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CHAPTER 6

The Meanings of Survival School Education: Identity, Self-Determination, and Decolonization

On an unseasonably cold weekend in October, several hundred Indian people gathered near the Bad River reservation in northern Wisconsin for the fall ceremonies of the Midewiwin lodge. Although mostly Anishinaabeg from Minnesota and elsewhere in the upper Midwest, they also came from other Native nations across the United States as well as Indigenous communities in Canada, Mexico, and Central America. The three-day ceremonies took place in a long structure constructed of maple saplings, curved overhead, tied with twine, and covered with tarps. More than a hundred feet long and twenty feet wide, the lodge stood in an open field along Highway 2, backed by pine woods and the south shore of Lake Superior.

Over the course of a day spent at the ceremonies, I lost all normal sense of time. Low-hanging clouds and intermittent rain and snow outside made it impossible to track the path of the sun across the sky. Inside, the lodge was a dusky, timeless space. The low illumination provided by the central fire, a hole in the ceiling above the fire pit, and strings of small lightbulbs varied little from morning to evening. There were no clocks and the day's events followed no hourly schedule; they began when people were ready, lasted however long was necessary, and ended when they were finished. Each part of the day's proceedings—from the teachings delivered to the Midewiwin initiates by Grand Chief Eddie Benton-Banai, to the many dances, to the jingle dress healing ceremony, to the afternoon and evening feasts—took hours to complete.

Within this self-contained world, past and present merged. The smell of

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wood smoke, cedar, tobacco, and sage; the feel of the earth underneath; the sounds of the Ojibwe language and the drumming and singing; the rituals of water, fire, and food; and the pervasive communality of the space, all evoked the traditional Anishinaabe life of three hundred years ago. Yet they coexisted with the trappings of modern American society: winter jackets and boots, baseball hats and stocking caps, plastic lawn chairs, and English spoken in thick Midwestern accents.

From an outsider's perspective, the day contained elements of powwow, religious revival meeting, hunting camp, training seminar, small-town high school basketball game, and family reunion. Stretches of great seriousness and deep focus alternated with moments of joyous abandon. Traditional teachings about how to live a good life were interspersed with wry inside jokes. Babies slept on blankets and toddlers trundled around inside the lodge, while outside the older children ran and roughhoused. Old friends met with hugs, tears, and teasing.

Above all, the lodge was a place of palpable spiritual vitality. Those gathered here were not just a few die-hard traditionalists clinging to the almost-forgotten, irrelevant ways of the distant past. This was a well-organized, humming, intergenerational event, run by cultural experts who managed the complex logistics of the dawn-to-midnight ceremonies with competence. Common human beings rose to their responsibilities as caretakers and culture bearers for their people. Together they worked as fire keepers, feast preparers, pipe carriers, water carriers, smudgers, drummers, singers, dancers, teachers, and healers. This was a strong, thriving, spiritual community, ready to continue on for the coming generations.

At its heart, the survival school system worked to provide students with meaning for their lives. That meaning developed from young people's discovery and acceptance of their cultural identity, the revival of Indigenous value systems, the strengthening of extended family support networks, and the infusion of daily life with a sense of interconnectedness and belonging. It also derived from the cultivation of political awareness and community-mindedness and the encouragement of active work for the good of Indian people and the survival of ancestral knowledge. In this way, the people of Heart of the Earth and Red School House sought to help students find their place in the world, and to uncover their life's purpose.

How, then, did students respond to this alternative educational system? What meanings did they find within it and how did it influence their devel-

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opment into young adults? What did the schools mean to students' families, and how did they shape Indian communities?

The survival schools' impact was most ambiguous in terms of academic outcomes. Over the life of the schools, they received their most consistent criticisms in the area of academic achievement and accomplished their least obvious successes. Neither Heart of the Earth nor Red School House ever provided an exceptional academic education as calculated by most standard measures of achievement, and at times they performed quite poorly in comparison to other schools. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, Heart of the Earth leaders placed more emphasis on raising test scores and producing other quantifiable improvements in students' mastery of basic academic skills, with some success.

Survival school founders have challenged negative assessments of their schools by standard measures of academic achievement. They have emphasized the results of studies that demonstrated individual students' improvement on basic skills rather than school-wide statistics. They also have pointed out the exceptionally high concentration of low-income, high-risk pupils in their student body, many of whom already had struggled and failed in the public school system. Certainly, one could argue that by attending one of the survival schools, some students simply *got* a basic education who otherwise would not have done so, given their past experience in public schools. This seems as true in Oh Day Aki's last years as it was when the A.I.M. Survival School first opened in 1972.

Some survival school educators—and particularly their founders—also have maintained that, while necessary and important, proficiency in basic academic skills was not their highest priority, nor has it been the purpose of this book to assess the schools in terms of academic achievement. I had neither the desire nor the expertise to engage in such analysis, even if there had been enough data to do so effectively. While decisions about how to balance instruction in basic skills with the cultural and political curriculum posed challenges that contributed to internal divisions within the schools, most of those I interviewed—whether founders, teachers, administrators, parents, or former students—prioritized other goals and emphasized other outcomes than academic achievement. As a historian interested in understanding Native people's experiences from their perspectives, I also looked elsewhere for the schools' most significant outcomes and meanings.

One of the survival schools' most significant outcomes was their influence on the identity development of students and their families, as they

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grew to understand themselves as Native people and become leaders in their communities. For those who founded and worked in the schools, they provided a way for Indian people to practice self-determination over their children's education. Over time, the survival schools also became centers for the rebuilding of Indigenous community in the Twin Cities and in the upper Midwest region. The members of what linguist Joshua Fishman might call this "community of belief" came together to ensure the survival of Indigenous difference in American society. Thus they worked against settler colonialism's persistent "logic of elimination" and furthered Indigenous decolonization in ways that have continued after Red School House and Oh Day Aki closed their doors.[1]

"She Found Out Who She Is": Student Experiences of Cultural Education

The cultural components of the survival schools' curriculum had the most profound and far-reaching impact on their students. School organizers had set out to help students discover and embrace their tribal, Indian, and Indigenous identities within an educational environment grounded in ancestral cultural knowledge. Many young Native people responded positively to this effort, and it shaped their lives in powerful and lasting ways.

Some students were drawn to Heart of the Earth and Red School House by an already-existing desire to learn about their cultures and a need to understand who they were as Indian people. In 1978, Tom King, then a ninth grader at Heart of the Earth, explained to a reporter why he "eagerly" had put his name on the school's waiting list five years earlier. "I didn't know my culture, and I wanted to," King said. "That's why I came here."[2]

Once they spent time in the schools, many students experienced the kind of self-awakening that school organizers had hoped to provide for them. Red School House graduating senior Don Havlish reflected on this process in 1978:

> Within the three years I was there, I really feel I learned a lot, academically and culturally speaking. I felt like a new person. I learned about the ways of our people, the traditions—the religion—I had finally discovered my real identity and I feel that's important to every individual, regardless of what your ethnic background may be.[3]

In the mid-1970s, Heart of the Earth student Leona Flores also discovered a new sense of self through her survival school education. After bouncing

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from one Minneapolis public school to another in the early 1970s, Flores landed at South High, where she continued to feel out of place and came into conflict with other students. When a fight led to her suspension from South, she transferred to Heart of the Earth. Once there, she embraced her Indian identity in a way she never had before. Flores was sixteen in 1975 when her mother, Harriet Heisler, told a journalist, "That school is the most important thing in her life. She found out who she is."[4]

The survival schools created a space in which young Indian people could feel safe in the process of exploring who they were and begin to feel good about themselves, without prejudice or hostility and without feeling the pressure to change themselves to conform to dominant social norms. Early in 1978, Betsee Knox, a health teacher and counselor at Heart of the Earth, explained to a reporter that in contrast to the public schools, "Here kids can feel more comfortable to be what they are and to believe what they believe." Lisa Bellanger, then a junior at Heart of the Earth, further explained that "In other schools, they put you on the spot and expect you to be the Indian that they made up for you. Here you can be the Indian that you are."[5]

Evidence suggests that for those survival school students who had struggled the most painfully in the public schools, entering that alternative, culturally defined space improved their attitudes toward school and enabled greater academic success. In early March 1972, psychologist Dr. Norman Silverberg tested students at the two-month-old A.I.M. Survival School (later Heart of the Earth) in Minneapolis in reading, spelling, and mathematics. Late in May he returned to repeat the tests. In the eleven weeks between testing sessions, Silverberg found that students had increased their grade level equivalencies across all three skill areas. In a written evaluation of the school and its curriculum, Silverberg stated:

> I was very favorably impressed, not only with the results of the quantitative evaluation, but also in terms of my observation of the children. They are happier and interested in learning. . . . It would appear to me . . . that the AIM Survival School is meeting the needs of many children of the Indian community and is therefore successful.[6]

According to Clyde Bellecourt, this improvement was a direct result of the school's emphasis on culture and identity. In a later interview, Bellecourt recalled the Silverberg tests:

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> Sometimes our kids that come to us were three or four years behind in reading, they're behind in math, and they're behind in different subjects. They all have special learning [and] behavioral problems . . . But they found out, with the introduction of Indian language, with culture, tradition, starting to instill some pride in these kids, that these kids were running anywhere from one-half grade to one and a half grade levels *higher.*[7]

The work of psychologist Dr. Margaret Silverberg corroborated Bellecourt's attribution of students' improved academic performance to the survival schools' cultural context. Silverberg also conducted academic testing at the Minneapolis survival school in the early 1970s and she maintained ongoing contact with Heart of the Earth students through her work as a psychological consultant for a local Indian advocacy agency. In a 1975 interview, she condemned the public schools for imposing a culturally hostile environment on Indian children. In contrast, she praised the survival schools for encouraging Indian youth to explore their cultural identities. In such an atmosphere, she asserted, Native students "can develop a stronger concept of self-esteem and self-worth than would be possible in public schools." As a result, "kids can be more relaxed and able to apply themselves to learning."[8]

Staff and students at Heart of the Earth also attested to the positive impact of the school's cultural environment on students' educational development in the 1970s. In 1978, Heart of the Earth director Jim O'Brien told a journalist that "children at Heart of the Earth are learning more than they would in a public school" and that "they also have better attitudes." The experience of eleventh grader Jolene Bounds supported O'Brien's assertions:

> She was expelled from Marshall–University High School three years ago because, she said, "I didn't get along with the white kids or the teachers and I wasn't learning anything." Now, at the survival school, her attitude has noticeably changed. She has regained an interest in school, she said, and has decided to pursue a career in law.[9]

In a survival school, O'Brien explained, "Native American children . . . do not feel caught between cultures as they do in public schools." As Eddie Benton-Banai argued, once Indian students develop a positive Indian identity and build up their self-esteem, "then you'll see the academic rise and their ability and their striving and their drive. That's what culture-based education is."[10]

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1. Red School House is a place where people gather together.
2. The Red School House teaches respect.
3. The Red School House is a place where I learn to speak Ojibway.
4. The Red School House has showed me the Indian ways.
5. The Red School House makes me feel smart.

