psychology department, who became dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, was president of the gillnetters' association which was notoriously anti-Indian at this time.⁷

Other professors at Western expressed a subtle contempt for Indian treaties and Native perspectives as a whole. In a Western history class one Native student reported that, "he [the professor] was talking about the validity of the treaties and how they were not documents of real stature....he said, 'people were making treaties with

7. The Northwest Passage, July 8-29, 1974, 7, reported that the Puget Sound Gillnetters Association had recently voted "more money to the 'war chest' to fight the Indians." See also John Brockhaus, "Rebellion on the Not-So-High Sea," Northwest Passage, October 11-25, 1976, 4. The author described a gillnetters association meeting and compared it to a Ku Klux Klan meeting.

drunken Indians.'"⁸ Attitudes like this were not just born overnight with the fishing controversies, but they were embedded in the personal views of faculty and students who had very limited knowledge of Indian tribal groups.

One Indian woman, a member of NASU, reported on her daily encounters with white students at Western:

As long as people think I'm a Mexican, it's all right, but when I tell them I'm an Indian!...It's more a tone of voice." She raised her brows and mimicked a mythical white student, distinctly enunciating each word. "Are you REALLY an Indian? Do you come from around HERE? What's it like to be an INDIAN in college?" The difficult part is their surprise and shock--of, God, an Indian really made it to college.⁹

Native political gains of the 1970s only provoked and gave an excuse for more blatant anti-Indian expressions. For a number of reasons, including an academic belief in the superiority of Western civilization, attempts to establish a Native American presence at Western were constantly being pushed back. An examination of the survival efforts of the College of Ethnic Studies, with its robust Native American studies component, reveals much about the resistance to Native prerogatives at Western.

Maurice Bryan, in his master's thesis, quotes a former president of Western Washington University explaining that racism and "closet bigots"¹⁰ were significant factors in

8. Deanna Shaw, "Indian Education: Lost In America," Klipsun (student publication of Western Washington University), September 1985, 11.

9. Deanna Shaw, "Indian Education: Lost In America," 11.

10. Maurice L. Bryan, Jr., "The College of Ethnic Studies at Western Washington University: A Case Study" (Master's Thesis, Western Washington University, 1993), 93.

the dismantling of the College of Ethnic Studies, a program that had, from 1970 to 1972, the preeminent Indian scholar Vine Deloria, Jr. as a faculty member. The elimination of the college made a symbolic statement that genuine Indian perspectives were not welcome on the Western campus.

With the College of Ethnic Studies eliminated only the Native American Student Union (NASU) was left to protest against the uninformed and prejudiced teachings about Indian people. Non-Native students at the university had virtually no knowledge about Native peoples and, hence, scant ability to question the subtle prejudices and racist teachings of their professors. This university, a place one counsellor called "a bastion of whiteness with a history of blatant and subtle discrimination against Indians," was educating many of the teachers for the Ferndale schools.¹¹ I am convinced now, as so many Lummis have insisted from the beginning, that Western Washington University played a large role in perpetuating stereotypes and negative attitudes about Indians. Even if some beginning teachers rejected the prejudiced opinions of their professors, some did not.

"Safe Classrooms" at Ferndale High School

Some of the new teachers at Ferndale were products of the popular counter-culture of the 1970s which emphasized alternative lifestyles, cultural awareness, and civil rights. They may have been bewildered at first by the circumstances of the high school, but many were determined to break down some of the obstacles and serve both Indian

11. Ibid, 13.

and white students alike. These teachers talked to me about how they tried to create "safe classrooms" for Lummi students. Later, they discovered that there was very little that they, or anyone else, could do to make even the smallest changes in a school environment which was cultivated by the entrenched anti-Indian disposition of the community of Ferndale. Ironically, the most assiduous attempts at breaking through the prejudice and bringing Indian culture into the classroom produced even more explosive outbursts of antagonism between whites and Indians. One former teacher put it this way:

I guess I had my head in the sand. I had a kind of Pollyannaish attitude that if people only understood each other they would like each other; they'd get along better. I was always trying to get more understanding. But, I remember a teacher telling me at one point that if people understood each other better, they might hate each other more.

The term "safe classroom" was used by three of the teachers I spoke with. They distinguished their classrooms from those of teachers--referred to as "the good old boys--" who showed blatant indifference or hostility toward Lummi pupils. This division also reflected the two ends of the political spectrum of the 1970s. "Safe classrooms," in this setting, were conducted by teachers with generally progressive convictions about civil rights and cultural pluralism. These teachers would not allow their students to make blatant or subtle racist comments in the classroom; sometimes they introduced anti-prejudice units into their curriculum.

