University of California, Berkeley

“We want you to listen to our words.”
A Case Study of Indigenous Parents’ Advocacy for their Children at the Carlisle Indian Boarding School, 1879 to 1918

History Thesis

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated first to all survivors of Indian Boarding Schools and their descendants. Sharing one small part of your story is an honor and a privilege. It is also dedicated to my parents, Taia Perry and Robert Kretz, who have been tireless advocates for me since the day I was born.

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Abstract

At the turn of the 20th century, the United States government developed an assimilationist approach to Indian Affairs. The Carlisle Indian Boarding School was a part of this trend by promoting curriculum meant to westernize Native children. While existing historiography has considered the socio-political development of Carlisle and how the school impacted children, what remains to be uncovered is how parents experienced Carlisle. By analyzing correspondence files in which parents requested the return of their children, this thesis reveals Native parents were skillful and knowledgeable advocates. Their reasoning, actions, and rhetoric to secure the return of their children changed over time due to federal policy developments and their increased understanding of Carlisle's assimilationist goals. Although Native parents asserted agency by advocating for their children, their effectiveness was limited: the outcomes of their advocacy depended upon white officials' perceptions of Native people, as well as pressure on school officials to increase enrollment numbers.

Introduction

"Hon. T.J. Morgan *March 31st 1893*

Sir

Please inform me how it is about the letter I sent to you of my granddaughter at Carlisle school. I just received a letter from her. She is in a great distress…please keep her from suffering if she is yet alive. Keep her from trouble and comfort her to cheer. How did he see the letters I have told you they are afraid of him they get punish every time he hear some one write how they are. He should not ought to seen it unless she was seen to. I am so sorry for her. She is a good girl. She may be suffering or locked up now if she is still living. Please send her home. She needs a help no time to delay. Please let me hear soon how it is and about her and oblige [sic].

Very respectfully,
M.M. Kennedy"[1]

On March 31st of 1893, Mary M. Kennedy writing on behalf of her granddaughter Nancy Seneca requested her return home from the Carlisle Indian Boarding School. This was her third letter requesting the return of her granddaughter from the Commissioner of Indian Affairs in Washington, D.C., Thomas Morgan. These letters emphasized that her granddaughter and other children did not have enough to eat and were punished by Superintendent Richard Pratt when writing home to their parents about the poor conditions they were living in. But on April 1st of the same year, Pratt assured Morgan that after speaking to Nancy and other students they were just homesick, and "[were] now satisfied and [did] have not the same views they had [before]."[2] Even though Mary Kennedy warned Commissioner Morgan that the children "[were] so afraid [of Pratt] they will not say 'I do not have enough to eat,'" Commissioner Morgan agreed with Pratt's assessment and Nancy remained at Carlisle until 1900, when her term finally expired.

Mary Kennedy's request is one of hundreds from Native parents and guardians who asked

[1] Mary Kennedy, "Mary M. Kennedy Requests Return of Her Granddaughter | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," March 31, 1893, RG 75, Entry 91, box 967, 1893-#11642, National Archives and Records Administration, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/documents/mary-m-kennedy-requests-return-her-granddaughter.
[2] Richard Pratt, "Pratt Responds to Complaints Made by Mary M. Kennedy | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," December 11, 1892, RG 75, Entry 91, box 967, 1893-#11666, National Archives and Records Administration, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/documents/pratt-responds-complaints-made-mary-m-kennedy.

for the return of their children from the Carlisle Indian Boarding School throughout its operation. Her experience reveals larger themes regarding how Native parents advocated for their children during this period. Her concern regarding the school's conditions was common among parents who had been promised a top-notch educational experience by recruiters. Her strategy of persistent letter writing and citing evidence to back her claims was deployed by many, and her knowledge of the bureaucracy that governed Native issues in the period was widespread amongst Native parents. At the same time, Kennedy's request is just a snapshot of the reasons for, the actions of, and the rhetoric used by parents requesting the return of their children from Carlisle, the subject of this thesis. Native parents were skillful advocates for their children at the turn of the twentieth century. Their reasoning, actions, and rhetoric to secure the return of their children became more varied as federal policy developments impacted Indigenous families, and more sophisticated as they learned what tactics did and did not work and came to understand Carlisle's assimilationist goals. Although Native parents asserted agency by advocating for their children, significant power imbalances and deep-seated racism limited their effectiveness: the outcomes of their advocacy depended upon white officials' perceptions of Native people, as well as larger federal policy changes impacting the inner workings of the Carlisle school.

Historiography

A rich historiography catalogs the development of American Indian Boarding Schools. In the late 20th century, scholars focused first on "federal policies that drove boarding school education" and later to "the experiences of Indian children within the schools."[3] David Adam's

3 Davis, Julie. "American Indian Boarding School Experiences: Recent Studies from Native Perspectives." OAH Magazine of History 15, no. 2 (2001): 20–22.

Education for Extinction (1995) is widely accepted as the cornerstone of the genre and provides a strong overview of the sociopolitical context, education models, response to, and outcomes of boarding schools. Sources that consider the federal policies driving boarding school education include *American Indian Policy in Crisis* by Francis Prucha, "Late 19th-Century U.S. Indian Policy" by Genetin-Pilawa, and *The Commissioners of Indian Affairs* by David DeJong. Scholars have also considered US Indian Policy of the late 19th century in a comparative context, specifically, "Histories and Memories of the Indian Boarding Schools in Mexico, Canada, and the United States" and Lake's *Progressive New World* which considers the progressive movement and its colonial undertones in the United States and Australia.[4]

Especially popular are works describing the experiences of children within boarding schools. Collections of boarding school survivors' writings can be found in the *Changed Forever* volumes by Arnold Krupat, specific school collections in *Boarding School Voices: Carlisle Indian Students Speak* (2018), Bahr's *The Students of Sherman Indian School: Education and Native Identity since 1892* (2014), Shilinger's *A Case Study of the American Indian boarding school movement: an oral history of Saint Joseph's Indian Industrial school* (2008), Ellis's *To change them forever: Indian Education of the Rainy Mountain Boarding School, 1893 to 1920 (*1996)*;* and a gendered analysis in La Croix, "Indian Boarding School Daughters Coming Home: Survival Stories as Oral Histories of Native American Women"

[4] David Wallace Adams, *Education for Extinction : American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928 / - University of California Berkeley* (University Press of Kansas, 1995); Francis Paul Prucha, *American Indian Policy in Crisis: Christian Reformers and the Indian, 1865-1900 / by Francis Paul Prucha.*, 1st ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1976); C. Joseph Genetin-Pilawa, "Late 19th-Century U.S. Indian Policy," in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of American History*, 2016, https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780199329175.013.312; David H. DeJong, *The Commissioners of Indian Affairs: The United States Indian Service and the Making of Federal Indian Policy, 1824-2017 / David H. DeJong.* (Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press, 2020); Alexander S. Dawson, "Histories and Memories of the Indian Boarding Schools in Mexico, Canada, and the United States," *Latin American Perspectives* 39, no. 5 (September 1, 2012): 80–99, https://doi.org/10.1177/0094582X12447274; Marilyn Lake, *Progressive New World: How Settler Colonialism and Transpacific Exchange Shaped American Reform* (Harvard University Press, 2019).