STEVE QUAGON

Yesterday We were talKing about how Come the new kids came to this School. Well I'll Tell you why I came. Since the first week I came here I Understood alot about This School. This School has alot of Pride And Understanding. IT IS Not like any Public School. in a Public School they're mean to you just because of your Color. Well thats not right! I quess These Indians, at Red Schoolhouse are not like that anyhow. this School has respect and they know what the Sacred circle means. the other Schools I went to Don't make you feel AT Home. This one does. All the people Are Bright here.

Maryanne Smith

Red School House student writing from the 1970s reveals how the survival schools' supportive, culturally relevant environment helped students develop positive attitudes toward education and facilitated their learning. From "We, Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow: Red School House Yearbook, 1977–78" and "Knowledge through Cultural Understanding: Red School House Information Booklet," published by Indian Country Communications, Inc.; reprinted with permission.

Beyond their impact on academic progress, the survival schools reached some young people on an intensely personal level, touching a spiritual core that they had not known they even had. Lisa Bellanger had attended the St. Paul Open School, cofounded by her mother Pat, through the ninth grade. At that point she considered transferring to Red School House, but found her mother's heavy involvement there a bit too close for comfort. She was interested in attending Heart of the Earth in Minneapolis, but because

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they lived in St. Paul, her mother didn't want her to take the city bus that far every day. So Lisa chose to transfer to Central High School in St. Paul, where many friends from her neighborhood attended. Although Central was a large, mainstream, public school, Pat agreed to let Lisa try it. As Lisa remembered in an interview, the experiment did not last long:

> On my first day of school, I walked in the first set of doors, and after going from a small school . . . to going to this school where there was a thousand kids, I never made it through the second set of doors at Central; I turned around and went home. And never, ever went back there.[11]

Rather than admit to her mother what had happened, Lisa pretended for weeks that she was attending Central, when in fact she was spending her days at home.

Eventually, Lisa got bored at home, and so her friend Susan Bellecourt, daughter of Clyde and Peggy Bellecourt and a student at Heart of the Earth, suggested that Lisa come to school with her. Lisa laughingly recounted what happened after several weeks of tagging along with Susan:

> One day the principal or one of the counselors cornered me and they said, "You know, you're here every day. And we've let you sit in the classes, and hang out; you might as well just enroll." So, then I had to go back, 'cause my mom had to sign papers, and tell her I had not gone to school at Central! I had to 'fess up. . . . So she said, "Yeah, all right, as long as you're in school!" So she signed the papers, and I started attending at Heart of the Earth.[12]

Lisa stayed at Heart of the Earth for the rest of her high school years until her graduation in 1979.

From her first days at Heart of the Earth, Lisa Bellanger had felt comfortable there, for reasons that did not become clear until years later:

> At that time, I couldn't tell you why I liked Heart of the Earth . . . I just liked it. There were other Indian students there, we learned, we had our culture classes, we had language classes, we had circle time, and I just knew that it felt good there. . . . And now, as an adult, I can think back and look at the elements of what it was that drew me there; now I know about that. I believe it has to do with ancestral memory—blood memory, it's sometimes referred to as—where the smell of smudging the sage

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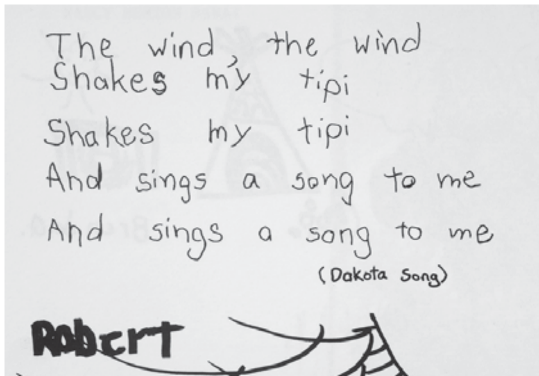
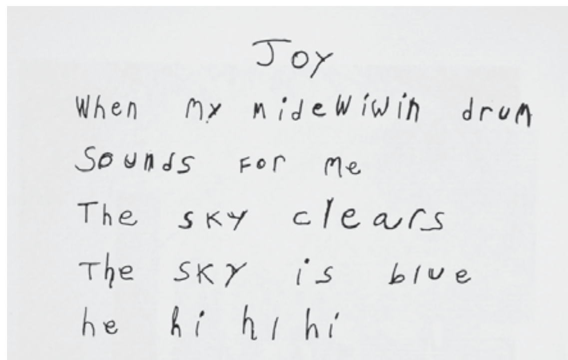
and the cedar connected with something inside of me that I didn't realize was there until I was older.

Bellanger believes that the educational environment at Heart of the Earth tapped into that "conceptual or ancestral memory that we know that we have, everybody has." Her sense of belonging within that cultural space happened because "when you go home to your original home, you feel it; you feel something there, but you can't describe it. And that's when I think that you've touched that place in your heart or in your memory where it's stored."[13]





Red School House students' creative work from the 1970s demonstrates how the survival schools' cultural curriculum shaped young people's developing sense of self. From "We, Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow: Red School House Yearbook, 1977–78," published by Indian Country Communications, Inc.; reprinted with permission.

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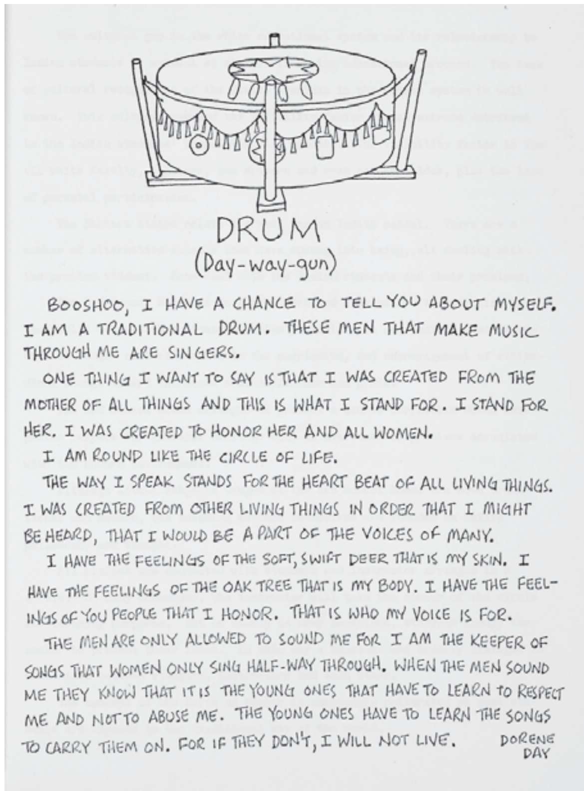
For Dorene Day, entering the survival school environment also felt like coming home. By the time she completed sixth grade, Day had attended three public schools, one in northern Minnesota and two in the Twin Cities. In the fall of 1972, she began seventh grade at the newly founded Red School House in St. Paul. Compared to the public schools, Day remembered Red School House as "this really wonderful place." The biggest difference for her was the "ever-present" spiritual atmosphere and the introduction to Indigenous values and beliefs. As she described it, when she entered the survival school, "I was like a sponge." She soaked up everything she learned about her culture, and it nourished her. As she put it, "I was fed spiritually."[14]

Within the cultural environment of the Red School House, Day flourished, growing into a strong, centered, creative young woman:



DRUM
(Day-way-gun)

BOOSHOO, I HAVE A CHANCE TO TELL YOU ABOUT MYSELF. I AM A TRADITIONAL DRUM. THESE MEN THAT MAKE MUSIC THROUGH ME ARE SINGERS.

ONE THING I WANT TO SAY IS THAT I WAS CREATED FROM THE MOTHER OF ALL THINGS AND THIS IS WHAT I STAND FOR. I STAND FOR HER. I WAS CREATED TO HONOR HER AND ALL WOMEN.

I AM ROUND LIKE THE CIRCLE OF LIFE.

THE WAY I SPEAK STANDS FOR THE HEART BEAT OF ALL LIVING THINGS. I WAS CREATED FROM OTHER LIVING THINGS IN ORDER THAT I MIGHT BE HEARD, THAT I WOULD BE A PART OF THE VOICES OF MANY.

I HAVE THE FEELINGS OF THE SOFT, SWIFT DEER THAT IS MY SKIN. I HAVE THE FEELINGS OF THE OAK TREE THAT IS MY BODY. I HAVE THE FEELINGS OF YOU PEOPLE THAT I HONOR. THAT IS WHO MY VOICE IS FOR.

THE MEN ARE ONLY ALLOWED TO SOUND ME FOR I AM THE KEEPER OF SONGS THAT WOMEN ONLY SING HALF-WAY THROUGH. WHEN THE MEN SOUND ME THEY KNOW THAT IT IS THE YOUNG ONES THAT HAVE TO LEARN TO RESPECT ME AND NOT TO ABUSE ME. THE YOUNG ONES HAVE TO LEARN THE SONGS TO CARRY THEM ON. FOR IF THEY DON'T, I WILL NOT LIVE.

DORENE DAY

Red School House student Dorene Day, youngest daughter of founding parent Charlotte Day, soaked up the school's cultural teachings and thrived in its spiritual environment in the 1970s. From "Knowledge through Cultural Understanding: Red School House Information Booklet," published by Indian Country Communications, Inc.; reprinted with permission.

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> That's really where I excelled in all of my writing and singing and everything else that I became interested in, because basically, they were teaching us how to express ourselves, from that cultural context, which could kind of go on forever. You know, once you have some of the principles—some of the teachings, or ideals—then you can do art forever, or you can write forever, or you can sing forever. So, that was a big deal for me . . . Once I got into that environment, where I felt safe and loved and cared for, and I had all these beautiful things around me, I just excelled.[15]

Throughout her high school years, Day wrote poetry and stories, and she became one of the school's leading traditional dancers and singers. While she explored her artistic talents, she also struggled with family tragedy and loss. Her father was killed when she was sixteen, and she also lost her grandmother during her teenage years. Day credits the Red School House with providing the cultural and spiritual grounding she needed to survive those difficult times.