Teachers who created "safe classrooms" for Lummi students also had higher expectations for the academic achievement of Indians. One woman reported that "there were a couple of very bright Lummi students that could have gone on to college." These students did very well in her classroom, but failed in all the other classes. When she asked them why they did so poorly in the other classes they told her that it just would not matter what they did. "It would not make any difference. They told me that they were surprised that I would expect so much from them. No one else had ever treated them that way before." And, summing up, she said "I don't think a lot of the teachers heard the kids. They were very much into power and control, and ego."

The teachers who had liberal social attitudes were not necessarily seen as more effective by Indian students. They are merely remembered as having been persecuted by a conservative Ferndale administration; Lummis felt persecuted by the same administration. One Lummi student remembered "a teacher who was only able to stay one year because she wore these really high boots. At the end-of-the-year assembly we gave her the shoe polish award. Her ideas and way of teaching were far too much to the left for Ferndale High School."

One woman who remembered being "evaluated poorly for allowing students to speak against the Vietnam war" recalled that "in English we had a class called 'Rock Poetry' that tried to use song lyrics to get them involved." Another teacher got permission to offer an honours humanity course.

He recalled that this made the "history teachers angry that we had gotten some of their best students and that we were teaching a revisionist version of American history with a distinctly liberal slant....Of course these teachers [the good old boys] said we were doing 'pinko' stuff." The other effect of this honours course was that it pushed more Lummi students into standard U.S. history courses taught by the conservative, anti-Indian teachers.

Superintendent James Norris brought an attitude of support for progressive curricula, but, as one teacher recalled, this was looked upon with suspicion by the school board which "represented the conservative hostile element in the community." Norris also recognized the problems of prejudice which infested the high school. A teacher remembered that "once he held a special teacher's meeting; he came up front and gave us all some tough talk about how we had to get along with the Lummis.... Norris was sympathetic and wanted whites and Indians to come to understand each other." Superintendent James Norris submitted his letter of resignation on May 29, 1975 saying "It is with some reluctance that I submit this decision for your consideration."¹²

This same teacher quoted above reported that all the efforts of the superintendent produced no change in the situation. "It would have taken a special person to bridge the cultural barricade." And, as he reflected on the climate

12. James Norris, Letter of Resignation, May 29, 1975, Ferndale School District Records.

of the school, "there was a certain cultural narrowness that you would hear in the coffee room. I suppose that some of those attitudes were picked up in the classroom. Lummis may have had attitudes of their own, that all teachers were bad, or all whites were bad."

Communication Styles and the Cultural Barricade

Teachers, even from "safe classrooms," had little knowledge of what Lummis felt about teachers or school. Some of these teachers wanted to get to know their Indian students, but could not break through the communication barriers. In the words of one man, "I didn't even know how to talk to the Lummi students." Another teacher speculated about why Lummi students did not talk about their attitudes very much: "I don't know whether they knew enough to not say anything, or whether it was that it hurt too much to talk about it."

Even when Lummi students were not silenced by the anti-Indian hostility of some classrooms, the differences in communication styles confounded many teachers. One teacher realized that, "for the Lummi children, to look an elder in the eye was a sign of disrespect; that is exactly the opposite of what the white culture teaches." And, another teacher "remembered reading about the cultural differences of eye contact and cultural expression and just telling myself 'that's just the way it is,' but it sure felt weird to me; I didn't like it." Some teachers were not as perceptive, or perhaps they just refused to acknowledge the differences. One woman reminisced on the attitudes: "If I

heard it once, I heard it ten times a day: 'they're sneaky. They're planning something, they're lying because they won't look you in the eye.'"

One teacher remembered his exasperation trying to sort through the maze of what kept him from understanding Lummi: "I could see that there's something not clicking here, and it was difficult to sort out what was linguistic and what was other. Because you've got basically cultural patterns, you've got lifestyle differences, you've got conflicts between the economics, you've got all of the history of distrust and out and out hatred. To me it seemed hopeless to know what was language based and what was based on something else. I came into a situation I couldn't sort out and that I couldn't function very well in."