(1993). Other works consider the development of boarding schools and their day-to-day operations, including Cooper's *Indian School: Teaching the White Man's Way,* Hamley's *Cultural Genocide in the Classroom: A History of the Federal Boarding School Movement in American Indian Education, 1875-1920,* and Bell's *Telling stories out of school: remembering Carlisle Indian Industrial School 1879-1918.*

Though Davis cites "the responses of Native students and parents to school policies" as a prominent research field, I have found only two secondary sources that touch on the experience and advocacy of Native parents. Adam's *Education for Extinction* devotes about five pages to the topic, arguing that parents engaged in resistance by preventing their children from attending boarding schools or sending "undesirable" children to boarding schools (often those who were intellectually or physically disabled), opposing school policies and curriculum, and advocating for their children's health.[5] Child's *Boarding School Seasons: American Indian Families, 1900 to 1940* reveals how parents at the Haskell Institute and Flandreau schools supported their children by requesting their returns in the summer, visiting them at schools, and keeping them informed of tribal happenings. She also explores parents' concerns with school curriculum and conditions.[6] These two works provide an important foundation upon which this thesis hopes to build. In contrast to previous works, this thesis centers the experiences and advocacy of parents, whereas previous scholarship has thought of parents as supporting actors in the story of Indigenous resistance to Indian Boarding Schools. By focusing on the views and experiences of parents, I hope to add to the robust literature on Indian Boarding Schools in the United States while amplifying narratives yet to be uncovered.

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[5] Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 210-215.
[6] *Magazine of History* 15, no. 2 (January 1, 2001): 21, https://doi.org/10.1093/maghis/15.2.20.

Methods

To showcase these voices, I have utilized correspondence between parents, school administrators, and officials within the bureaucracy governing Indian Affairs at the turn of the twentieth century. Specifically, I am using correspondence marked in archives as "Requests to return home," meaning requests by either parents or school officials to have a child from the Carlisle School returned to their homelands. The primary archive used to pull this correspondence from is the Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center, managed by Dickinson College. This archive is a searchable database of records from the U.S. National Archives, Dickinson College, and the Cumberland County Historical Society that relate to the Carlisle Indian School.[7] However, it is important to recognize the limitations of such an archive: not all letters sent by parents requesting to return their children home are correctly cataloged in the archive, and many files contain just pieces of correspondence, the rest not yet digitized or lost. To supplement this research, additional documents regarding school policies were retrieved from the U.S. National Archives. Further information regarding student and administrator experience was retrieved from the autobiographies of individuals who attended or worked at Carlisle. While initially documents from local Indian agencies were also going to be examined, these agencies either lacked historical records from the time period requested or were only available in person and could not be accessed under the author's time and budget constraints.

The state of Indian Affairs in the late 19th century

From the founding of the United States to the end of the Civil War, the U.S.

[7] "Mission | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," accessed November 26, 2023, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/page/mission.

government's Indian policy consisted of violent military responses.[8] Following the Civil War, the sustainability of this policy was called into question, especially as the nation reckoned with the white supremacist values behind chattel slavery. This came to the forefront of the national consciousness with the publication of Helen Jackson Hunt's *A Century of Dishonor* in 1881,[9] which cataloged a century of violent U.S. federal Indian policy including the Sand Creek Massacre, Gnadenhutten Massacre, and Massacre of the Apache.[10] The US government's violence against Indian people alarmed white progressive reformers, leading some to organize on behalf of Native people through the Women's National Indian Association and Indian Rights Association. These reformers differed from federal leaders who believed westward expansion was the strongest path forward for federal Indian policy and could unite the North and South following the Civil War.[11] The outcome of this debate was an assimilationist approach: the federal government moved from a policy of outward physical violence to one focused on assimilating Indigenous people through land, cultural, and educational policy.

Integral to assimilation was the breaking up of Native land holdings and imposing a capitalist, European-American relationship to land on Native people. The 1887 Dawes Act turned this idea into a reality: it allotted 80-acre land parcels to individual Natives, which were then held in trust by the US government for twenty-five years before families could lease or sell it.[12]

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[8] David H. DeJong, *The Commissioners of Indian Affairs: The United States Indian Service and the Making of Federal Indian Policy, 1824-2017 / David H. DeJong.* (Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press, 2020), 30.

[9] DeJong 72; Margaret D. Jacobs, *White Mother to a Dark Race: Settler Colonialism, Maternalism, and the Removal of Indigenous Children in the American West and Australia, 1880-1940* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), https://muse.jhu.edu/pub/17/monograph/book/11886 30; Jessica Enoch, "Resisting the Script of Indian Education: Zitkala Ša and the Carlisle Indian School," *College English* 65, no. 2 (2002): 121, https://doi.org/10.2307/3250759.

[10] "A Century of Dishonor by Helen Hunt Jackson (U.S. National Park Service)," accessed November 26, 2023, https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/a-century-of-dishonor-by-helen-hunt-jackson.htm.

[11] C. Joseph Genetin-Pilawa, "Late 19th-Century U.S. Indian Policy," in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of American History*, 2016, https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780199329175.013.312.

[12] Genetin-Pilawa, "Late 19th-Century U.S. Indian Policy."

Advocates of this policy argued "civilization was impossible without the incentive to work that came only from individual ownership of a piece of property." By eliminating communal landholding and allotting parcels to individuals, Native people would be inspired to adopt European-American ideals of a yeoman farmer lifestyle. For further incentive, the federal government granted citizenship to Natives with an allotment under the Dawes Act who had voluntarily moved away from their tribe.[13]

The actual effects of the Dawes Act on Native people were far from the idealistic vision set out by reformers. A major loss of Native land resulted, with "tribal communities losing over 60 percent of their land fifty years after passage."[14] Lands that were once held in an organized, collective fashion by tribal communities turned into a disorderly landscape with white Americans and Natives living interspersed together. Furthermore, Native people were often left with marginal land that was difficult to cultivate, and those who received allotments were unable to tend to the land on their own (being children, elderly, or disabled).[15] This forced Natives to lease their lands to white settlers, further breaking up tribal communities, and was perceived by reformers as further evidence of Native peoples' laziness: instead of farming, they handed their lands to others.[16]

The US government also promoted the assimilation of Native people through cultural policy that suppressed Native religion, clothing, and outward appearance.[17] The federal government worked in partnership with Christian missionaries from 1869 to 1882 to impose

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[13] Francis Paul Prucha, *American Indian Policy in Crisis: Christian Reformers and the Indian, 1865-1900 / by Francis Paul Prucha.*, 1st ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1976) 253.
[14] Bart Elmore, "Regulating America's Natural Environment," in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of American History*, 2018, https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780199329175.013.530.
[15] James Taylor Carson, "Mapping Native North America | Oxford Research Encyclopedia of American History," February 28, 2020, https://doi-org.libproxy.berkeley.edu/10.1093/acrefore/9780199329175.013.766.
[16] Prucha, *American Indian Policy in Crisis* 258.
[17] DeJong, *The Commissioners of Indian Affairs* 67.

Christianity and eliminate Native culture amongst tribes.[18] Missionaries were subsidized financially by the federal government. They "taught that polygamous marriage, varying styles of dress and adornment, and gendered divisions of labor that put women in control of agriculture and village life and left men responsible for hunting must be abandoned."[19] Missionaries were also appointed to Indian Agent positions on reservations, where they taught English, Euro-American styles of agriculture, and domestic labor. Later, federal policy targeted Native cultural practices. The Indian Religious Crime Codes adopted by Secretary of the Interior Henry Teller in 1883 prohibited traditional dances, feasts, and criminalized medicine men's practices. Those who defied the Codes could find themselves without rations or in prison for a period of ten to sixty days.[20]

Education for assimilation

Within this larger trend of assimilation policy, education became identified as another pathway to impose white culture on Native people. Early treaties gave the U.S. Congress the responsibility to provide education for tribal nations; seventy had provisions to bring civilization to tribal nations, and 38 had provisions specifically around education.[21] Schools provided the opportunity for US government officials to break down connections between Indigenous students and their parents, lands, and nations. In place, white American ideas of behavior, language, values, and work could be imposed on Native children. Early efforts by the US government to educate Native children involved expanding missionary schools due to the limited funding and

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[18] Allison M. Dussias, "Ghost Dance and Holy Ghost: The Echoes of Nineteenth-Century Christianization Policy in Twentieth-Century native American Free Exercise Cases," *Stanford Law Review* 49, no. 4 (1997): 774, http://doi.org/10.2307.1229337.

[19] Tammy Heise, "Religion and Native American Assimilation, Resistance, and Survival," *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Religion*, November 20, 2017, https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780199340378.013.394.