"The Youth Need a Voice": Student Experiences of Political Education

The political education provided by the survival schools worked differently for different students. At their best, Heart of the Earth and Red School House offered young Indian people a set of integrated, relevant experiences that helped them become more socially aware and more politically empowered. Former Heart of the Earth student Lisa Bellanger recalled in a 2002 interview:

> I don't know how many protests and rallies I was at! You know, *learning* about Native rights, *learning* about human rights, *learning* about fairness, and equality, [and] justice.

Although many of those learning opportunities took place outside of the regular school day, Bellanger remembers them as well-connected to the general curriculum. As she put it, "There were many times that we were out of school doing things, but then we had to relate back to education."[16]

Some of the survival school students' most transformative political experiences occurred at national conferences. Throughout the 1970s, students traveled across the country to multitribal gatherings of Indian people sponsored by the American Indian Movement and other intertribal organizations. They attended meetings of the International Indian Treaty Council

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and the Federation of Native American Controlled Survival Schools, participated in youth and elders gatherings, and attended annual conferences of the National Indian Education Association. At these meetings, survival school students listened to elders, tribal leaders, and community activists discuss the most pressing concerns of contemporary Indian people: treaty rights, sovereignty, and self-determination; land, water, and mineral resources; health, housing, employment, and education. They also absorbed teachings about cultural values, beliefs, and prophecies and the importance of preserving traditional ways of life.[17]

At these gatherings, students also spoke out about their own concerns and their vision for the future of Indian people, as Lisa Bellanger remembered:

> Students from the survival schools would stand up and say, "You know, the *youth* need a voice in these issues; this is *our* issue, this is what *we* want to talk about." And you would hear young people talking about the responsibilities and rights of sovereignty, and as applied to treaty rights, and as applied to protecting land and natural resources . . . [W]e were out there telling people, "You know, you *are,* this *is* a sovereign nation. We have, and should have, the right to government-to-government relationships and negotiations."[18]

Some of these students used their emerging sense of justice to push the adults further along the path to self-determination. At times they also led the call to revive their ancestral knowledge and return to traditional ways of life. According to a report from a 1975 education conference:

> [Survival school] students present at the conference reminded their elders that there were things more important than money and political power. "We never came together before to learn from each other," Sherri Blakey, co-chairman of the Red School House student council said. "Our orientation is spiritual and cultural, as well. A lot of learning can take place in a sweat lodge."[19]

While they spoke to the adults at national conferences, these young leaders also inspired their fellow students. Dorene Day attended many such gatherings while a student at Red School House, and the youth activism she witnessed made an impression:

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> There was a bunch of young people, that we went to every AIM conference and convention. And we were always doing work, I mean we were always trying to do stuff—I was probably less active than some of the other ones. . . . But I remember their actions, their faces, you know, people that were involved in stuff like that. . . . [S]ome of them, like Lisa [Bellanger] and Ingrid [Washinawatok], had been at it for a few years by the time I started going. So I started to watch everything they did.

Before long, Day moved from watching and learning to speaking out and leading in her own right.[20]

Both Lisa Bellanger and Dorene Day were galvanized by the political education they received at Heart of the Earth and Red School House. They cannot, however, give the survival schools the entire credit for their politicization. Both of these young women had family backgrounds that predisposed them to political awareness and activism. Lisa Bellanger's mother Pat was a longtime community activist, an American Indian Movement founder, and a survival school organizer. Lisa already had attended many AIM rallies and conferences by the time she enrolled at Heart of the Earth. Both of Dorene Day's parents encouraged social awareness in their children from a young age. When Charlotte Day attended AIM protests in the early 1970s, she often brought her children along. Day's older siblings also set an activist example. Her brothers and sisters participated in the Trail of Broken Treaties, the Wounded Knee occupation, and the Longest Walk, and her older sister Sharon protested against the Vietnam War. The older Day children also attended Red School House, so that their home and school environments became mutually reinforcing influences on their developing political consciousness.[21]

Red School House student Gabrielle Strong also came from a politically oriented family. A Sisseton-Wahpeton Dakota from South Dakota, Strong transferred to the St. Paul school for her senior year when the BIA closed the boarding school she attended in Fort Sill, Oklahoma. Strong's mother, an AIM supporter, sent her daughter to the survival school in part because of its AIM affiliation and its politicized curriculum. Although Strong arrived with a preexisting social awareness, she appreciated the opportunity to exercise it actively as part of her education. Looking back, the marches, protests, and conferences stood out as highlights of her year at Red School House and as key contributors to her developing sense of identity.[22]

Not all survival school students experienced their political awakenings

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as an integrated component of a broader educational curriculum. Rick Powers attended Red School House briefly in 1972. Raised by a non-Indian adoptive family, Powers had grown up knowing little about his Indian heritage. As a teenager, he became a chronic runaway, until he was sent to the juvenile correctional facility at Lino Lakes north of St. Paul. While there he was approached by AIM organizers Billy Blackwell and Butch Old Shield, who offered to help him out of Lino Lakes and get him reconnected to his Native identity. They got Powers released into Old Shield's custody, and within a few days Blackwell, Old Shield, and Eddie Benton-Banai had taken him to a sweat lodge, enrolled him in the Red School House, and helped him take his "first step . . . from the White world into the Indian world."

Powers subsequently embarked on an intense journey of cultural and political awakening. The Red School House, however, contributed little to this process. Drawn to the AIM community in Minneapolis, he began cutting classes to spend time along Franklin Avenue getting to know young Indian people and community activists. When the Trail of Broken Treaties organized in the fall of 1972, Powers joined the caravan, traveled to Washington, D.C., and participated in the occupation of the BIA building. Then, instead of returning to school, he accompanied other AIM members to the Pine Ridge reservation in South Dakota, where he became embroiled in the Lakota community's conflicts with tribal chairman Dick Wilson, their struggle for fair treatment within the justice system, the occupation of Wounded Knee, and its divisive and violent aftermath. Powers eventually retreated from frontline activism, but he never returned to Red School House. In the late 1970s, he earned his high school diploma through the GED program in the St. Paul public school system. For Powers, then, his political development diverged from his formal education—though as an adult, he did return to the survival school system to work at Heart of the Earth in the 1990s.[23]

"It Really Does Extend Itself": Strengthening Native Families

For some of those who completed their education at Red School House or Heart of the Earth, the survival schools shaped their lives in lasting ways. By the turn of the twenty-first century, the schools' influence had extended into the second and third generations of Indian families who had been involved with the schools as founders, administrators, staff members, or students. The first and second generations of survival school families were founders

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such as Jerry and Pat Roy, Charlotte Day, Pat Bellanger, Clyde and Peggy Bellecourt, and Eddie Benton-Banai, and their children who attended the schools in the 1970s. As these children and other former students grew up, graduated, and began raising families of their own, some of them also sent *their* children to the survival schools for their education, creating a third generation of Indian families whose lives became closely connected to the schools. Pat Bellanger's daughter Lisa, a 1979 Heart of the Earth graduate, had three children attend the school before it closed in 2008: her daughter Binaishi, her younger son Mukwah, and her oldest son Jacob. Charlotte Day's youngest daughter Dorene, who graduated from Red School House in 1977, had four children—Ariana, Bud, Alyssa, and Alana—attend Red School House prior to its closure in 1995.

As parents, these former students wanted their children to experience the kind of educational environment they had loved and be influenced in similarly positive ways. Lisa Bellanger sent her children to Heart of the Earth in order to provide them with the same foundation of cultural practices, symbols, and meanings that had supported her as a teenager. "I wanted them to go to Heart of the Earth," she said, "because I wanted them to experience circle time." Because of the school's grounding in traditional Native culture, "it's helping to instill values that I want instilled in them." Bellanger saw the school environment and the home as mutually reinforcing: "the values that I want my children to learn, are upheld and they're validated at school. And then I, in turn, validate what the school teaches my children; they come home and they ask me about this or that, and we'll talk about it." In the 1960s and 1970s, educational reformers had targeted the dissonance between home and school cultures as one of the most serious problems for Indian public school students. As a three-generation survival school family, the Bellangers stopped the cycle of education-induced cultural alienation and replaced it with one of school-supported cultural reinforcement.[24]

Like Lisa Bellanger, Dorene Day has described the survival school as a place that felt comfortable, safe, and deeply relevant, like a cultural homecoming. She credited that environment with nurturing her intellectual, emotional, and spiritual development. As evidence of her devotion to Red School House, which she attended throughout high school, Day pointed out that though she could have graduated a year early at age seventeen, she chose not to do so. "I loved the place so much," she explained, "that I went to school for another year." When she became a parent, she said, "I wanted that same kind of education for the kids." She wanted them in a small Indian

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school. She wanted to send them to "a place that will really love kids, and embrace kids, even when they're bad, and they do stuff wrong . . . a place where they know people care about them, 24–7."

More than anything, Day wanted her children in a culturally supportive educational environment. As a young child, Day's daughter Alana was "the kind of kid that danced down the hallway singing Indian songs." Day feared that in a public school, Alana would learn that "artistically or spiritually expressing yourself was wrong." Instead, Day explained, "I want my kids to know that they're respected for their culture, who they are, they're respected for their spirituality." For all of these reasons, Day sent her four oldest children to Red School House until it closed. Then she chose a multicultural alternative high school in St. Paul called Guadalupe Alternative Programs (GAP). Although not exclusively an Indian school, Day described GAP as "the closest thing that I can find to Red School House."[25]

Dorene Day and Lisa Bellanger could not, and did not, rely entirely on these educational institutions to direct their own children's development. But, as they worked to guide their children's lives in positive, meaningful directions, they drew from their experiences at Heart of the Earth and Red School House. By enrolling their children in survival schools when possible, and by passing on the values nurtured by a survival school education, they have raised the next generation of their families to be both culturally grounded and politically engaged.