As teachers got glimpses of the poverty on the reservation, they also encountered images of a very different family and community structure; so different that they could not understand it. Many teachers accounted for the Indian students' low level of performance by seeing them as no different from any other underprivileged socioeconomic group, not culturally different, but culturally deprived.¹³ Some of these teachers had a vague awareness that Lummi

13. See James A. Banks, An Introduction to Multicultural Education (Needham Heights, Massachusetts: Allyn and Bacon, 1994), for an explanation of the problems in the cultural deprivation theory. From 1900 to 1970, many educators subscribed to this theory which maintains that children from home cultures that are not compatible with the school culture have been deprived of adequate cultural stimulation and opportunities for intellectual growth. An ethnocentric premise, it was exposed in the 1970s and a model emphasizing cultural difference was promoted.

students' differences were linked to a distinct and separate value system, but they were nonetheless bewildered trying to adequately explain it. One social studies teacher expressed it this way:

The average white person is not aware of the differences between Indians and whites. I wondered how come Indian kids couldn't give speeches. I asked myself, were they shy because they're trained to be shy, or are they just shy because they're a minority here in the school. I guess I knew that even among healthy Lummi families there were differences apart from whites. Indians, compared to other minorities such as Vietnamese, or Hispanic, are on the far edge culturally speaking. There really is a cultural difference in the way Lummi kids are raised which impeded them in the competitive environment of school.

Teachers Against the Grain

It was the climate of anti-Indian hostility that kept even thoughtful, responsive teachers from reaching Lummi students. As one teacher reported, "There was a subtle pressure--maybe not so subtle pressure--that the white majority didn't want teachers wasting their time. There was pressure to not give too much extra attention to the Lummi students. There was a certain enmity, hatred, resentment there; a feeling that the Lummis always got extra and didn't deserve it." Another teacher who had "done a lot of reading about eastern religions" recalled that she was open to "exploring the beliefs" of other cultures including Lummis and other Indian peoples. "But," as she explained, "I knew most of the staff's feelings about the religious beliefs of the Lummis. They discredited it as a bunch of hocus pocus."

These teachers who tried to arbitrate the Indian-white tensions in the high school often became victims themselves; victims of their "good intentions." One teacher who showed a

film on prejudice reported that "my students' reaction to that film was pretty amazing. Instead of seeing the irony... they got into name calling and stereotyping and wanted to continue on. They didn't get the point or they didn't want to get the point. I stopped showing that film....I never knew what teacher or administrator was going to jump down my throat. I felt pretty vulnerable as a liberal outsider."

Teachers who protested the way Lummi students were treated found themselves out of favor with other teachers and the administration as well. One teacher protested that Lummi students were receiving corporal punishment more often than non-Natives. Her opposition to swatting students with a paddle was understood, but never respected by the intermediate administrators who found ways to force her into participating in the punishment--if only as a witness. She reported that "they would trick me into coming out into the hall saying they needed my signature or something like that; they would have it all set up to swat the kid with a paddle. As soon as I would go out into the hall they would do it and use me as a professional witness to the punishment."

Another teacher recalled that "there was an attempt, at that time, by the tribe, to sort of bridge the gap and have students be able to bring their Indianness into the school. For a while, I had my Lummi students demonstrate how to make fry bread in speech classes." But, the anti-Indian antagonism from non-Native students and faculty made most teachers abandon efforts to create inter-cultural understanding after seeing the hardships it imposed on Lummi

students. In the words of one teacher: "I remember a couple of occasions when Lummi students would share something cultural and I remember being very interested myself and quite amazed at how poorly it was received...there would always be somebody muttering something. And then I came to realize that it was a hugely risky thing for a Lummi student to do--and I stopped encouraging it. I stopped encouraging it after I saw what they were getting themselves into. It was too hot for them."

At Ferndale High School in the 1970s, even "safe classrooms" were only safe to a degree for Indian students. One woman reflected on her role as a teacher during that time saying, "I think that there were a lot of us at the school who were not maybe personally prejudiced or bigoted, but because we were involved in this school, all of us took part in this institutional racism." The most empathetic teachers were confronted with a dilemma: the more they explored genuine Native culture in the classroom, the more they jeopardized the emotional and physical safety of their Lummi students. Every effort to shatter the prejudice resulted in intensifying the expressions of prejudice. Conversely, as they downplayed the cultural distinctiveness of Lummis, they maintained a tenuous calm and order in the classroom and received approval from their principals. This was the way many of the most progressive teachers at Ferndale operated. They silenced themselves as they silenced their Indian students in order to maintain "safe classrooms." As one teacher reminisced: "The fog was part of

it. We all covered. Oh, maybe a couple of us would have a few drinks and commiserate about it, but nobody went out and talked frankly about how deeply troubled they were about all this stuff."