[20] Lee Irwin, "Freedom, Law, and Prophecy: A Brief History of Native American Religious Resistance," *American Indian Quarterly* 21, no. 1 (1997): 36, https://doi.org/10.2307/1185587.

[21] Donald L. Fixico, *Bureau of Indian Affairs* (Bloomsbury Publishing USA, 2012) 69.

infrastructural capacity of the federal government to develop its own schools.[22] However, a drawback to these schools, from the perspective of the federal government, was that they were still located in tribal communities, allowing children to maintain a strong relationship with their Indigenous communities[23]

The Carlisle Indian Boarding School's development addressed this purported problem. Carlisle was founded by Richard Henry Pratt and was the first off-reservation boarding school for Native children in the United States, located in Pennsylvannia. In April of 1861, Pratt joined the Union Army in the Civil War, starting a life-long career in military service which continued after the war as the second Lieutenant of the Tenth US Cavalry, an all-Black unit. As Second-Lieutenant, Pratt was exposed both to racial segregation and Native cultures. Racial segregation ran contrary to his beliefs that Black and Native people should be granted full constitutional rights.[24] At the same time, his exposure to Indigenous communities through eight years of military service on the frontier did nothing to increase his respect for Native culture, rather affirming to Pratt that Indigenous cultures were savage and must be eradicated.[25] These two beliefs formed the underlying logic for Pratt that Native people were not a race to be eradicated through violence, but a race to be assimilated into white society. This sentiment is infamously expressed in his belief, "Kill the Indian in him, and save the man."[26] This could be best accomplished through education, as Pratt believed Native people were "born a blank, like

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[22] DeJong, *The Commissioners of Indian Affairs* 85.

[23] Denise K. Lajimodiere, "American Indian Boarding Schools in the United States: A Brief History and Legacy," [25] 2014, 256, https://doi.org/10.7916/D8JH3K27.

[24] Adams *Education for Extinction*, 38.

[25] Frederick J. Stefon, "Richard Henry Pratt and His Indians," *The Journal of Ethnic Studies* 15, no. 2 (Summer 1987): 92.

[26] "'Kill the Indian in Him, and Save the Man': R. H. Pratt on the Education of Native Americans | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," accessed December 10, 2023, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/teach/kill-indian-him-and-save-man-r-h-pratt-education-native-americans.

the rest of us" and it was the tribal environment that created savage tendencies.[27] Following an "experiment" by Pratt in the Red River Wars of the 1870s, where he undertook a re-education campaign of Kiowa, Comanche, and Cheyenne prisoners of war at Fort Marion,[28] Pratt requested Secretary of the Interior Schurz to bring fifty children to the Hampton Institute for similar education.[29] Considering the limited success of missionary schools in assimilating Indigenous children, this request aligned with the goals of the U.S. Indian Office, and Pratt received permission to open the Carlisle Institute in 1879.

In its philosophies, practices, and curriculum, Carlisle Indian Boarding School can be understood as a culmination of the assimilationist movement that had developed in the decades after the Civil War. By remaining in the boarding school environment, Native students could be taught to be yeoman farmers and proper Christians, enabling them to assimilate into white society fully. This process included stripping Native students of their outward connections to their heritage, such as by cutting the long hair of Native children, which was seen to be a sign of savagery by white school officials. Traditional clothing was also taken from students and replaced with shoes, trousers, and dresses in a military style.[30] Carlisle's curriculum focused on assimilation by teaching students English and educating them on a trade. Students were allowed to speak only English at Carlisle and would be punished if they did not comply. Carlisle even used a book meant for disabled people, *First Lessons for the Deaf and Dumb,* to educate Indigenous children–clearly an inappropriate choice for children who were hearing and largely did not have intellectual disabilities.[31] Furthermore, this implies that officials thought that

[27] Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 52.
[28] Fixico, *Bureau of Indian Affairs* 72.
[29] Jacobs, *White Mother to a Dark Race* 27.
[30] Cooper, *Indian School* 37; *Jacobs, White Mother to a Dark Race* 27.
[31] Cooper, *Indian School* 51.

growing up in Indigenous culture was a literal handicap. This inadequate instruction led students to have an insufficient command of the language for future employment. At the same time, they had lost fluency in their native languages, leaving them ill-equipped to navigate life in their homelands as well.[32] When it came to student's technical training, the education they received was based on their gender with boys learning manual labor and farming, and girls learning domestic work.[33] This education was also self-serving: by having students produce goods throughout their education, Carlisle could offset some of the costs of their program.[34]

With a better understanding of the larger context surrounding the development of Carlisle, and Carlisle's philosophy and curriculums, we will now turn to Native parents' advocacy for their children. First, the diverse range of reasons parents appealed for the return of their children will be analyzed, followed by an examination of the actions they took to supplement their writing and finally of the rhetorical arguments parents made. The last section of this thesis will consider school officials' response to such advocacy, which reveals what type of appeals were most effective and the limitations of parents' advocacy.

Reasons for Return

At the time of its founding and throughout much of its existence, parents were unaware of Carlisle's inhumane practices. Therefore, diverse factors influenced a parent's decision to send their child to the boarding school, and sometimes, it was not the parent's decision at all. Some parents sent their children to Carlisle because they genuinely believed it was an educational opportunity that would grant their children and/or their community social mobility. Others were coerced into sending their children by official and unofficial policies that allowed recruiters to

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[32] Letitia Harding, *The Carlisle Indian Boarding School and Its Literary Legacy: The War with the Pen.*, 2001. 214.
[33] Lajimodiere, "American Indian Boarding Schools in the United States" 257.
[34] Harding, *The Carlisle Indian Boarding School and Its Literary Legacy* 11;

withhold rations and misrepresent Carlisle's curriculum and policies to gain the consent of parents. And tragically, some parents did not consent at all but rather had their children forcibly taken. The circumstances leading to a child's removal influenced the reasons parents asked for their children's return because these elements shaped parents' expectations of Carlisle.

The reasons parents cited shifted over time and frequently reflected the stressors Indigenous communities were facing at home as a result of federal policy. Initially, requests focused on illness and the need for their child's support. This remained a constant issue (although it was cited as a reason to a lesser extent in the later years of Carlisle's operations) due to the high levels of stress in Native communities from breakouts of disease and the reservation system. With the development of recruitment strategies and the outing system, parents cited new reasons including issues of consent and complaints regarding school conditions.

Changes in enrollment patterns did not have a direct influence on parents' cited reasons for the return of their children. Carlisle's enrollment started at about 200 students in 1879, and leveled out at around 1,000 students from 1889 to 1914, peaking at 1,290 students in 1906-1907. After 1911, enrollment mostly decreased until Carlisle's closure.[35] However, this is not the same pattern observed when analyzing the different reasons parents provided for requesting the return of their children. For example, a consistent number of letters requested the return of a child due to illness from 1800 to 1891, with spikes in 1893, 1894, and 1903, and one letter of this type per year interspersed throughout the rest of the period. Therefore, it is reasonable to deduce that requests reflected particular concerns parents were facing rather than fluctuations in enrollment.

[35] Frank IV Vitale, "Counting Carlisle's Casualties: Defining Student Death at the Carlisle Indian Industrial School, 1879–1918," *The American Indian Quarterly* 44, no. 4 (2020): 383–414.