Lisa's son Mukwah and her daughter Binaishi both were very active in traditional cultural activities as young people. As members of the drum and dance club at Heart of the Earth, they performed regularly at powwows, feasts, graduation ceremonies, and other community events. They faithfully participated in Midewiwin ceremonies and other seasonal gatherings. Lisa's mother Pat Bellanger, survival school founder and proud grandmother, praised Mukwah's affinity for traditional ways of life, even at a young age. In an interview, she gleefully recounted how he had cooked wild rice for the guests at a recent traditional funeral. "You should have seen the elders!" she exclaimed. She also delighted in describing Mukwah's tenth birthday party, where he invited elders as well as children and led his young friends in a traditional honor song for his grandmother.[26]

Like Lisa Bellanger, Dorene Day also raised her children with an Indigenous cultural orientation. As a Red School House graduate, Day attributed her family's solid cultural grounding to the spiritual nourishment she received during her years in the survival school system:

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> If someone never took me to ceremonies, if someone never took me on a sweat lodge, if someone never took me out in the woods to fast, I wouldn't be the person that I am today. If someone didn't put that kind of energy into me, and didn't tell me all of our history and culture and stories—philosophy, traditions, everything—I wouldn't be the person I am today, and my kids wouldn't be the people *they* are. So, it really does extend itself.

With the birth of her grandson, Omashkoonce (Little Elk), Dorene and her family began encouraging a fourth generation of Days to grow into maturity from a firm cultural foundation. As Day said proudly, "My grandson is already a little Midewiwin boy." This gave her great hope for the future:

> My grandson sings at the top of his lungs, with the drum . . . He plays about ceremonies, that's how he plays. He wants to sing, he wants to replicate those things in the lodge that he sees, he wants to dance, he wants to sit by the drum, he wants to do all that. So, he's gonna have those memories *well* before I did; I didn't have those memories till I was twelve, thirteen years old. He has them from birth. And that's going to make a difference.

Because of her grandson's early exposure to traditional culture, Day believes, "he is going to be so far ahead of all of us that he will have some kind of impact."[27]

Survival school graduates also are grooming their children and grandchildren to have an impact on the world by raising them to be socially aware and politically active. Dorene Day educated her family about contemporary Native struggles, such as the fight to save Coldwater Springs, a sacred site in Minneapolis, from destruction during the reroute of Highway 55, and the resistance of the Qwich'in people in Alaska to oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Day characterized these efforts as an extension of the political education she received as a young person, from her parents and from the survival schools:

> They are having the same kinds of experiences that I had, which hopefully will give them . . . the motivation to stay socially and politically knowledgeable about what happens to them, the environment, to people. 'Cause that's really how I was raised: I was raised going to protests, and I learned early what those fights were about, so I understood

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> that. And so that's how my kids are. My kids, I take them to the American Indian Movement conferences, I take them to protests.

Lisa Bellanger also has continued the legacy of political activism within her family, talking to her children about many of the same issues and bringing them to the same events as Dorene Day.[28]

The children of these multigenerational survival school families have proven relatively resistant to the problems that continue to plague young Native people in the United States, such as high dropout, suicide, and teen pregnancy rates; widespread substance abuse; and entanglement in the juvenile justice and child welfare systems. Lisa Bellanger's oldest child Jacob received most of his education at Heart of the Earth and graduated there in 2002, and she credited the school with helping him avoid destructive life patterns:

> We went through our hard times with him. But, you know what, he's gonna be twenty years old and he's not a father yet. You know, he understands that responsibility. And going into his adult life, he's never been sentenced to serve any time in any correctional facility.

Although Jake had not avoided trouble entirely, his mother was proud of the young man he had become. For Dorene Day, her grandson represented the third generation of Days who might grow up "chemical-free." This is a significant achievement in a family, and a community, with a history of alcohol addiction.[29]

Certainly, there were other influences besides the survival schools that shaped how Dorene Day and Lisa Bellanger raised their children. Both had culturally oriented, politically conscious parents, and both of them had formative experiences at home that influenced their choices as adults. But both Day and Bellanger insisted that without their years in the survival schools, their own families' trajectories would have been drastically different. As Day explained:

> I firmly believe that my kids were exposed to various things all of their lives because of my education. And now my kids are the way they are because of that exposure. And they will do even more with it than I did, you know what I'm saying? . . . [T]he fact that they are starting out way younger, it's gonna make them that much stronger. And it all

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> comes from that education I got. That's where it all comes from. I'm sure it came from my mother, and from my ancestors as well, but that's where I was able to see the connection; that's where I was able to have it flourish.[30]

Rather than losing more cultural knowledge with each new generation, survival school families like the Days and Bellangers are gaining it. By weaving survival school teachings into their adult lives, they are strengthening the social fabric of Indian families that had been weakened by American colonial policies and assimilationist institutions.

"I Want to Give Back": Rebuilding Native Community

The survival schools' long-term impact also extended beyond the circle of family to influence a broader Indian community. The schools had cultivated a spirit of community-mindedness among young Indian people, encouraging them to work for the collective good of their communities, their tribes, and other Indian and Indigenous people. Over the decades, these teachings bore fruit as Native people nurtured within the survival school system became community workers and cultural leaders, in the Twin Cities and beyond.[31]

Some of the students inspired by the survival schools' lessons about collective responsibility and community commitment returned to work in the schools as teachers, administrators, staff members, or volunteers. After graduating from Heart of the Earth in 1979, Lisa Bellanger worked off and on at the school for a total of ten years, holding positions as a secretary, administrative assistant, computer instructor, adult education tutor, student services coordinator, and career counselor. She also served many years as a school board member. In addition, she spent hundreds of hours volunteering for the school, helping with the drum and dance club, acting as a cheerleading adviser, organizing and chaperoning school events, and shuttling students to powwows, ceremonies, conferences, and protests.[32]

Former Red School House students also returned to work within the survival school system. After graduating from Red School House in 1981, Gabrielle Strong worked at the school as a receptionist, teacher aide, and drug and alcohol counselor before leaving to attend Macalester College in St. Paul. After receiving her bachelor's degree, Strong returned to work as a youth counselor at Ain Dah Yung, a student housing facility and shelter for

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runaway and homeless Indian youth that was founded and administered by Red School House. Within a year, she became the director at Ain Dah Yung, where she stayed for the next fifteen years. Red School House graduate Sherry Blakey, who had been a student leader in cultural and spiritual activities, also worked at the school after graduating in 1978. Another early student, Keith Herman, returned to Red School House to work as a teacher, counselor, and coach. Five of Charlotte Day's children who attended Red School House in the 1970s—Sharon, Cheryl, Charlene, Janet, and Dorene—worked at the school in some capacity in the years before it closed.[33]

In addition to former students, adults with connections to the survival school community also returned to give something back. Many parents and other relatives of survival school students received GEDs and job training through survival school adult education programs or the American Indian Opportunities Industrialization Center (AIOIC), an AIM-founded vocational training center in Minneapolis. Over the years, some of these family members came back to the schools to share their new skills, often as computer teachers or administrative support staff.[34]

Those whose lives were shaped by the survival schools also have provided educational leadership in other Twin Cities schools. Former Red School House student and employee Keith Herman moved on to work with Indian students at South High School in Minneapolis. Gabrielle Strong, a 1981 Red School House graduate and later an employee, has been a leader in Indian educational reform in St. Paul. In 2002, she was serving her eleventh term as an elected member of the parent committee on Indian education in the St. Paul public school system. Frustrated with the persistent achievement gap and the ongoing alienation of Indian children in the public schools, she also was seeking innovative ways to teach Indian children. In conversations with people in several Dakota communities, she was exploring the possibility of establishing a network of Native home schools focused on language revitalization and grounded in traditional Dakota culture.[35]

Former Heart of the Earth teacher and administrator Vikki Howard also maintained her commitment to improving Indian education in the Twin Cities. After leaving employment at Heart of the Earth in 1995, she helped a Minneapolis Indian agency develop a family education center. She went on to a position as education director at Nawayee Center School, an alternative Indian school founded in Minneapolis in the 1970s and accredited in 1981. In 1998, Howard began working as a community relations coordinator in the Indian studies department at the University of Minnesota. There she en-

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gaged in outreach efforts to reservations and the Twin Cities Indian population and acted as an advocate and community builder for Native university students and their families.[36]

Former survival school staff members also have applied the experience gained at Heart of the Earth and Red School House to their work in Indian education outside of the Twin Cities. Vikki Howard worked as education director for the Leech Lake band of Ojibwe on her home reservation in north-central Minnesota. Laura Waterman Wittstock, a Seneca woman who worked as an administrator at both survival schools, helped write funding proposals for the Circle of Life, an Indian community school on the White Earth Ojibwe reservation in northwestern Minnesota. By spring 2012, the Circle of Life school had expanded into a new building, where it delivered a curriculum that followed the survival school model, providing an "individualized, quality, culturally based education that emphasizes maximum academic, emotional, social, spiritual, and physical development for all individuals in a safe and productive environment." Elaine Salinas, a White Earth Ojibwe, served as a program developer and administrator at Heart of the Earth for many years in the 1970s and 1980s. Subsequently, she continued to work for reforms in Indian education through her involvement with the Urban Coalition in Minneapolis and the Rural School and Community Trust on the Oneida reservation in Wisconsin. Rosalie Brown Thunder, a Ho-Chunk from Wisconsin, worked as the elementary principal at Heart of the Earth from the mid-1980s to the early 1990s. In 1993, she left to take a position as tribal education director on her home reservation.[37]

The Day and Bellanger families have made ongoing commitments to work in Indian education, outside of the survival schools as well as in them. In 2002, Red School House graduates Sharon and Dorene Day and Heart of the Earth graduate Lisa Bellanger founded a new alternative Indian school in Minneapolis called Native Arts High School (NAHS). Dorene Day left the project after a year to work as a teacher at Guadalupe Alternative Programs (GAP) high school in St. Paul, where the diverse student body included many Native students. In 2010, Lisa earned an masters in education from the University of Minnesota Duluth and in 2012 she was working as dean of students at Multicultural Indigenous Academy, a charter school in St. Paul.[38]

In their work as educators, Lisa Bellanger and the Day sisters have re-created many aspects of the survival schools. Native Arts High School followed the survival school model of immersing academics within a comprehensive cultural framework based on traditional Native practices, beliefs,

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and values. NAHS students applied math and physics concepts to the construction of model sweat lodges and a full-sized birch-bark lodge. They learned about science and nutrition by planting and harvesting traditional foods and using them to prepare a meal. Like the Red School House, NAHS also encouraged students' creative expression through journal writing and visual art projects. As a small, mostly Indian school, NAHS also had the intimate family atmosphere and supportive student–staff relationships that characterized the survival schools.[39]

At Guadalupe Alternative Programs high school in St. Paul, Dorene Day worked in a larger and significantly more diverse institution than NAHS. Even so, Day was drawn to GAP because of the ways in which it resembled Red School House. She liked the fact that educators at GAP provided a supportive, loving environment for students, even those branded "troublemakers" by other schools. She appreciated that the educational philosophy at GAP encouraged a holistic approach to learning that integrated intellectual, emotional, and spiritual development. In an interview, she contrasted this environment with the typical public school, where "you're supposed to do everything with your brain." Gesturing back and forth between her head and her heart, she continued:

> [In a public school] you're not supposed to connect the two. Well, how I learned everything I learned is by connecting the two. So, that's why I try to re-create that for kids, because they need to know that that's how they're going to live life anyway. If they're gonna make good, responsible . . . healthy choices, they're gonna have to have those two things working together. They're gonna have to have their mind and their emotions *intact* enough so they can navigate [those decisions].