Lummi Students' Perceptions of Teachers

Lummi who attended Ferndale High School between 1970 and 1980 generally divided teachers into only two categories: those who "helped" and those who were "prejudiced against Indians." Acts of kindness and support are remembered as vividly as acts of enmity by former students. One Lummi student told of how he came to be able to play in the band at Ferndale: "There was this teacher, she was nice; she got me started. I remember I used to dream about getting a trumpet. Maybe she told my mom about it, but I got a trumpet for my birthday. It cost \$75 which was a lot of money in those days!"

Another Lummi man recalled the most hated and difficult class, civics, and how a teacher pushed him to make it through. It was taught in the Junior year and its culmination was a mock senate. Each student had to make a speech giving opinions on political issues and participate in a mock legislative session. It was extremely difficult for Indian students to make this kind of a speech--especially in the uptight atmosphere of the classroom. "But I got help writing the speech from this woman teacher," the man reflected. "I ran for senate and I won. I beat the other guy by 10 votes. That woman teacher helped me. I don't remember her name."

Lummis often couldn't remember the names of teachers at the high school. One woman confessed that she "could remember all the names of all the teachers from the Lummi Day School, but I can't remember any--not a single one--of the names of the teachers from Ferndale High School."

Often when Lummis talked about teachers at the high school they began by offering a short statement about some teacher that "helped" them. These accounts--usually just a sentence or two--of helpful teachers seemed to be conceded as a way of providing balance to the outrageous stories of prejudice and hostility that usually followed. One student, looking at yearbook pictures, started with, "She was the typing teacher, she used to help me out with my typing. I learned to type real good." He then launched into a more detailed story of the corporal punishment he had to endure in another teacher's classroom. In another instance, a Lummi woman began by saying, "mostly, I got along with all the teachers. I found that if you treat people the way you would like to be treated they will treat you the same." Then, having uttered the disclaimer, she told a story about a P.E. teacher who evidenced a deep prejudice against Indians and refused to attend to her sprained ankle: "I walked on it the rest of the day; it got really bad. My mom was really angry about how I was treated at school."

Sometimes the stories about "helpful" teachers were told with a tone of ambivalence. One Lummi man recalled being "called into the principal's office when I was in the last half of my junior year. The principal, he tried to help

me--I guess. We looked over my credits and found that I was 35 credits short. Nobody ever told me about those necessities-credits. He wanted me to jam it all in but I found out (not from the principal) that I could go to the Lummi community college to finish school. I went to Lummi and got an adult diploma."

Acts of Hostility and Violence To Lummis: The "Good Old Boys"

Although most expressions of anti-Indian attitudes were submerged beneath a professional teacher's demeanor, some teachers were less adept at concealing their antipathy toward Lummi students. This group of teachers has been referred to by both students and former teachers as "the good old boys." These instructors were fishermen and viewed Lummi culture as illegitimate and the fishing treaties as scandalous. They were also coaches and very popular among the white community of Ferndale. The way that Lummi students were treated in these openly anti-Indian classrooms was representative of the way Indians were treated in the town of Ferndale. This partly explains how such conduct by teachers at the high school could be unofficially tolerated.

In the Title IV¹⁴ quarterly report of December 1975, Linda Lloyd, the coordinator of the high school program, wrote:

14. The Title IV program was part of the Indian Education Act which provided funding for special programs such tutoring sessions. This act was a result of the Kennedy Report (1969). See Jane Eder and Jon Reyhner, "The Historical Background of Indian Education" in Teaching the Indian Child, ed. Jon Reyhner (Billings, Montana: Eastern Montana College, 1988), 46.

Particularly at the high school level, many students I found had a defeated attitude. This attitude can be attributed mostly to the attitudes of the teacher, and other white students.... I worked with three teachers at Ferndale High School [She names the teachers here]. I could safely say that at one time or another each of these teachers exposed to me their racist attitudes. Whether this attitude was subtly put through in a classroom context, or put directly to me when class was dismissed, it became increasingly apparent to me as time went on.

These racist teachers often made indirect attacks on Lummi culture by allowing the most bellicose white students to express anti-Indian attitudes without being challenged. One Lummi student reported that white kids would call him a "stupid savage; the teachers didn't say it, but they allowed it to be said." One teacher recalled that "kids were often used as pawns." These teachers had to maintain an image of professional standards and that meant that Indian-white relations, as a topic for discussion, had to have an appearance of fairness to both sides. This was accomplished by allowing certain white students to express in the classroom what some teachers only spoke outside in the community.

Occasionally, these white teachers were unable to maintain themselves in a state of repressed animosity. Sometimes they lost their composure: The Bellingham Herald, in March of 1977, reported that "numerous charges of racism have been leveled at Ferndale public schools, perhaps culminating last spring when a sixth-grade Indian girl had her mouth washed out with soap and another girl was kicked

by a teacher."¹⁵ I was told by one teacher that the mouth washing was performed with such force as to cause the girl's gums to bleed.