Child Illness

Disease was rampant across Indian Boarding Schools at the turn of the 20th century, largely due to poor conditions in schools and the stress of relocation. At the start of Carlisle's opening, funding was limited, and so its facilities were extremely inadequate. Commissioner Price of the Bureau of Indian Affairs in 1882 admitted the school was using facilities "which long ago should have been condemned as unservable and even unsafe."[36] Children were cramped in close quarters, sleeping two to a bed and dozens in the same room.[37] Food was another major complaint from children and parents, both the quantity and quality of it, causing many to suffer undernourishment. Such conditions weakened already vulnerable immune systems and allowed disease to spread rapidly, particularly in the early years of Carlisle's existence. Common epidemics included tuberculosis, trachoma, measles, pneumonia, mumps, and influenza.[38] Death rates are difficult to quantify exactly, but one statistic demonstrates the severity of disease at Carlisle: in 1881, of the forty-nine students at the school, ten had to be returned home due to illness–a little over a fifth of the student population.[39]

Such conditions were undoubtedly not what parents expected. Parents had reason to expect that children would be attending a school in a safe environment with other healthy children. The recruitment process for Carlisle included physical evaluations of children who would be attending.[40] Physicians evaluated every student applying for the school and most children who were in ill health were not accepted. Euro-American physicians were employed

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[36] David Wallace Adams, *Education for Extinction : American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928 / - University of California Berkeley* (University Press of Kansas, 1995) 112.
[37] Michael L. Cooper, *Indian School: Teaching the White Man's Way.* (Clarion Books, 1999).
[38] David Wallace Adams, *Education for Extinction : American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928 / - University of California Berkeley* (University Press of Kansas, 1995) 124-125.
[39] David Wallace Adams, *Education for Extinction : American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928 / - University of California Berkeley* (University Press of Kansas, 1995) 130.
[40] Richard Pratt, "Student Recruitment in Western Agencies for Summer 1888 | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," RG 75, Entry 91, box 474, 1888-#18893, National Archives and Records Administration, accessed March 5, 2024, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/documents/student-recruitment-western-agencies-summer-1888.

on-site by Carlisle, meaning children could receive access to Western medicine which they frequently did not have at home (the extent to which this put Native parents at ease would have varied, depending on how the individual valued Western medicine). And if children were to fall ill, parents were assured by recruiters they would be brought home as soon as possible.[41]

Reports of children, school officials, and other parents describing children falling ill or dying at Carlisle prompted many parents to request the return of their children. Of the 147 request letters sampled in this study, 26 concerned children's illness. The majority of these requests were made from 1881 to 1895, spiking in 1893-94 and 1903 before petering out in the later years of the school. Reasons for spikes are unknown, and do not correspond with the years disease outbreak took place at Carlisle, nor with the years of particularly high enrollment numbers. 1893 was the year the Office of Indian Affairs permitted Agents to withhold rations to compel parents' consent for their children's attendance at Carlisle: thus students might have been arriving at Carlisle more malnourished than before, or recruiters could have been facing additional pressures to increase enrollment numbers, leading them to permit ill students to attend Carlisle.

While these numbers are helpful for a birds-eye overview of these requests, it is key to humanize these numbers and share their individual stories. One such family was the Wheelocks. Joshua Wheelock, son of Mason Wheelock, was from the Oneida Nation in Wisconsin. He arrived at Carlisle on September 11, 1903 for five years to study engineering as a trade.[42] According to his father, Joshua suffered kidney issues before his entrance at Carlisle, which the family disclosed to recruiters. Still, Joshua was admitted to the school. By the summer of 1904, Joshua became sick, leading his father to request his return home. The first surviving

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[41] Richard Pratt, "Pratt Responds to Request to Return Harry Mann | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," RG 75, Entry 91, box 1017, 1893-#33009, National Archives and Records Administration, accessed March 5, 2024, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/documents/pratt-responds-request-return-harry-mann.

[42] "Joshua Wheelock Student File | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," G 75, Series 1327, box 69, folder 3459, accessed January 25, 2024, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/student_files/joshua-wheelock-student-file.

correspondence file is dated April 25, 1905 from Mason Wheelock (Mr. Wheelock) to the Secretary of the Interior. In it, Mr. Wheelock emphasized his previous attempts to bring Joshua home from the Carlisle School:

> *"Dear Sir; For nearly two months I have been writing to Col. Pratt Supt. of Carlisle Training School trying to reason with him about my boy, Joshua Wheelock, whose health is failing by evidences that I cannot discredit just on the merits of the findings of Carlisle's School Physician made after I began to ask for Joshua's return home... After having been at Carlisle only a little while he (boy) began to complain of his kidney trouble which continued and is still troubling him which is shown by loss of 12 lbs in weight and the boy does say that he is sickly. His card report says he had been ill at times in Hospital. The foregoing and all other facts that I have respectfully submitted to Col. Pratt showing that I have reasons to request that my boy be sent home but which the Col. ignored every time…"* [43]

Mr. Wheelock's account–that he was in contact with Superintendent Pratt for two months and was not seeing progress on his son's health–runs contrary to how the school was characterized by recruiters. While expecting his son to be returned quickly due to his ill health, Mr. Wheelock was met with significant opposition. In the context of the high death rate at Carlisle, Mr. Wheelock's persistent requests for his son's return were extremely urgent–his son was facing life-or-death stakes. Other parents felt similarly. One letter from Mrs. Crow to Superintendent Morgan in August of 1891 pleaded, "I want him to come home he used to be sick with urinary disease and I am afraid that he always nearly died."[44] Some parents had previously experienced the loss of children, leading to urgent requests when their children fell ill at Carlisle. When Chief Harry Bear's son developed consumption (tuberculosis) at Carlisle, he shared that he had previously lost five other children to the disease when they were his son Henry's age.[45]

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[43] "Correspondence Regarding Request to Return Joshua Wheelock | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," RG 75, Entry 91, box 2530, 1904-#35695, National Archives and Records Administration, accessed January 25, 2024, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/documents/correspondence-regarding-request-return-joshua-wheelock.
[44] "Request for the Return Home of Carlo French | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," RG 75, Entry 91, box 774, 1891-#32104high, National Archives and Records Administration, accessed October 4, 2023, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/documents/request-return-home-carlo-french.
[45] "Return Home of High Bear Jr. | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," RG 75, Entry 91, box 1, 1881-#121, accessed January 22, 2024, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/index.php/documents/return-home-high-bear-jr.

Some parents aided their children by sending medicine to them. In the same letter from Mrs. Crow described above, she shared she had "to send [her grandson] medicine twice this summer for his illness."[46] The mother of Walter Winsborough, Mrs. Mary Wells, noted in her letter to the Superintendent, "I have sent him some roots which I know are very good for the heart trouble of any kind. I hope you will allow him to take it."[47] Although there is no specific record that shows if these students were allowed to take this medicine, in a letter regarding a different ill student, Superintendent Pratt admitted he had kept the boy at Carlisle due to the "inhumane treatment from the medicine man" at the boy's reservation.[48] It is therefore unlikely students got access to medicine their parents sent. Yet, this care parents provided was still a form of resistance: they asserted agency and kept traditions alive by doing so.

The illness of a child was a major reason parents requested their return from Carlisle Indian Boarding School, especially as the school's unsafe conditions were exposed to parents through letters from their children. These requests were particularly urgent because the return home of a child in this instance truly could be the difference between life or death. While this request type was common at the beginning of Carlisle's history, it became less frequent as school conditions marginally improved and other issues became more prominent, including non-consensual recruitment practices and the outing system.

Family illness and child labor

Throughout Carlisle's history, it was common for parents to ask for the return of a child to support sick family members and/or a family's business in the wake of a family loss. While some

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[46] "Request for the Return Home of Carlo French | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center."
[47] "Health Reports of Walter Winsborough | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," March 8, 1917, RG 75, CCF Entry 121, #15770-1917-Carlisle-820, National Archives and Records Administration, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/documents/health-reports-walter-winsborough.
[48] "Request to Return Kent Black Bear to His Home | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," October 30, 1885, RG 75, Entry 91, box 270, 1884-#25674, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/documents/request-return-kent-black-bear-his-home.

of these families likely sent their children to Carlisle in order to gain an academic education, the conditions created by the Dawes Act forced families to reprioritize and have their children returned so they could support the family's needs.

The Dawes Act privatized lands held communally by Indigenous people, leading each individual to have upwards of eighty acres of land to manage.[49] This was a huge shift in land stewardship models which had previously relied on multiple community members assisting in the cultivation of land: now individual families were responsible for overseeing these large tracts by themselves. Poverty rates would have also limited the ability of Native people to employ hired help, making family support imperative. This need for family support is reflected in the data regarding requests to return home. 63 of the 149 requests analyzed were of this type. Requests increased to a peak in 1903 and then fell off towards the later years of Carlisle's operation.