As a teacher, Day felt comfortable at GAP because the school valued all dimensions of a child's development, "whether it's math, or writing, or the sweat lodge."[40]

Day remained at GAP in large part because of the school's commitment to providing students with spiritually meaningful experiences. On a regular basis, she said, "something is taking place that's getting them connected" to "things of a spiritual nature." Some of those spiritual experiences, like time in the sweat lodge, came from American Indian traditions, while some reflected the other cultural backgrounds of GAP students. The survival school philosophy, especially as it developed at Red School House, had

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promoted understanding of Indian culture among non-Indian people. As a Red School House student, Day participated in cultural outreach efforts within Twin Cities public schools. As a teacher at GAP, she facilitated an exchange of cultural perspectives among a diverse student population. For her, this multicultural, spiritually grounded quality of GAP education made the school a "cultural oasis" in the city.[41]

No school has replaced Red School House in the hearts of the Days and the other Indian families whose lives were centered there. As Dorene Day said, "There'll never be another Red School House." Yet she has learned to live with its loss by recognizing its lasting legacy:

> I used to be really sad about it being gone. . . . And now I've sort of had this healing process over the years, that this is always going to be here, as long as I'm alive and I'm teaching it. And as long as someone else after me picks it up and teaches it, it's still going to be alive.[42]

Thus the spirit of Red School House lives on, in the community leadership and cultural work of people like Dorene Day and those whose lives she influences.

In their work at GAP and NAHS, Dorene Day and Lisa Bellanger also perpetuated the survival school practice of cultivating political awareness and action among their students. Both brought students to protests and demonstrations related to contemporary Indian issues. In the fall of 2002, Day educated GAP staff members and students about the University of Minnesota's plans to participate in the building of a telescope on Mount Graham in Arizona, a site considered sacred by the Apache people. Day and other Twin Cities Indian activists had been protesting the university's involvement in the project, and she encouraged like-minded GAP students to register their concerns with the Board of Regents.[43]

Besides their work in education, survival school people have labored in other ways to improve the lives and conditions of Indian people. Some are former staff members whose time at the schools inspired a commitment to community-based work. Jeannette "Poncho" Jones, a former Red School House parent and employee, went on to work as a youth counselor at the Upper Midwest American Indian Center in Minneapolis. Pat Bellanger credited Jones's involvement at Red School House for giving her the training and confidence to become an active community worker. A former Heart of the Earth bus driver named Arnold Stands continued to act on the schools' teachings by providing services to needy Indian elders in Minneapolis.[44]

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Former survival school students also have worked for their communities in a variety of agencies and institutions. One of the first Heart of the Earth students became an attorney and a tribal council member on the Flandreau reservation in South Dakota. Lisa Bellanger remembered her speaking at the 2001 graduation ceremonies "about how Heart of the Earth had changed her life" and "broadened her whole sense of . . . who she is as a Native woman." Red School House graduate and former Ain Dah Yung director Gabrielle Strong went on to become a program officer at the Grotto Foundation. There she administered grant programs supporting Native families, communities, languages, and cultures. Former Red School House student and employee Charlene Day worked as a family advocate for the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe at its urban office in Minneapolis. A few blocks down Franklin Avenue, her sister Sharon, also a former Red School House student and staff member, served as director of the Indigenous People's Task Force, providing social and spiritual services to Native people living with HIV and AIDS. Walter Pederford, another early Red School House student, joined the St. Paul police force. As an officer, Pederford encouraged Indian youth to stay in school, avoid drugs and alcohol, and become involved in drum groups and other cultural activities.[45]

Certainly, the schools could not inspire everyone who encountered them to make the world a better place for Indian people. In some cases, the schools were unable to prevent troubled Indian youth from continuing along a self-destructive path. Although Dorene Day asserted that "we left those schools knowing that we could do whatever it is we wanted to do," she also acknowledged that "there were kids that really grasped on to that, and worked that well, and there were other kids that still fell into things":

> I have friends that I graduated with that drank themselves to death. I have friends that I grew up with in the Red School House that have as many kids as me, but don't have a financial means to take care of them the way I do. So, I've seen a lot of different things. And I think what it breaks down to is, on an individual basis, what you do with what you carry, how you live out those teachings in your life. Some of us did it to the fullest, like myself, and some of us didn't.[46]

Lisa Bellanger reflected, "I know there's some students that went to Heart of the Earth that never got it. And I don't know if they ever will, because their family environment might not support those same values." In her own

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experience, she found that "being part of a family where I hear it outside of school and in school makes a difference for me." Not all survival school students experienced the same sort of reinforcement in the home.[47]

Yet Bellanger expressed hope, even for those who did not recognize the benefits of a survival school education in their youth:

> I know that there are some that never got it early on, but as adults now, are starting to look back and realize what it is that made a difference in their life. You know, maybe they have sobered up or maybe they have had some kind of a change of experience, where they realize how important it is to think about their traditions, and they go back: "I remember at Heart of the Earth, we used to do it like this." And if it's one memory that helps them to change or to grow in a good, positive, strong way as an adult, I think that's really important.

She concluded, "I think what Heart of the Earth planted was seeds."[48]

Even for those who committed themselves to community work as adults, the survival schools provided just one influence among many. Students like Lisa Bellanger, Gabrielle Strong, and the Day siblings came from families that encouraged their children to live within their cultural traditions and carry collective responsibility for community well-being. These families also cultivated a wide-ranging political consciousness that motivated their children to become activists as adults. Survival school employees like Vikki Howard, Laura Waterman Wittstock, and Elaine Salinas also had engaged in community activism prior to their time at Red School House and Heart of the Earth.

Although the survival schools were not the only influence on these individuals' community leadership, they were *an* influence. Many Native people became drawn into the orbit of the schools and the work of the American Indian Movement over time as students, family members, employees, and volunteers. For at least some of these people, their time in the schools influenced their future paths in significant ways. At the very least, the schools encouraged a preexisting community orientation. Gabrielle Strong was careful to point out in an interview that "I always knew, and felt, that I didn't want to work anywhere else but for and within my own community; that's just something that I always had within me." At the same time, she acknowledged, "that was nurtured at Red School House."[49]

As a place of employment, the survival schools provided a system in

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which Native people could practice their commitment to community-based work. Strong, whose very first job out of high school was working for Red School House, said of her experience:

> I was happy to come back, I was really thrilled. I thought, Yeah, I'm going back to work, and giving back to the school. That was really good for me, I really liked that idea. I felt really good about that.

In her time as a Red School House employee, Strong worked her way up from a receptionist position to become the director of Ain Dah Yung, a Red School House–affiliated housing facility for homeless and runaway Indian youth. Under her leadership, Ain Dah Yung split off from the school to become an independent, $1.6-million agency providing culture-specific social services to Indian youth and families in the Twin Cities. During her years at Red School House and Ain Dah Yung, Strong gained valuable skills in working with Indian families, administering community programs, and managing a complex service organization. Those experiences helped shape her into a compassionate, clear-eyed community leader.[50]

Having the opportunity to work for their own communities through programs, services, and institutions of their own making and under their own control had tremendous significance for Native people, particularly in the 1970s and 1980s. For nearly two hundred years, federal Indian policy had limited Indigenous sovereignty and eroded Native people's ability to determine their own futures. In the post–World War II period, federal and state policies, as well as local institutional practices, intruded deeply into Native families and exerted significant control over the social reality of Indian communities. The practice of self-determination, through the survival schools and other community-controlled, Indian-led programs, thus altered long-standing, powerful historical patterns.

Some of what Indian people learned through their involvement with the survival schools was lessons about how *not* to operate community institutions. In interviews, Gabrielle Strong credited Red School House leaders with creating an inspirational model for culture-based Indian education, and she expressed gratitude for her many positive experiences during her year as a student there. Yet she also asked, "From those painful experiences that we all had there—and there *were* painful experiences—what did we learn from that? And how could we do it better?" During her time as a student and employee and in her years working for an affiliated agency, Strong

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learned the necessity of hiring people for their ability to teach well, provide effective services, and ensure a safe environment for children, rather than out of loyalty to relatives or friends. At Red School House, she says, this was not always the case. Former Red School House student Rick Powers, who worked at Heart of the Earth in the mid-1990s, also criticized the practice of hiring or retaining employees for reasons of personal loyalty rather than merit. Such staffing decisions had negative consequences during his time at the school, weakening educational programming and escalating interpersonal conflicts in ways that undermined the cohesion of the survival school community.[51]

From her experiences at the St. Paul survival school, Gabrielle Strong also came to believe in the critical importance of hiring staff members who would provide good role models for Indian youth and whose actions consistently embodied the values they taught. Among some Red School House teachers and administrators, she said, “there was a disparity sometimes, in what people talked, and how they walked.” Strong knows that in the early years of running their own school, “people did the best they could, the best they knew how.” Yet the hypocrisy of some Red School House staff members around issues such as alcohol and drug use had a “detrimental effect” on Strong and other students. Learning from those experiences later shaped her priorities as an educational leader.[52]

Strong learned other lessons from her involvement with Red School House. She came to believe that building successful community institutions requires leadership from people who can translate an inspiring vision into sustainable practice:

> I think it did boil down to, how do we manage resources, and *did* we know how to manage resources back then? . . . Because everything begins with a vision, and a concept, but along with that you need a plan, right? You need a good plan to enact it. And you need people with integrity to caretake the resources that go along with putting that plan into action, whether it’s money, or space, or staff. And I don’t know that we knew all that then. And that’s where things broke down, in the carrying out of that vision.