The incidents were well publicized in Whatcom county. Esther Helfgott, a teacher in the Upward Bound program, commented that "such incidents seem representative of the general atmosphere of suppressed hostility in many public schools."¹⁶ At the civil rights hearing held in Seattle in October 1977, a Lummi high school girl, Lilian Phare, reported on the incident in which her sister was kicked in the back by a teacher:

It's been brought out a couple of times now about the kicking incident. This was with my younger sister....she almost fell to the ground. It was printed in newspapers where he apologized, and he never did. And the quote from Mr. Boyd was when there was a conference between my mother and Gail and the teacher, that the teacher didn't want to see her again. He told the principal just to keep her out of his way, that he didn't want to see her again.¹⁷

With regard to the above incident, Superintendent Dennis Peterson sent a report to the United States Commission on Civil Rights in November of 1977. His report stated that "In the spring of 1976, a certified teacher at a middle school kicked an Indian student. The 'kicking incident' resulted in both disciplinary and legal action

15. Rick Cocker, "Flagrant, subtle racism a fact of life for many," The Next American Revolution, Bellingham Herald, March 10, 1977.

16. Rick Stern, "Racial identity becomes a positive factor," Western Front, July 15, 1976, 1.

17. American Indian Issues In the State of Washington, Volume I, 120.

taken against the certificated teacher. The legal proceedings resulted in a two weeks loss in pay."¹⁸

This episode where teacher John Boyd kicked a Lummi girl was discussed in executive session by the Ferndale School Board on June 21, 1976. The attorney, John T. Slater, made an agreement with the Whatcom County Prosecutor, David McEachran:

It was the prosecutor's position that he felt this incident involved a third degree assault by Mr. Boyd and that his office would file such a charge unless the School District took some administrative sanction against Mr. Boyd and he suggested a suspension of Mr. Boyd's salary for one-half month would constitute a reasonable sanction insofar as his office was concerned....An agreement to this affect had been prepared by his attorney and forwarded to both Mr. Slater and the Whatcom County Prosecutor.¹⁹

Dan Raas, the tribe's attorney, was asked at the civil rights hearing if there was not some legal action underway. Raas stated that "commencing a lawsuit or threatening litigation or beginning investigations would prove counterproductive to the ongoing negotiations between the tribe and the school district, that we felt that we could probably win such a lawsuit if we brought it, but it would be very time consuming, very expensive, and the net results would be worse than if we negotiated it."²⁰

18. Hearing before the United States Commission on Civil Rights, American Indian Issues In the State of Washington, Volume II: Exhibits, Arthur S. Flemming, Chairman (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977), 49.

19. Minutes of Executive Session of School Board June 21, 1976, Ferndale School District, 1.

20. Ibid, 123.

Raas was conveying the sentiment of many Lummi parents that it was best to avoid trouble with the officials in the Ferndale school district. After all, the kids would have to go to school at Ferndale or be sent away to Chemawa Indian school in Salem, Oregon. There was also a feeling among some Lummi parents that the white man's world is what it is; the children must learn to get along with the way things are and not expect that they will change anytime soon. "The more we protest and cause trouble for the school district, the more difficult will be the conditions for our Lummi students in the classrooms."

Lummi also saw a certain futility in challenging a school system that seemed so full of anti-Indian individuals. Geraldine Bill, a Lummi who was the Johnson-O'Malley coordinator at the high school, expressed some of this discouragement when she testified at the 1977 civil rights hearing in Seattle:

Our people just more or less give up on trying to negotiate with the school administrator (superintendent Dennis Peterson)... And, I also mentioned to our administrator that I was concerned about their attorney, who represents the district, because I sat in on one of the negotiating meetings and he had made a statement that he owns 40 acres of land on the Lummi Reservation and that he did not agree with the sovereign water, sewer district, anything that the Lummi were trying for, and I think that he had a lot of personal opinion or feeling against our people to begin with, and the superintendent thanked me for the concern I had, but nothing was said or done about it after that.²¹

21. American Indian Issues In the State of Washington, Volume I, 1977, 296.

At the high school, many of the anti-Indian teachers employed a "blame the victim" explanation for the poor academic performance of Lummi students in their classrooms. They referred to the reservation as a giant welfare check and made comments that reservation life crushed the spirit of initiative and competition by offering too many free handouts. The 1976 Title IV quarterly report quotes one of these teachers describing a Lummi boy having trouble with the class: "He shows no interest at all, just sits there with his head down, I don't even know if he can read. Well, it doesn't matter anyway, the only thing he really needs to know is how to sign his welfare checks."²²