The case of Joseph Hamilton and his father Sin da ha ha offers further insight into what these letters typically looked like. Joseph arrived at Carlisle at 12 years old on August 19, 1892, for five years. He was from the Omaha Nation under the Winnebago Agency. On October 16th, 1885, his father requested the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to return Joshua. Winnebago Indian Agent Charles Potter wrote the request on Sin da ha ha's behalf.

"*At the earnest request of Sin da ha ha (an Omaha Councilman) I address you this communication. Sin da ha ha has a son at the Indian Industrial School Carlisle Penn. whom he desires to have returned home. He says as a reason for his return, that he is an old man and is now living alone. I promised him that I would place the subject of his request before you but gave him no encouragement that it would receive your favorable consideration. "* [50]

Hamilton's case is fairly typical. When children were requested to return home to support their family's business, it was primarily to aid with managing farms and cattle. This demonstrates that Indigenous economies functioned with a base unit of the family, rather than an individual. In

[49] Genetin-Pilawa, "Late 19th-Century U.S. Indian Policy."
[50] "Request for the Return of Joseph Hamilton | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," May 7, 1886, RG 75, Entry 91, box 314, 1886-#15341, National Archives and Records Administration, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/documents/request-return-joseph-hamilton.

the example of Hamilton, the Indian Agent who made his request noted that "all his children [were] absent from home attending school," which made it difficult for Hamilton to tend to the farm.[51] While an individualist approach might consider the responsibility of the farm solely on Hamilton, it is clear in this correspondence that the responsibility of the farm was on the family as a whole. This tension is apparent in other similar correspondence files. In these instances, school officials characterized parents as selfish by putting their needs above their children's, when in reality it was the family's needs overall that were paramount.[52]

Lack of Consent

Within the first decade of Carlisle's opening, new pressures were placed on recruiters and Native families due to shifts in department policy. Commissioner John Oberly (1888-1889) placed heavy emphasis on compulsory school attendance for Native children, and by 1891, education became compulsory for Indian tribes.[53] Two years later, Congress allowed the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to withhold key resources like rations and clothing from Indian parents and guardians who refused to send their children to school, effectively forcing parents to send their children to boarding schools such as Carlisle.[54] This was compounded by a new policy under Commissioner William Jones (1897-1905) which emphasized filling boarding schools to their absolute capacity, regardless of health impacts. Jones believed that parents had no moral or legal right to "stand in the way" of a child's education, formally dismissing the consent of parents

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[51] "Pratt Responds to Request for Return of Joseph Hamilton | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," June 14, 1886, RG 75, Entry 91, box 314, 1886-#15838, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/documents/pratt-responds-request-return-joseph-hamilton.

[52] "Pratt Responds to Request to Return Clara and Roger Jamison | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," July 7, 1902, RG 75, Entry 91, box 2126, 1902-#42483, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/index.php/documents/pratt-responds-request-return-clara-and-roger-jamison.

[53] David H. DeJong, *The Commissioners of Indian Affairs: The United States Indian Service and the Making of Federal Indian Policy, 1824-2017 / David H. DeJong.* (Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press, 2020) 94.

[54] Margaret D. Jacobs, *White Mother to a Dark Race: Settler Colonialism, Maternalism, and the Removal of Indigenous Children in the American West and Australia, 1880-1940* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), https://muse.jhu.edu/pub/17/monograph/book/11886, 150.

as a prerequisite for taking children to boarding schools.[55] These shifts in government policy reflect the increase of letters parents sent to Carlisle arguing that their children had been taken without their consent and thus needed to be returned to them. The first spike in these cases can be observed in 1893, the same year rations began to be withheld from families who refused to send their children to school. The second major spike occurred in 1902, likely a result of these policies and others (compulsory school attendance for Native children, a shift from supporting missionary to public schools) that built upon each other and came to a head by the early 20th century.

Two instances of letters sent by parents are particularly impactful, the first coming from William Tallchief (Mr. Tallchief) on behalf of his daughter, Jennie Tallchief (Figure 1). Jennie was a student at Carlisle entering the school on September 16, 1892, from the Seneca Nation on Cattaraugus Reservation.[56] On July 31 1893, Mr. Tallchief wrote the following to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs.

> "*I have a daughter in the Carlisle, PA Indian Industrial School whose name is Jennie Tall-chief who was induced to go at said school without my consent and without my knowledge but being in favor in the promotion of education among our people, I have remained silent. After my daughter was gone about two weeks, I received 1(herewith enclosed) printed agreement asking for my signature. I refuse to sign the same.*
>
> *Now therefore, I ask the Hon Commissioner to cause that my daughter be sent home as she desires to come home. On the ground of the above statement and as I deem that this is a plain case of kidnap.*[57]

Mr. Tallchief's letter clearly expressed the injustice of his situation, saying his daughter was taken "without [his] consent and without [his knowledge]" and "[deeming] that this is a plain case of kidnap." Using such language rejected colonial ideas that parents' consent and rights did not matter. Instead, Mr. Tallchief asserted agency, arguing that because *he* saw this as a case of kidnapping, his daughter should be returned to him. Furthermore, Mr. Tallchief provided proof of

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[55] DeJong, *The Commissioners of Indian Affairs* 94.
[56] "Jennie Tallchief Student File | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," September 16, 1892, RG 75, Series 1327, box 60, folder 3020, National Archives and Records Administration, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/student_files/jennie-tallchief-student-file.
[57] "William Tallchief Requests Return of Jennie Tallchief | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," RG 75, Entry 91, box 1006, 1893-#28529, National Archives and Records Administration, accessed January 24, 2024, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/documents/william-tallchief-requests-return-jennie-tallchief.

his lack of consent. Contained within the correspondence he sent to the Commissioner is a blank consent slip, a piece of paper Carlisle asked parents to sign to agree to five years of enrollment for their children at Carlisle. The slip was not signed by Mr. Tallchief.

Parents also took issue with recruiters who did not obtain their informed consent before taking their children to Carlisle. Recruiters frequently assured parents that students would be admitted for only a three-year term and could return home at any time the parent wished in order to secure more children for the school, contrary to Carlisle's official policies. Such was the case for a group of parents from the Standing Rock Agency in August of 1905. In a letter sent by missionary May Collins to Commissioner Leupp, six parents alleged their children were taken without their full consent. Mrs. Brave Thunder lamented that the recruiting party had taken her son without her knowledge while she was at Oak Creek. Upon learning he was taken, she followed her son, but Mrs. Brave Thunder claimed "They made me consent. I consented for one year. Crying with a sad heart. I am a widow. I need my son." The Hashourn parents stated similarly, that they did not want their son to go "But upon pressure [they] consented the one year." Yellow Earrings claimed he did not consent at all, and when he tried to catch up to Daniel who had been taken by the recruiters, "[his] horses were poor…[and] when [he] reached them they had gone. [He] did not consent."[58] These statements paint a horrifying picture of kidnapping by the U.S. government and provide a glimpse into the grief these parents and many others experienced. At the same time, they show parents unyielding efforts to assert their rights over their children. These accounts, especially by Yellow Earrings and Mrs. Brave Thunder, show that

[58] "Correspondence Regarding Requests to Return Standing Rock Agency Students | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," August 26, 1905, RG 75, Entry 91, box 3009, 1906-#1371, National Archives and Records Administration, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/index.php/documents/correspondence-regarding-requests-return-standing-rock-agency-students.

parents attempted to have their children returned from the moment they were stolen, even running after recruiters in attempts to keep their children with them.