Strong also asserted that while Red School House had some “dynamic, visionary leaders,” too many of them “were very territorial, or very dictatorial.” Healthy institutions, she maintained, need leaders who cultivate future

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leaders among the youth and within their communities, rather than trying to control everything themselves.[53]

At their best, the survival schools offered a positive model for those who wanted to create change for Indian people through community-controlled institutions. While expressing some sharp criticisms, Gabrielle Strong also acknowledged that the survival schools stood on the cutting edge of Indian self-determination, and that they set a precedent for others to follow. "This was an era," she pointed out, "when Indian people were in charge for the very first time." The people of the survival schools provided inspiration for those of younger generations, even though they made mistakes along the way.[54]

For some young Indian people, their time at the schools guided their development into cultural workers and community leaders in absolutely critical ways. Both Lisa Bellanger and Dorene Day spoke frequently in interviews of the internal drive to "give something back" that has motivated their seemingly tireless community work, and both gave the survival schools credit for feeding the force that has driven them all their adult lives. In conversations about her work as a spiritual leader, Dorene Day consistently traced it back to her time at Red School House:

> That's important to me, to be able to give back something, 'cause I have received so much . . . as a result of my cultural and spiritual education. . . . To me, that deserves a really big celebration. So, part of how I celebrate is to do what I do, you know? I sing, take kids to the sweat lodge—I really, really wanted this really simplistic life, and it's probably never gonna be that way, 'cause I always feel like there's lots of work to do.[55]

Lisa Bellanger spoke in similar ways about her decision as a young adult to accept a job offer at Heart of the Earth:

> I want to give back. I want to do that, and that was done for me, and that was why I went back to work at Heart of the Earth. . . . And people said, "How come you left your job at the city to work at Heart of the Earth, you know, there's *no* job security. You never know if you're gonna have a job the next year or not, you never know if the school's gonna be there the next year." And I just said, "Well, I want to give back to the school and to the kids, what the school gave to me."

The example set by survival school founders and teachers, Bellanger said, was the reason "why I wanted to give back: I wanted to be that person that

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helped me. I wanted to be like [Ojibwe language and culture teacher] Ona Kingbird, I want to be like [Heart of the Earth principal] Chuck Robertson, I want to be like Clyde Bellecourt . . . I want to be like my mom." Of her deeply ingrained "community sense" Bellanger said: "I really owe that to the survival schools." She insisted that "what Heart of the Earth gave me really did form and give me a foundation of who I am today. I didn't get that at [the St. Paul] Open School, I didn't get that at public school; I *know* I got it at Heart of the Earth."[56]

In Bellanger's opinion, her experience is not unique. Although she acknowledged that her mother's cultural orientation and community activism gave her "more of an opportunity . . . than the other students," she believes that other young Indian people also left Heart of the Earth and Red School House with comparable experiences and similar commitments to community work. As survival school educators involved students in feasts, powwows, ceremonies, and other communal gatherings, "that became a part of our life and a part of things that we liked to do. So, now that we're older, most of the students that *I* remember from Red School House and from Heart of the Earth, some of the longer-term students, still have a really strong foundation, or sense of community." That foundation comes from "the schools' emphasis on culture and traditions and teachings." It was because of these teachings, Lisa Bellanger said, that Dorene Day now "works in the heart of the community." Because of Dorene, her sisters, and other former students, Bellanger said, "I think that the biggest thing that I've seen the survival schools do is create a level of individuals that have a sense of community and culture." Those individuals have become "the pillar of culture, and a pillar of community-centeredness."[57]

"Bringing Back" Indigenousness: Cultural Revitalization and Indigenous Decolonization

From their founding in 1972, the survival schools strengthened Native families, built Indian community, and reclaimed Indigenous knowledge and identities. They helped Native youth and adults discover and reconnect to their tribal heritage and expand their political consciousness, and they furthered the practice of Indian self-determination through community-controlled institutions. Taken together, these processes represent a kind of Indigenous decolonization. The AIM survival schools furthered social, cultural, and psychological decolonization for Native people in the Twin Cities

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and elsewhere in the upper Midwest. This outcome of the survival school system has outlasted the schools themselves.

The historical process of European and Euro-American colonialism in North America had material and physical consequences for the Native people whose lands became occupied and exploited, including territorial dispossession, resource depletion, economic dependence, military conquest, epidemic disease, and unprecedented depopulation. For Native North Americans, as for other colonized peoples, there also were less tangible consequences. Land loss, military conflict, and competition over diminishing resources disrupted subsistence patterns that had defined Indigenous societies and anchored their worldviews for centuries. European and American explorers, missionaries, traders, negotiators, and military and government agents dealt with Native people in ways that undermined traditional political leadership, kinship networks, gender roles, and family relationships. With U.S. territorial expansion and the implementation of removal and reservation policies in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, tribal people lost control over nearly every aspect of their lives.

As Native people were alienated from their homelands and the U.S. government extended its authority over their communities, the psychological, social, cultural, and spiritual consequences of American colonialism became increasingly severe. They included the loss of language, songs, and ceremonies; the erosion of spiritual beliefs; the weakening of value systems; and the unraveling of collective identities that had developed over centuries of people's adaptation to and identification with the places where they dwelled. Intrusive federal policies also deliberately destabilized family and community structures and disrupted the passing of cultural knowledge from generation to generation.

The sociopsychological effects of what Mi'kmaq education scholar Marie Battiste terms "cognitive imperialism" and what Chickasaw legal philosopher James Youngblood Henderson calls "the cognitive legacy of colonization" were devastating for Indigenous individuals and communities, and their legacy has persisted over multiple generations. Battiste defines cognitive imperialism as "the imposition of one worldview on a people who have an alternative worldview, with the implication that the imposed worldview is superior," thus working to "disclaim other knowledge bases and values" in a way that "denies people their language and cultural integrity by maintaining the legitimacy of only one language, one culture, and one frame of refer-

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ence." Thus, colonialism creates an entire cognitive system that, according to Henderson, "explicitly and implicitly confirms Aboriginal inadequacy and asserts a negative image of Aboriginal heritage and identity." For generations of Native people living within such a system, this has resulted in a kind of "cognitive imprisonment." Ultimately, Battiste argues, cognitive colonialism becomes "the means by which whole groups of people have been denied existence"—an outcome that, not incidentally, also "has been used . . . as the means of confiscating" their land and resources.[58]

From this perspective, the work of Indigenous decolonization must go beyond the restoration of the land base, the reclamation of resources, and the reassertion of political sovereignty. It also must address what human rights scholar Erica-Irene Daes calls the "subjective, social, and spiritual" effects of colonialism and their ongoing manifestations in contemporary Native societies. Seminole historian Susan Miller writes that through this work, "Indigenous communities and nations decolonize their collective identities and their institutions, and individuals decolonize their minds and their ways of interacting and participating in institutions." She also describes a process of "bringing back," a "movement to revitalize Indigenous languages and recover lapsed Indigenous practices" as well as "ancestral skills and concepts," thus "reclaiming the knowledge" and restoring the "lost heritage" that U.S. policies suppressed. Marie Battiste defines decolonization as "a source of deconstruction and reconstruction" that rejects colonial categories and dismantles Eurocentric cognitive systems while restoring "Indigenous knowledge and heritage." Thus, decolonization is a process of "healing and rebuilding" Indigenous "nations . . . communities, and selves."[59]

The AIM survival schools contributed to these processes of social, cultural, and cognitive decolonization for American Indigenous people. They furthered sociocultural decolonization in part through the rebuilding of traditional extended family structures. The schools brought siblings, parents, grandparents, aunts, and uncles together in their classrooms, offices, and programs and at their social gatherings. They fostered familial relationships among their students and staff members and encouraged students' parents and other family members to become closely integrated into the life of the schools. By involving students' relatives and other community members in their programs, the survival schools reinvigorated the commitment to extended family that had anchored traditional Native cultures. Parents, other relations, friends, neighbors, and anyone else interested in students'

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lives and invested in their well-being—all were considered essential participants in their education and valuable contributors to their process of intellectual, emotional, and spiritual growth.

From the beginning, the schools also were built on a model of parental and community control over staffing, structure, curriculum, and pedagogy. For Twin Cities Indian people, involvement in their children's education and community control over school governance had profound historical and political significance. Since the mid-nineteenth century, Native people's experiences with formal schooling in the United States had been defined by the *loss* of control. Within the federal boarding school system, Indian families and communities lost influence not only over their children's education but over their entire social and cultural development. In the public schools of the post–World War II period, Indian parents felt alienated from the mainstream educational system, and many retained traumatic personal and familial memories from the boarding schools. Some responded by disinvesting themselves from their children's education. Others tried to engage with it but struggled to navigate what they experienced as a hostile environment.

The commitment of survival school founders to involve families directly in their children's education, and their efforts to knit community members closely into the fabric of school life, represented a seismic shift in Twin Cities Indian people's relationships to schooling. Because Heart of the Earth and Red School House enrolled mostly Native students, parental control over school governance also meant *Indian* control over Indian education. Instead of non-Indian people setting the parameters for their experience, Native people were creating an alternative social reality, constructed through a system of their own making. This made the survival schools sites where Indian people practiced the decolonization of their children's education. They worked to repair the social and psychological damage caused by the mission school and boarding school education of earlier decades. They also resisted the assimilationist imperative operating in postwar public schools, which worked more subtly to neutralize or eliminate the Indigenous alternative in modern American life. Thus they furthered what Mi'kmaq scholar Marie Battiste has identified as the "deconstruction" work of decolonization, by exposing the fallacies of colonial education systems and challenging their hegemony over Native people's mental universes.[60]

The survival schools also revived aspects of traditional Indigenous pedagogical practices. According to Gregory Cajete:

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> Indigenous education is, in its truest form, about learning relationships in context. This context begins with family. It extends to the clan, to the community and tribe, and to all of the world. The goal is completeness. . . . Our idea of education is a reflection of that social ecology.[61]

Marie Battiste describes an Indigenous education as one that furthers young people's "development as human beings" in ways that "involve the elders and our life ways" throughout the development process. The survival schools did this by incorporating extended family and community members into their students' learning and personal development; involving elders as teachers of traditional knowledge and skills; instructing students in cultural values through observation and experiential practice; and approaching education as a holistic, integrated process with intellectual, physical, emotional, social, and spiritual dimensions. In these ways, they reinvigorated Indigenous models for nurturing the next generation into adulthood.[62]