Often teachers blamed the parents for the problems Lummi students had in dealing with the classroom situation. Some teachers thought the parents and other family members had poisoned the students' opinion of the school before they even arrived. The same teacher from above: "See, I told you, it's all the Indians' parents' fault for their kids failing. They tell the kids so many bad things about the white man's education that it frightens them and they reject it."²³

Most of the teachers that were regarded as anti-Indian were expressing an amalgam of unexamined attitudes about Indians and their anger about the outcome of the Boldt decision. It would have been impossible to separate out what was simply narrow ethnocentrism and what was bitterness

22. Title IV Quarterly Report, December 1976, Ferndale High & Mountain View School, 3.

23. Ibid.

about the fishing decisions. The two were inextricably melded together.

For some teachers at Ferndale High School, the Boldt decision upset the economic status quo and violated their sense of how the world ought to be ordered. In other words, Indians were fine as long as they knew their place. In the minds of these white teachers and many members of the Ferndale community, the Boldt decision had created a situation where everything was out of place.

The stories from the well-intentioned, but ineffectual, liberal teachers were usually told to me in painful and frustrated tones. One of these teachers told me that he was "in the grocery not long ago and I ran into my teacher's aid [a Lummi woman] from Ferndale High School. We hadn't seen each other in almost twenty years. I told her that there was a guy writing about what it was like at the school then. She started crying. I asked her, what's the matter? She said, 'I always cry when I think of those times.'"

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSIONS

Both Native and non-Native educators have recently shown enthusiasm for curricula and pedagogic approaches that are supposedly oriented toward "Native learning styles." Certainly programs emphasizing cooperative learning and integrated curricula can be useful techniques for helping Indian students achieve in school. But, it is too often thought that the educational problems of Indian students can be solved by modifying these superficial elements of classrooms. Administrators would often rather adjust existing structures than begin an examination of more troubling and often more confusing community forces that converge at the school.

A number of teachers and Ferndale community members, not wanting to talk about the fishing wars, tried to convince me that conditions had changed at Ferndale High School since the 1970s. Indeed, it is certain that a great many things would have changed in two decades for a small town high school. But, some perennial themes, if they ever submerged, are resurfacing again. In April 1995, the Bellingham Herald reported that

[Tom] Richardson, who moved back to Washington from California eight years ago, said the racism he encountered in Whatcom County stunned him.

For example, he said his son was told by non-Indian fellow students at Ferndale High School that they could hang out with them or with Lummi kids but not both.

"It was a real shock and surprise for all of us, he said, "I had assumed the world had changed."¹

As we look back on this setting we can see that Ferndale High School in the 1970s represents an extreme example of culture-conflict. But what can we learn from this case that applies to other situations?

First, conservative critics of educational policy often complain that there is too little local control but, in the case of Lummi students at Ferndale High, it was local control by the Ferndale School Board and community that oppressed them. In the 1970s it was the politics of fishing and the anti-Indian attitudes of teacher/fishermen that made going to school so difficult for Lummis. Had the more liberal and open-minded teachers been given more support, perhaps by the federal government, for their anti-prejudice efforts, the school could have become a catalyst for communication and understanding between whites and Indians. Instead, Lummi students became targets for hostility and resentment about Indian fishing rights.

Second, attempts to avoid discussions of Indian issues by progressive teachers did not attenuate the prejudice, it only further silenced Lummi students. Some teachers tried to discuss the most superficial aspects of a stereotyped Indian culture. Their goal was to bring the Native student's culture into the classroom, but not connect it with the salmon, the topic of contention. But teachers could not

1. Rachel Prentice, "Talk of racism arises," Bellingham Herald, April 3, 1995, 2.

understand the Lummis' historic and spiritual connection to the salmon; whites viewed it as simply an economic resource. In this case, the heart of the controversy that teachers tried to avoid was also at the heart of the Natives' culture. They further silenced Indian students by an unspoken ban on discussions about fishing.

Teachers who were deeply troubled by the prejudice at the high school were bewildered by the complexity of the political and cultural conflicts played out in the classrooms and halls. They sometimes talked about their feelings in small groups away from the school, but as time went on most of them tended to avoid discussing what was a confusing and seemingly unsolvable dilemma. An atmosphere of denial descended on the high school in the 1970s as teachers pretended that everything was mostly alright and that the problems bursting around them were normal and acceptable. Teachers and students alike referred to this phenomenon as a "fog that engulfed all of us."