The cases of Jennie Tallchief and the Standing Rock Agency students parallel much of what was experienced by other parents who did not give informed consent to send their children to Carlisle. Most complaints include parents who believed they were sending their children to Carlisle for three years only, and only at the expiration of those three years found that their children were signed up for five years of enrollment.[59] Fewer, although still a prominent number,

[59] "John Logan Requests the Return of His Three Children | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," August 1, 1887, RG 75, Entry 91, box 412, 1887-#20960, National Archives and Records Administration, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/documents/john-logan-requests-return-his-three-children; "Response to Thomas Metoxen's Request to Return Home | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," accessed October 4, 2023, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/documents/response-thomas-metoxens-request-return-home; "Allen Responds to Request to Return James Down | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," February 26, 1902, RG 75, Entry 91, box 2061, 1902-#16602, National Archives and Records Administration, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/documents/allen-responds-request-return-james-down; "Se He Du Ba Requests Return of Son Thomas Mitchell | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," June 7, 1886, RG 75, Entry 91, box 314, 1886-#15312, National Archives and Records Administration, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/documents/se-he-du-ba-requests-return-son-thomas-mitchell; "Request to Return John Elm | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," June 12, 1888, RG 75, Entry 91, box 468, 1888-#15371, National Archives and Records Administration, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/documents/request-return-john-elm; "Request to Return Lydia Flint to Her Home | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," February 12, 1891, RG 75, Entry 91, box 718, 1891-#11662, National Archives and Records Administration, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/documents/request-return-lydia-flint-her-home; "Request for Return Home of Renville Children | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," June 14, 1909, RG 75, CCF Entry 121, #41688-1909-Carlisle-820, National Archives and Records Administration, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/documents/request-return-home-renville-children; "Pratt Responds to Request to Return Marguerite and Louise Provost | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," accessed January 25, 2024, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/index.php/documents/pratt-responds-request-return-marguerite-and-louise-provost; "Pratt Writes to William Patterson Regarding His Daughter Cora | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," January 3, 1902, RG 75, Entry 91, box 2026, 1902-#723, National Archives and Records Administration, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/index.php/documents/pratt-writes-william-patterson-regarding-his-daughter-cora; "Request for Marie Arteshaw to Return Home | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," July 13, 1908, RG 75, CCF Entry 121, #40302-1908-Carlisle-826, National Archives and Records Administration, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/documents/request-marie-arteshaw-return-home; "Walter Winsborough Student File | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," September 10, 1916, RG 75, Series 1327, box 115, folder 4739, National Archives and Records Administration, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/student_files/walter-winsborough-student-file; "Pratt Responds to Request for Return of Uriah Goodcane | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," August 8, 1898, RG 75, Entry 91, box 1576, 1898-#40434, National Archives and Records Administration, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/index.php/documents/pratt-responds-request-return-uriah-goodcane; "Request to Return Andrew and Mary Peters | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," July 3, 1918, RG 75, CCF Entry 121, #51221-1918-Carlisle-820, National Archives and Records Administration, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/documents/request-return-andrew-and-mary-peters; "Request for the Return of Samuel Wilson and Minnie Finley | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," July 12, 1893, RG 75, Entry 91, box 1001, 1893-#26306, National Archives and Records Administration,

argued they had not consented to send their child for any period of time to Carlisle.[60] Despite horrific policies that reduced parents' autonomy over their families, it is clear Native parents continued to show up for their children and assert their rights as parents, even if these requests were ultimately unsuccessful.

Complaints regarding school curriculum

Parents also sought the return of their children and better resources for them due to Carlisle's subpar curriculum and conditions. Recruiters described Carlisle in a manner contrary to its reality: they emphasized the academic experiences children would gain from coming to Carlisle that would purportedly help them navigate a white-dominated world. Superintendent Pratt himself characterized the school as much, and urged the Sioux Chief Spotted Tail (Figure 2) to send children to Carlisle "so that they can speak the English language, write letters, and do the things which bring to the white man prosperity…[and] stand for their rights as the white man stands for his." [61] Parents from the Onondaga Nation were similarly told their children would be

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https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/documents/request-return-samuel-wilson-and-minnie-finley; "Request to Return Clarence De Graff | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," June 24, 1909, RG 75, CCF Entry 121, #40722-1909-Carlisle-826, National Archives and Records Administration, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/documents/request-return-clarence-de-graff.]78

[60] "Request for the Return of Abner Patterson | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," June 4, 1893, RG 75, Entry 91, box 988, 1893-#20659, National Archives and Records Administration, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/documents/request-return-abner-patterson; "William Tallchief Requests Return of Jennie Tallchief | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center"; "Pratt Responds to Request to Return Emily and Gustave Hardt | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," June 28, 1898, RG 75, Entry 91, box 1564, 1898-#34579, National Archives and Records Administration, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/index.php/documents/pratt-responds-request-return-emily-and-gustave-hardt; "Correspondence Regarding Enrollment of Phoebe Doxtator | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," accessed March 26, 2024, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/documents/correspondence-regarding-enrollment-phoebe-doxtator; "John Powell Demands Return of His Sons Moses and Stansill | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," September 14, 1900, RG 75, Entry 91, box 1831, 1900-#45969, National Archives and Records Administration, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/documents/john-powell-demands-return-his-sons-moses-and-stansill; "Mercer Responds to Request to Return Sophia Green | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," June 2, 1906, RG 75, Entry 91, box 3151, 1906-#47811, National Archives and Records Administration, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/documents/mercer-responds-request-return-sophia-green; "Allen Responds to Request to Return Ida and Thomas Griffin | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," February 11, 1902, RG 75, Entry 91, box 2061, 1902-#16603, National Archives and Records Administration, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/index.php/documents/allen-responds-request-return-ida-and-thomas-griffin.

[61] Richard Pratt, *Battlefield and Classroom: Four Decades with the American Indian, 1867-1904*, ed. Robert Utley (University of Nebraska Press Lincoln and London, n.d.). 152.

getting the same access to resources as white children, and complained that Carlisle was "not as was represented to us before [the children] went we all supposed they had gone to white school…there was no need of their going to a wild Indian school."[62] In contrast to parents who out of necessity requested the return of their children for labor, these parents were adamant that they did not want their children trained in tasks related to labor. A possible explanation for this discrepancy could be class. Many of the parents who requested children home due to complaints related to school curriculum were from urban areas and were middle class,[63] while parents who needed their children's support frequently lived in rural areas.

Indeed, Carlisle's actual curriculum was far from what was promised to parents. The school educated Native children to prepare them for the low positions school officials felt the children were bound to occupy in the workforce. Academic subjects received attention for half of the school day, with the second half being devoted to trades.[64] One major source of this tension was the outing system, which allowed children to work on farms of white Christian families over the summer or semesters at Carlisle in exchange for low pay, and only some schooling. The outing program started in 1880 with 21 spots but quickly grew in popularity with 109 students being sent out the following year and peaking with 948 students being sent out in 1903.[65] Parents' complaints regarding school curriculum first started to appear in 1883, with two major spikes in 1893 and 1902. Beyond the outing program, the school's food and model of industrial training

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[62] "Request to Return Onondaga Nation Students | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," December 1, 1883, RG 75, Entry 91, box 174, 1884-#2631, National Archives and Records Administration, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/documents/request-return-onondaga-nation-students.

[63] "Request for Return Home of Renville Children | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," June 14, 1909; "Correspondence Regarding Return of Nora and Geneva Jameson | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," May 14, 1901, RG 75, Entry 91, box 1953, 1901-#39264, National Archives and Records Administration, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/documents/correspondence-regarding-return-nora-and-geneva-jameson.

[64] Cooper, *Indian School* 57. [39]

[65] Robert A. Trennert, "From Carlisle to Phoenix: The Rise and Fall of the Indian Outing System, 1878-1930," *Pacific Historical Review* 52, no. 3 (1983): 272, https://doi.org/10.2307/3639003.

were other common complaints of parents who believed their children would be educated in academic topics.