In many ways, the schools functioned as extended family and community structures would have in traditional Indigenous society, but in a form adapted to twentieth-century urban circumstances. Thus they contributed to what Marie Battiste has identified as the "reconstruction" work of decolonization, repairing some of the damage inflicted by generations of social disruption and rebuilding a version of precolonial Indigenous societies. Through their multidimensional community presence, the schools also embodied key values they hoped to instill in their students: the acceptance of responsibility to one's community and the willingness to work collectively for the good of Indian people. As the survival school system fostered these values, it protected Indigenous ways of being. To survival school educators, community-mindedness was a fundamental component of Indigenous identity. Within the schools, lessons about community responsibility and social activism were taught within a traditional cultural context. Those who spent time at Heart of the Earth and Red School House learned that the work of preserving Native languages and restoring ancestral knowledge was critical to the survival of their people.[63]

The most powerful kind of decolonization practiced by the survival schools was their contribution to the revitalization of Indigenous knowledge and identity. Heart of the Earth and Red School House taught Native languages and encouraged their use in daily school life, and they involved students in the practice of traditional subsistence skills. They taught students

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tribal and intertribal dances, songs, and ceremonies and introduced them to Native values and belief systems. They encouraged students to discover who they were as Indian people, and within that process of discovery to find a sense of self-worth. In all these ways, survival school educators helped build what Hawaiian Indigenous rights activist Poka Laenui has described as "the foundation" of Indigenous decolonization: the individual and collective process of "rediscovery and recovery," of language, identity, and pride.[64]

Some of those nurtured within the survival schools went on to become local and regional leaders in the process of Indigenous cultural and spiritual revitalization, becoming the "pillar of culture" to which Lisa Bellanger referred. Vikki Howard, who worked at Heart of the Earth as a teacher and school principal, credits the survival school environment for reconnecting her with her cultural identity and practice:

> Through the movement I was exposed to . . . spirituality, different elders. All this came about as I started working at Heart of the Earth. And that's when I began my journey to find my way and that's where I found my way back to the Anishinaabe way of life.[65]

Howard's family had been oriented toward their traditional culture and she had been engaged in political activism and aligned with AIM since her high school years in Minneapolis in the early 1970s. Yet she locates her personal cultural awakening during her time at Heart of the Earth. Since then, Howard has carried her commitment to Indigenous cultural and spiritual practice into her work as an educator and community advocate, in the Twin Cities and on her home reservation in northern Minnesota.

Many of the survival school people who became community leaders have incorporated cultural revitalization into their work as educators, counselors, community advocates, and administrators of service agencies, while others have made cultural work their primary focus. Ron Leith, a former student and then a teacher at Red School House, went on to run cultural and spiritual programs for the Lower Sioux Dakota community in southern Minnesota and helped organize sun dance ceremonies. Red School House Lakota teacher Jerry Dearly became a fixture at Twin Cities area powwows and other cultural gatherings as a master of ceremonies, storyteller, and respected traditional singer. Former Red School House student Paula Horn organized annual spiritual gatherings held in sacred places around the world.[66]

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Since the early 1980s, survival school people have led a modern revitalization movement dedicated to restoring the practice of traditional Anishinaabe culture and spirituality in the upper Midwest and the transnational Great Lakes region. Called the Three Fires Society, this movement works to maintain and strengthen the Ojibwe language as well as the ancestral teachings and spiritual ceremonies of the Anishinaabe people, as practiced through the Midewiwin lodge. The Anishinaabeg are linguistically and culturally related peoples whose ancestors migrated over hundreds of years from the East Coast, along the St. Lawrence River, and westward through the Great Lakes. According to oral tradition, they were fulfilling a prophecy, on a journey in search of the place "where food grows on water," which they found in wild rice. Various groups of Anishinaabeg settled at different points along the migration route, eventually coalescing into the Ojibwe, Odawa, and Potawatomi peoples. During the colonial period, these three tribes maintained cultural, political, and military ties through the Three Fires confederacy and through their common history.[67]

The ancestors of those Anishinaabeg who became the Ojibwe people eventually settled along the south shore of Lake Superior in present-day Wisconsin. There they established their cultural homeland and built a way of life spiritually centered on an island that they called Moningwunakawning. French explorers renamed it LaPointe; later it was called Madeline Island, and it now forms part of the Apostle Islands. At the core of this way of life, for the Ojibwes as for other Anishinaabe people, was a seasonal round of communal subsistence activities in which small bands of people worked together to hunt, gather, and cultivate the land. In the winter, multiple extended families lived together in a village settlement where they hunted, maintained trap lines, and made and repaired clothing and tools. During the spring, summer, and fall, smaller groups of families set up seasonal camps in different parts of their homeland to tap maple trees, gather berries and medicinal plants, fish, garden, hunt, trap, and harvest wild rice. This seasonal round, while defining the people's economy, also ordered the maintenance of social relationships through collective gatherings for feasts, dances, giveaways, and ceremonies. Social roles and responsibilities were based in the clan system and individuals understood their collective identities through a kinship network of extended families and bands.[68]

The most important seasonal gatherings were for the Midewiwin ceremonies, which were the spiritual heart of the Anishinaabe people. The Midewiwin lodge, also known as the Grand Medicine Society, was based

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on principles of physical and spiritual healing and the maintenance of harmony and balance among people and between human beings and the rest of the creation. Mide priests were respected healers and spiritual leaders who guided the people down the path of living a good life. Periodically, people from scattered camps and villages came together on Moningwunakawning for several days of Midewiwin ceremonies. There they listened to the teachings of Mide leaders; performed rituals and prayers of thanksgiving, honor, and respect for the creation; contemplated their place in the universe; and reaffirmed their collective commitment to what Ojibwe historian Paulette Fairbanks Molin has called their "philosophy of living."[69]

In the early 1980s, Red School House founder Eddie Benton-Banai and other survival school people revived the Midewiwin lodge as a center for Indigenous spiritual practice and Anishinaabe identity, through the formation of the Three Fires Society. Since then, Mide followers have gathered for seasonal ceremonies at various sites in the upper Midwest and the Great Lakes region of the United States and Canada. In recent years, they have met most frequently near the Bad River reservation along the south shore of Lake Superior in Wisconsin, not far from Madeline Island and in the heart of the Anishinaabe homeland. Members of the Three Fires Society also hold Ojibwe-language immersion camps for Native youth and travel to Indigenous communities in the United States and Canada to facilitate workshops, deliver lectures, share their drum and dance groups, and perform healing ceremonies. Through all of these activities, the Three Fires Society promotes the traditional Anishinaabe value and belief system as a means to "spiritual, physical, emotional, and mental well-being." They offer Midewiwin teachings and ceremonial practices as an antidote to alcohol and drug abuse, family violence, self-loathing, hopelessness, and social disintegration.[70]

By the early twenty-first century, the Three Fires Midewiwin Society had grown into a multitribal, international community, with a membership of more than two thousand people from Indigenous communities in the United States, Canada, Mexico, and Central America. Yet it has remained rooted in Anishinaabe culture and centered on Midewiwin teachings. Geographically as well as spiritually, it has been grounded in Ojibwe communities in northern Wisconsin, particularly at the Lac Courte Oreilles and Bad River reservations. Much of the leadership within the Three Fires Society has come from people who spent years within the survival school system. Eddie Benton-Banai, founder and longtime director of Red School

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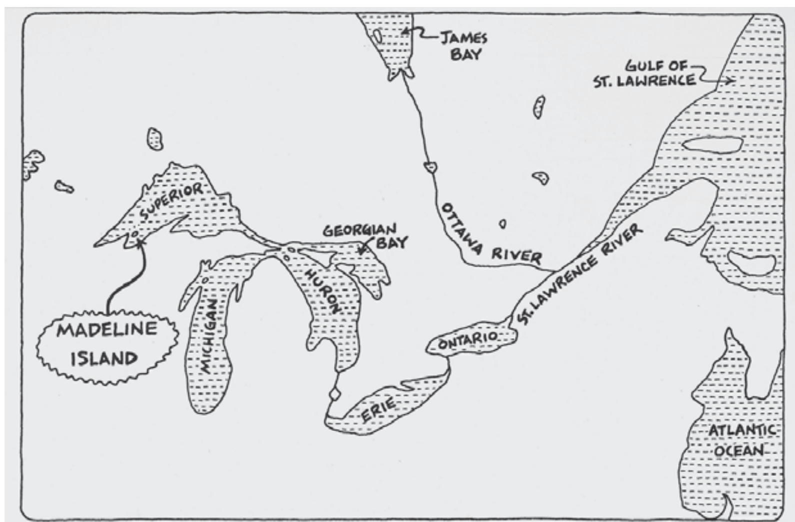
House, was and still is the movement's spiritual leader, serving as the Grand Chief of the Midewiwin lodge. Former Red School House cultural instructor Walter "Porky" White was the president of the Three Fires board of directors until his death in November 2001. Other members of the board have included Lisa Bellanger, Dorene Day, and Ramon Benton, the son of Eddie Benton-Banai and a former Red School House student.[71]

Seasonal Midewiwin ceremonies held near the Bad River reservation in northern Wisconsin hold particular significance. It is here that, in anthropological terms, the ethnogenesis of the Anishinaabe people occurred, long before European contact. Those who revived the Midewiwin lodge through the Three Fires Society thus have returned Anishinaabe spiritual practices to the place where they began. This is where Anishinaabe culture first developed, and where it flourished for generations before the first contacts



In Book 1 of the "Mishomis Book" coloring book series, The Ojibway Creation Story, *Eddie Benton-Banai traced the historical migration of the Anishinaabe people west through the Great Lakes to Moningwunakawning (Madeline Island), the center of the Ojibwe people's traditional homeland. Since the 1980s, Benton-Banai and other survival school people have held seasonal Midewiwin ceremonies near this sacred island, along the south shore of Lake Superior in northern Wisconsin. From* A Mishomis Book: A History-Coloring Book of the Ojibway Indians, Book 1, *illustration by Joe Liles, published by Indian Country Communications, Inc.; reprinted with permission.*

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with French explorers, fur traders, and missionaries in the early seventeenth century. Through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Anishinaabe people had successfully negotiated the French, British, and then American presence in the western Great Lakes region. Until the War of 1812 solidified American control of the upper Midwest, they had participated fully in the creation of a dynamic mixed society. They also maintained a distinctive transnational identity as Anishinaabe people, whose economic and cultural orientation to the Great Lakes crossed the border imposed by the creation of the U.S. and Canadian nation-states.[72]

Reconnecting Native people to their homelands and restoring an Indigenous relationship to place are essential components of decolonization. In this context, survival school people's revival of seasonal Midewiwin ceremonies on the south shore of Lake Superior, near Moningwunakawning (Madeline Island)—the place where the Anishinaabe people have their cultural origins—becomes especially meaningful. Maintaining their interdependent relationships with all beings in the context of a particular place provides the essential grounding for an Indigenous identity. As James Youngblood Henderson describes it:

> Aboriginal understandings, languages, teachings, and practices developed through direct interaction with the forces of the natural order of ecology. This experience intimately connects their worldviews and knowledge with a certain space. This is more than mere ecological awareness; it is a living relationship with a specific environment.