Even though they may have encountered individual empathetic teachers, Lummis recognized that the schooling structures that oppressed them were far reaching and that anti-Indian racism was entrenched in every level of the education system. Economic self-interest on the part of non-Native fishermen drove a fair amount of this bias, but bigotry, apart from the fishing wars, was also involved.

Public knowledge about the tenured Western Washington University professor who told student teachers that Lummis

were genetically inferior might have produced some outrage. This, in turn, could have led to a more thorough examination of how attitudes are transmitted throughout educational institutions. But, this situation was not known among non-Natives outside of a small group within the university.

Critical theorists such as Pierre Bourdieu, Michael Apple, Henry Giroux, and Paulo Freire have discussed the hegemonic structure of educational institutions and how the sources of oppression are obfuscated and concealed. They argue for a thorough examination of the stems of power that converge at schools. Then, as Giroux proposes, "Radical educators must seize the positive moments that exist amidst the cracks and disjunctions created by oppositional forces that are only partially realized in the schools. To do so represents a crucial step in translating political understanding into the kind of political struggle that might contest not only the hegemonic practices of the school, but also could trace their source back to the wider society."² In the case of Lummi students at Ferndale High School, the political backdrop that shaped the culture of the school was comprehensible, and had this information been available to those teachers who were trying to make a difference, it might have directed their efforts in more effective ways. Vine Deloria's book Indians of the Pacific Northwest: From the Coming of the White Man to the Present Day would have

2. Henry Giroux, Ideology, Culture, and the Process of Schooling (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1981), 31.

been an excellent source of information for teachers because much of it is dedicated to an examination of the Lummis with regard to the history of Indian-White relations in Whatcom County.³

Equally important to having information about the historic and political climate of the school is knowledge about the lifeways of the Lummi people that validates them as an aboriginal people with a legitimate contemporary culture. Giving teachers at Ferndale correct and properly contextualized information about Lummis as a people and as individuals would have helped them understand the themes of Indian students' struggles in their classrooms. But rather than focus entirely on the Lummi students' culture, it is vital that the teacher reflect deeply and critically on her own culture and the values that are often in conflict with the goals and lifeways of aboriginal people.

It has been made evident that avoiding controversy does not diminish tensions in cross-cultural education settings, it merely submerges those tensions. As Paulo Freire has maintained, teachers need to struggle with their students to foster critical consciousness as they make meaning of their community and world.⁴ The prescription at Ferndale High School in the 1970s was for more, not less, discussion about

3. Vine Deloria, Jr., Indians of the Pacific Northwest (Garden City, New Jersey: Doubleday & Company, 1977).

4. Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed (New York: Seabury Press, 1970).

treaties and Indian-white relations. An open forum might have attenuated the hostility and transformed anger into rational argument.

The high school program that I helped to start at Northwest Indian College on the Lummi reservation in 1989 has grown to three times its original size in students, faculty, and facilities. It now includes not only dropouts, but Lummis who choose to go to school on the reservation rather than attend Ferndale. For a number of reasons, most Lummi parents still send their children to the Ferndale schools. Recently, critics of the Lummis have raised the old complaints of having a segregated school on the reservation.

Marlene Dawson, Whatcom County Councilwoman and Ferndale School Board member, wants all Indian students integrated into the Ferndale schools. On a radio talk show focusing on water rights, she recently said, "I'd like to know, since we have a federal policy of desegregation, why we are supporting a segregated school system on the reservation."⁵ Dawson, a property owner on the Lummi reservation, speaks for a group of other white residents on the reservation as well as for her constituents in the community of Ferndale. She is actively lobbying state and federal officials to limit the authority of the Lummi tribe. Her efforts, if successful, would erode Lummi sovereignty and could eventually lead to termination of the reservation.

5. Marlene Dawson, guest on the "Jeff Kent Show," KGMI AM, June 22, 1995.

The issues of the 1970s were about fishing rights while the issues of the 90s are focusing on water rights. Dawson and others have provoked Senator Slade Gorton into threatening to cut off all federal appropriations to the Lummi tribe if Lummis do not make compromises in the conflicts with white property owners.

Conflicts between Indians and whites are still felt in the schools. This study would suggest that it is not spurious to make the connection between Dawson's position on the Ferndale School Board and her involvement with anti-Indian activities (although her efforts to restrict tribal sovereignty for the Lummis are not seen as anti-Indian by neo-conservatives, only pro-property rights). From a perspective opposite to that of Lummis, she recognizes the direct link between what goes on in the schools and the politics of Indian-white relations in Whatcom County. On the same radio show she stated that "I'm concerned about relationships with the children in the school. Anytime you get in this big confrontation, those kinds of things end up...."⁶ (the host interrupted her and she was not able to finish her sentence).