This dashed promise was a major reason parents expressed discontent with Carlisle's curriculum and sought to have their children returned. When it came to the outing program, parents felt that students could do the same work at home and were not getting the academic education that had been promised to them. Martha and David Patterson, parents to Abner Patterson, similarly protested that Carlisle was misrepresented to them. The Pattersons wrote, "I hear that they have only two hours and ½ schooling in a day…and the balance of the day is work; that He was learning to Howe and we have plenty of that to do at the House."[66] As Carlisle became infamous for its outing program, and recruiters could no longer paint Carlisle as purely an academic experience, parents grew hesitant to send their children to the school. In a request Julia Provost wrote to return Marguerite and Louise Provost home (Figure 3), she stated she made a deal with the recruiter "Miss Burgess [who] understood that we do not wish to have our girls go out to the country farms," although the girls were sent on outing anyway.[67] From these accounts, it is clear that Native parents also advocated for their children by ensuring they had access to unique educational opportunities they could not provide themselves: they wanted better for their children than below-average wages for menial labor and sought education on academic subjects to position their children for a better life after Carlisle.

When parents realized their children were not being cared for as they expected, parents sought better conditions for them. Cecelia Harto, an adolescent Chippewa girl who entered

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[66] "Request for the Return of Abner Patterson | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," June 4, 1893.
[67] "Pratt Responds to Request to Return Marguerite and Louise Provost | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," August 6, 1897, RG 75, Entry 91, box 1531, 1898-#18815, National Archives and Records Administration, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/index.php/documents/pratt-responds-request-return-marguerite-and-louise-provost.

Carlisle in 1913, complained to her grandfather about the subpar food.[68] In a letter to Carlisle's Superintendent, her grandfather Antoine Harto (Mr. Harto) expressed concern that "every meal [is] of the same kind without sugar in coffee nor butter on bread…" and Cecelia was made to scrub the floor for long periods at a time. Mr. Harto asked the Superintendent to ensure that "Cecelia may not be overworked by scrubbing nor by lack of some sweet and milk in coffee and a might of butter in her bread at least once a day, if this is not possible from lack of appropriation I am willing to pay even the small amount of ten cents a day." He further explained that the family "was brought up at sugar season especially lived almost entirely on sugar and my family was noted for health and strength," and emphasized the benefits of sugar as a traditional medicine.[69] Even from afar, Native parents tried to provide for their children at Carlisle. This was an assertion of their rights and knowledge as parents to understand what was best for their children, even in the face of a system that was predicated on the belief that Native parents could not appropriately raise their children. Parents' complaints regarding Carlisle curriculum highlight the level of engagement parents had in their children's lives–they maintained correspondence with their children and paid close attention to what their experiences were.

Parents had diverse reasons for requesting the return of their children, including the illness of their child, the need for their child's labor, a lack of parental consent, and complaints regarding the school curriculum. These requests shifted from predominantly citing family and child illness as the reason for a child's return home to also include issues of consent and complaints regarding curriculum. These additional reasons developed as a result of policy changes that happened at the federal level–specifically the development of policies that did not require a parent's consent to

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[68] "Cecelia Harto Student File | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," January 12, 1913, RG 75, Series 1327, box 101, folder 4373, National Archives and Records Administration, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/index.php/student_files/cecelia-harto-student-file.

[69] "Correspondence Regarding Cecelia Harto | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," June 26, 1913, RG 75, CCF Entry 121, #71855-1913-Carlisle-820, National Archives and Records Administration, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/index.php/documents/correspondence-regarding-cecelia-harto.

take a child to boarding school and the outing system at Carlisle. More of these complaints were made the longer these systems were in place, demonstrating an increased knowledge of Carlisle's system and problems that likely came from their children's correspondence and the experiences of other families. What these diverse reasons for return demonstrate is a major desire by parents to ensure the safety and health of their children and families.

Actions

Parents deployed organizing tactics to secure the return of their children from Carlisle including petitioning, lobbying Congress, employing outside advocates, and letter writing. Strategies and actions used by parents increased in sophistication over time as they became adept at navigating the bureaucratic process. This organizing is situated within a longer tradition of Indigenous advocacy towards different levels of the U.S. government. In the period preceding Carlisle's existence, petitioning and lobbying were used by many Native communities, including the Seneca in New York and Odawa and Ojibwe in Michigan. The petitioning campaign amongst the Seneca sprung in response to an 1838 treaty that forced the Seneca to cede their lands in New York and be removed to Kansas. The campaign they undertook included petitions by the Seneca Chiefs, warriors, residents, clan mothers, and even allies like the Hicksite Quakers to members of Congress and President John Tyler. As this petitioning took place, the Seneca built alliances and created organizations that provided infrastructure for future petitioning and lobbying, the center of which moved to the Cattaraugus reservation in 1848. Similarly in Michigan, petitions were employed by the Odawa and Ojibwe to voice their concerns with removal and negotiate land cessions. They too found allies, particularly in Catholic priests and laity who forwarded their petitions to the President, Indian Agents, and Secretary of War[70]

[70] Daniel P. Carpenter, *Democracy by Petition: Popular Politics in Transformation, 1790-1870*, 1st ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2021), https://doi.org/10.4159/9780674258921, 427-429.

Petitions

Parents and tribal leaders created petitions by compiling their grievances, collecting signatures from community members, and sending them to school officials and government leaders. They were especially used early on in Carlisle's history. A clear legacy of the aforementioned Seneca petitions (1838 to 1841), a petition written by Cayuga[71] Chiefs and families was sent from the Cattaraugus Reservation to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs on May 1, 1893, requesting the following:

"To Grover Cleavland President of the United States of America, Washington DC
The undersigned Chiefs of the Cayuga Nation and the Indian people residing upon Cattaraugus Reservation in State of New York.
Do most respectfully ask to the Department of the United States that a certain Indian children named the accompanying list be release immediately from Carlisle Industrial school in state of Pennsylvannia, for the following reasons.
1st That the parents was misinformed when the children was taken to the aforesaid school. Even some children was taken without the knowledge of parents.
2nd That the parents are dissatisfied in the manner of the children taken care of in aforesaid school.
3rd That the parents learned and believed that their children were put to work and allowed a very little schooling, while they seeking scholarship.
4th That the food allowed for the children in aforesaid school insufficient.
5th That the punishments to the children in aforesaid school beyond reasonable.
6th That the parents believes it will be better interest to their children that they should be returned home immediately.
7th That the undersigned believes that the United States of America is a free country and no person should be detained in any manner unless through crimes. [sic]"[72]

Ideally, the author would next explain how this organizing occurred: how did parents and Native leaders come together to write such a petition? How were signatures collected? Was there debate around what would be included in the petition or what other actions could be taken to secure the return of the children? However, a record does not exist (at least not one that this author could access) to answer these questions. All that remains in the National Archives is

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[71] Cayuga Nation includes individuals from the Seneca, Cayuga, Onondaga, Oneida Mohawk and the Tuscarora peoples.

[72] "Petition of Cattaraugus Reservation Requesting Return of Children | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," April 21, 1893, RG 75, Entry 91, box 978, 1893-#16452, National Archives and Records Administration, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/documents/petition-cattaraugus-reservation-requesting-return-children.

correspondence between Cattaraugus tribal members and bureaucratic officials at Carlisle or the Office of Indian Affairs. These files mainly represent the opinions of bureaucratic officials. The only information from Native parents comes from the text of this petition. The Indian Agency that served Cattaraugus, which we might expect to have records of Indian Agent's cases or Council meetings of the tribe, has no records from until the 1920s.[73] Still, some interesting findings can be extrapolated from the record as it exists.

At the bottom of the petition are the "names of persons who desire children to be returned from Carlisle school." This includes one hundred and fifteen names, representing about eighty families. The volume of signatories suggests that significant organizing must have occurred to gain such signatures. It is possible that the authors of this letter, the Chiefs of the Cayuga Nation, led the effort to gain signatures and then liaised with the U.S. Indian Agent A.W. Ferrin (who was assigned to Cattaraugus Reservation) to have the letter sent. Interestingly, the letter was addressed to President Grover Cleveland but sent by Ferrin straight to the Commissioner. Considering Native people from Cattaraugus had written to both the Superintendent and Commissioner in previous instances, their address to Cleveland was likely not a mistake: it appears to be an intentional decision to elevate their issue to a higher level, which Ferrin might have thwarted. Alternatively, an additional petition could have been sent to President Cleveland directly.