According to Henderson, "Aboriginal worldviews are empirical relationships with local ecosystems, and Aboriginal languages are an expression of these relationships." Blackfoot Native studies scholar Leroy Little Bear describes "Aboriginal philosophy" as "firmly grounded in a particular place," while Susan Miller has defined Indigenousness as "a way of relating to everything else in the cosmos," in which "human communities are bound to the land in an intimate and committed relationship," guided by principles and ritual practices of "reciprocity (or balance) and respect." Thus "the well-being of Indigenous communities" depends on the maintenance of an "ongoing integrated relationship" with the land and all the other beings of a particular place.[73]

As Little Bear describes Indigenous philosophy, upholding these place-based, reciprocal relationships not only ensures Native people's survival; it

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keeps the world intact. He writes that "the function of Aboriginal values and customs is to maintain the relationships that hold creation together." According to this worldview, "if creation is to continue, then it must be renewed. Renewal ceremonies, the telling and retelling of creation stories, the singing and resinging of the songs, are all humans' part in the maintenance of creation." For Indigenous people, as Susan Miller explains, their "relation to the sacred is encoded in the language."[74] Thus it is critical that the stories be told, the songs sung, and the ceremonies conducted in the people's Native language.

By building a seasonal Midewiwin lodge at the site of the Anishinaabe people's cultural origins, and by reclaiming that space for songs, dances, teachings, and ceremonies conducted in the Ojibwe language, the Three Fires Society has restored what American colonialism worked to destroy: a distinctly Indigenous, sacred relationship to creation, grounded in its proper place. This has powerful meaning for individual psychologies and personal identity development. As James Youngblood Henderson explains, in order to "understand the meaning of life," Indigenous people must "reestablish a relationship with their local ecological order." Midewiwin ceremonies also rebuild a collective Anishinaabe identity, as participants carry out communal cultural practices necessary to fulfilling their people's role within the interdependent web of living beings, thus doing their part to maintain the balance of the universe.[75]

Arguing that survival school people worked as agents of Indigenous decolonization does not mean that they always did so effectively, nor would I claim that everything AIM people did, locally or nationally, furthered the process of decolonization. Some AIM leaders and some survival school educators made choices and engaged in behaviors that contradicted their own profession of Indigenous beliefs and values. Some took actions that undermined the schools' founding ideals, hurt Indian families, and compromised the well-being of Native communities. Even at their best, the people of Heart of the Earth and Red School House made mistakes, and sometimes their work fell short of their own expansive vision for Indigenous education.

Following Marie Battiste's definition of decolonization as involving both the "deconstruction" of the colonial paradigm and the "reconstruction" of Indigenous consciousness, one might argue that the cognitive *de*construction that took place in the survival schools, particularly in the more political components of their curriculum, was oversimplified and at times heavy-handed. Their efforts at cultural *re*construction were complicated by their

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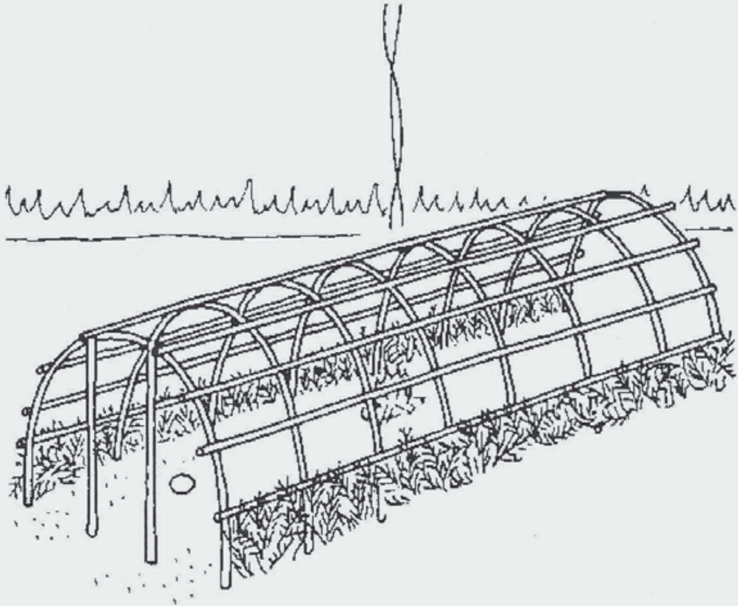
The Midewiwin Lodge

The Lodge is the center of all thought, planning and action. The lodge structure and all that flows from it is based upon the natural laws of creation, for example: traditional forms of government, societal framework, communication, relationship with the land, health, law, and artistic expression, peace and freedom.



The Three Fires Society, led by Eddie Benton-Banai and other survival school people, has helped restore the teachings, traditions, and seasonal ceremonies of the Midewiwin lodge, the spiritual heart of traditional Anishinaabe life. The people of the Three Fires Society have practiced Indigenous decolonization for Anishinaabe and other Native people in the western Great Lakes region and provided a foundation for a modern Anishinaabe identity. They contribute to the revitalization of the Ojibwe language through lodge ceremonies, immersion education, and other language initiatives. From a 2003 Three Fires Society brochure; illustration by Joe Liles.

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urban location, multitribal student population, and financial instability, and undermined by the mid-1970s federal backlash against AIM, inexpert and at times corrupt management, and internal ideological conflicts. It seems possible—from an outsider's perspective and in theoretical hindsight—that some of the schools' interpersonal conflicts, especially at their most intense in the 1980s and 1990s, might have been in part disagreements about whether and to what degree individual administrators and teachers were committed to the project of decolonization and whether they wanted the schools to function as decolonizing institutions.[76]

Although in some ways troubling, the messier dimensions of survival school history and the unevenness with which the schools practiced Indigenous decolonization are not surprising when considered in their historical context. From the schools' founding in 1972 through the 1980s, they were on the experimental edge of alternative, community-controlled, culture-based Indian education, particularly in urban areas. They had few models and little to draw from for appropriate curriculum materials. Most of their people lacked relevant training to carry out the responsibilities they took on.

Although the AIM organizers who founded and staffed the survival schools developed a creative educational philosophy, they were not intellectuals; few of them even had college degrees. Even if they had been academically oriented, in the 1970s the field of postcolonial theory was in its infancy. Moreover, it was not until the late 1990s that scholars began to develop decolonization theories from distinctly Indigenous perspectives and analyze the dynamics of settler colonialism and the place of Native peoples in contemporary settler societies. It is only in the last decade that scholars have begun systematically to apply these theoretical insights to Indigenous people in the United States. Still, these schools helped pave the way for others to practice culture-based, community-controlled Indian education. They made something new seem possible.

Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Te Rina Smith has written about what happens when Indigenous communities put decolonization theory into practice. Drawing from her experience with community-controlled Maori immersion schools in Aotearoa/New Zealand, she observes that when Indigenous people "take hold of the project of emancipation and attempt to make it reality . . . [t]he end result cannot be predetermined. The means to the end involves human agency in ways that are complex and contradictory." One can try to contain, but cannot entirely avoid, "the unevenness and unpredictability, under stress, of people engaged in emancipatory struggles."

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While "Western academics" might "quibble about the success or failure of the emancipatory project and question the idealism that lies behind it . . . this stance assumes that oppression has universal characteristics that are independent of history, context, and agency. At the level of abstraction, this is what has to be argued, in a sense, but it can never be so on the ground."[77]

Within decolonizing projects like the survival schools, carried out by common human beings in particular historical circumstances, visionary ideals and daily realities do not always match up. And all the while, those engaged in this work struggle with the destructive legacy left by the historical experience of colonization, as well as the ongoing efforts of the settler society to eradicate their Indigenousness.

Conclusion

Heart of the Earth and Red School House helped nurture hundreds of young Indian people through their childhood and adolescent years. The word *adolescence* has Latin roots meaning "to come to maturity, be kindled, burn" and "to feed, sustain." This captures what the survival schools did for at least some of their students. They helped them develop into maturity, secure in their Indian identity and aware of their responsibilities to their communities and nations. They kindled a cultural and political awakening in young Indian people and fed them spiritually in ways that would sustain them into adulthood. The long-term consequences of this process would become apparent in the 1990s and 2000s, in the lives and families of former survival school students.

The survival schools also functioned as vital community centers for many Indian people in Minneapolis and St. Paul. The processes of identity development and personal growth provided for local Native youth also extended to adult family and community members. The schools provided social services and support networks that helped families navigate city life and negotiate the consequences of federal, state, and local policies and institutional practices. Through parental and community involvement, Red School House and Heart of the Earth also facilitated the American Indian Movement's effort to provide local Indian people with community-controlled institutions that met their needs and respected their cultural perspectives. Thus they contributed to the movement for Native American self-determination—political, social, and cultural—that began in the 1960s and has gathered strength ever since.

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The survival schools also furthered the movement to reclaim Indigenous knowledge and revitalize Indigenous identities. Through this work the schools became centers of a distinctly Indigenous community in the Twin Cities. They also helped create a transnational community of Anishinaabe cultural and spiritual revitalization in the upper Midwest and Great Lakes regions.

From this perspective, the survival schools' founding and development must be understood as part of the transnational history of global Indigenous decolonization movements since the 1960s. Just as the reach of European colonialism was global in scope, so the movements for Indigenous decolonization have crossed national borders and connected Native peoples from across the globe through common purpose in the work of decolonizing projects. Many of these projects have incorporated or been centered in the practice of community-based education. In the United States, as in other settler societies shaped by the persistent desire to eliminate Indigenous ways of being, educational initiatives like the survival schools have nurtured communities of difference, thus ensuring the survival of Indigenousness in the modern world.

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