An individual's high school experiences have a profound lifetime effect on attitudes and values toward education. As Native people begin to create secondary and post-secondary education models out of the drive for self-determination,

6. Ibid.

there is a need to examine critically the public school experience from an Indian point of view. Unless the history and cultural framework of these high school settings is looked at closely, there will be a tendency for Indian people to re-create the very structures that did not work for them in the first place. This needs to be kept in mind as Native peoples establish band schools and tribal colleges.

Moreover, teachers and administrators who serve Indian students in the public schools must learn to appreciate that each student is an individual and has a unique background with regard to the tribal and family setting they come from. Too often school districts base ideas on how best to serve Indian students on stereotypes and misunderstandings. If these educators could hear the thoughts and feelings of individual Indian students as they tell the stories of their life at school, they may begin to examine their own cultural biases and presumptions.

Moreover, discussions about improving Indian education must begin with a coherent sense of the history of Indian-white relations in a given community. To focus attention only on the school without examining the history of the community which surrounds it can give an incomplete and misleading depiction of the problems Native students face in public schools. And, distorted representations of the past can lead to erroneous interpretations of the present.

In the case of my particular study, I especially hope that it can serve the Lummi people by allowing their voices to be brought into the discourse of what education ought to be for and how to create a schooling environment that celebrates the contributions of a diversity of perspectives. These stories of school life twenty years ago need to be heard as a way of adding depth to our understanding of the history of North American education. In addition, these stories can inform a contemporary movement to create a culturally plural and vibrant education system, avoiding some of the most glaring mistakes of the past.

NOTE ON PRIMARY SOURCES

In gathering information about the Lummis, I travelled throughout Whatcom county. I also went to Seattle and to Chemawa Boarding School in Salem, Oregon to gather documents. While interviewing individuals in Whatcom County about life at Ferndale High School, I asked if they knew of any notes, letters, or newspaper clippings which could help in my research. One woman made a photocopy of her notes from a hearing held at Western Washington University about the racist professor discussed in chapter seven. These notes provided a great deal of information as it confirmed and amplified on what informants had told me about the hearing. I visited Mountain View Elementary School, Vista Middle School, and Ferndale High School. At Ferndale High School I systematically searched the school paper, The Eagle Eye, from 1970-1980 for information about Indian-white relations at the school. I also inspected the Ferndale School District's Board Minutes from 1973 to 1977.

I went to the Lummi Archives, which is a private archive center, but the majority of documents there are restricted as a result of Tribal Resolution #9229 which restricts access to documents according to Lummi sensibilities. Ann Nugent's work, Schooling of the Lummi Indians Between 1855--1956, was researched and written before Resolution 9229 was enacted. It is an official publication of the Lummi Indian Business Council and

provides background information and details on early school experiences.

I found a considerable amount of information about the Lummi Federal Community Action Program and its educational components at the Western Regional Archives in Bellingham. Additionally, I visited the archives of the Sisters of Providence in West Seattle and examined correspondence and official chronicles with regard to the Tulalip Boarding School. At the same time, the Seattle Museum of History and Industry displayed an exhibit on Tulalip. I inspected the exhibit and spoke with its curator, Librarian Carolyn J. Marr, about my research and the educational history of Lummis at Tulalip. She provided me with copies of some of her field notes from interviews with Puget Sound Indian students who talked about their public school experiences.

Newspapers were an important source of documentation about both incidents and attitudes concerning Indian-white relations in Whatcom County during the 1970s. For Lummis, the most critical years were 1974 to 1977 covering the Boldt Decision (1974) and the aftermath which was felt throughout Puget Sound. I systematically examined the Bellingham Herald, a daily newspaper, from 1973 through 1977 for articles, editorials, and letters to the editor about Lummis and Indian fishing rights. I also systematically searched the following weekly and monthly newspapers examining all editions from 1970 to 1980: Ferndale Westside Record-Journal, the Lynden Tribune, The Northwest Passage, The

Western Front (weekly student publication of Western Washington University), and the Lummi Squol Quol (the monthly Lummi Tribal Newspaper).

When I visited Chemawa I was told that all records on former students were confidential. Unfortunately, there were no archives for such things as student essays, yearbooks, or issues of the student newspaper. One administrator searched through his own copies of 1970s yearbooks to point out particular Lummi students and make general comments on the educational history of Lummis at Chemawa. His comments can be found in chapter four.

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