On May 8, 1893, Ferrin followed up with the Commissioner with the following letter:

"…Since I have forwarded the petition I have seen some of the intelligent and reliable man of the Seneca Nation and they tell me that only a few families are dissatisfied with having their children at Carlisle. They say most of the children there are pleased with the school and their treatment, and they think it is a mistake for their friends to try to get them away.

[73] The date range and completeness of agency records varies greatly. The New York Agency, which served Cattaraugus, is anomalous in terms of its records start date. Many agencies that sent children to Carlisle have records starting in the 1860s-1880s. However, most of these records have not yet been digitized and are held in person at locations across the nation, meaning they were inaccessible to the author for this study.

I am informed that an effort was made at the last session of the Seneca Nation Council to get the Council to pass a resolution asking that the children be sent home form Carlisle but after mature deliberation the Council declined to pass such resolution [sic].”[74]

If we are to take Ferrin at his word, then this petition represents a complex political landscape in Cattaraugus that influenced how Native parents organized. As mentioned, the petition itself was written by the Chiefs of the Cayuga Nation. However, in 1848, the Council of Chiefs was abolished in favor of a three-branch, elected government model, forty-five years before this letter was written.[75] Ferrin in this letter mentions that the Council rejected the resolution to return children home from Carlisle–this might be a reference to the elected government. This would imply that one group of parents was working with the Chiefs (who might have continued to exist in some sort of traditional role) for the return of their children, and another group of community members was working with the elected government to keep the children at Carlisle. This would also imply that different factions existed within the Seneca and that these factions manipulated the complex political structure of the nation to advance their own goals. Native communities therefore did not always agree on the benefits or harms of Carlisle’s education for their children.

The Cattagarus petition is one of three petitions that appeared in the letters sampled. A previously mentioned petition from the Rosebud Agency was written in 1881 to Superintendent Pratt. This petition was written by the Sioux Chiefs and the larger Sioux Council requesting the return of their children who had experienced illness and death.[76] In 1885, the Oneida Sachem and Councilors requested the return of children from Carlisle citing that parents were not able to give

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[74] “A. W. Ferrin Provides Update on New York Requests to Return Students | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center,” May 8, 1893, RG 75, Entry 91, box 980, 1893-#17317, National Archives and Records Administration, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/documents/w-ferrin-provides-update-new-york-requests-return-students.
[75] Carpenter, *Democracy by Petition* 425.
[76] “Letters Sent to Pratt from the Rosebud Agency Regarding Return of Children | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center,” June 23, 1881, RG 75, Entry 91, box 23, 1881-#9836, National Archives and Records Administration,
https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/documents/letters-sent-pratt-rosebud-agency-regarding-return-children.

"due consideration" before sending their children to Carlisle.[77] All three of these petitions are roughly concentrated in the beginning half of Carlisle's history, and none successfully achieved their children's return. The low number of petitions in the historical record, and the fact they petered out towards the last half of Carlisle's history, implies that petitioning became too labor intensive for too little reward.

Lobbying Congress

Following this period of petition-writing, Native parents wrote letters to U.S. Senators and Representatives encouraging them to advocate to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs on their behalf. Lobbying to congressmen occurred during a distinct time period. Of the letters sampled, ten parents employed this method of advocacy, with the first in 1899–twenty years after the founding of Carlisle and seven years after the last petition was sent. Letters of this type continued until Carlisle's closing in 1917.

One powerful example of this comes from the correspondence of Mrs. Mary Wells, mother of Walter Winsborough. Walter entered Carlisle on September 10, 1916 for three years, but starting in January 1917 he developed acute articular rheumatism.[78] From January 8th to January 29th, correspondence between Mrs. Wells and the Superintendent of Carlisle took place, mainly consisting of updates on Walter's health. Mrs. Wells continuously asked if it would be possible for her to come to Carlisle to see Walter or for Walter to be returned home. However, the Superintendent did not grant a response to this request in his correspondence, and only updated her on Walter's health. On February 12, 1917, the following letter by U.S. Senator Henry Lane was sent to the Assistant Commissioner of Indian Affairs:

[77] "Request to Return Onondaga Nation Students | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," December 1, 1883.
[78] "Walter Winsborough Student File | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center."

"I transmit herewith papers in regard to the case of one Walter Winsborough at the Carlisle Indian School. The boy's parents are anxious to have him removed to his home, and I would thank you to have this matter investigated and advise me if it is possible to comply with their request."[79]

What is particularly interesting about this correspondence is that Senator Henry Lane was a representative from Oregon, whereas Mary Wells resided in Browning, Montana. However, Senator Lane was a known advocate for Native American rights. Elected to the Senate as a Democrat in 1912, and serving until May of 1917,[80] he was a reformist on Indian policy, especially advocating for tribes through his position on the Indian Affairs Committee.[81] A eulogy for Lane highlights his contributions. In a memorial address held in the U.S. Senate in 1919, Blackfeet Business Council Chairman Robert J Hamilton shared "the Blackfeet Tribe of Indians [felt] profound sorrow for the death of Hon. Harry Lane…[a] useful Senator and exponent of justice and fair play for the American Indian…"[82]

The Blackfeet had a strong connection to Senator Lane, who had supported an impoverished sect of the tribe in a fight against the sale of their land to white creditors. While other reformists supported the sale of land, Senator Lane actually visited the Blackfeet Reservation in 1914 and spoke to tribal members on the ground, leading him to support the movement to block the sale.[83] What makes this relevant to Walter and Mary Wells's case is that they were Piegan and Chippewa, and resided under the Blackfeet agency. Senator Lane's previous advocacy alongside the Blackfeet likely motivated Mrs. Wells to contact him, instead of her

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[79] "Health Reports of Walter Winsborough | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center."
[80] United States Congress, "LANE, Henry," Biographical Directory of the United States Congress, accessed March 8, 2024, https://bioguide.congress.gov/search/bio/L000059.
[81] Oregon Historical Society, Oregon Encyclopedia, "Harry Lane (1855-1917)," accessed March 8, 2024, https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/lane_harry_1855_1917_/.
[82] United States Congress Senate, *Harry Lane (Late a Senator from Oregon). Memorial Addresses Delivered in the Senate of the United States, Sixty-Fifth Congress.*, Senate Document / 65th Congress, 3rd Session. Senate ; No. 446 (Washington, D.C: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1919).
[83] "'Justice and Fair Play for the American Indian': Harry Lane, Robert Hamilton, and a Vision of Native American Modernity Harry Lane, Robert Hamilton, and a Vision of Native American Modernity on JSTOR," accessed February 19, 2024, 305-306, https://www-jstor-org.libproxy.berkeley.edu/stable/26504137?seq=2.

Senator from Montana, to advance her case. This demonstrates that Wells had knowledge of political movements within the Blackfeet nation and of different Senators' positions on Indian affairs issues. She made a conscious, strategic decision to work alongside a known advocate for her community when contacting Senator Lane. This paints a picture of the sophisticated and dynamic political advocacy Native parents employed to advocate for their children.

Employing Advocates

Native parents also worked alongside white allies, particularly church members and lawyers, to assist them in gaining the return of their children. These allies either wrote for and interacted with school officials on parent's behalf, or simply included a few lines about their support of the parent's case and forwarded the parent's own letter to school officials. Such cases also occurred during the second half of Carlisle's history following the period of petition writing.

Seven letters throughout the period are of a missionary writing on parents' behalf for the return of their children. In these letters, the missionaries validate the parents' concerns and express support for the return of a child.[84] However, five of them were written by one missionary, Reverend S.S. Burleson. One such letter by Reverend Burelson included his support for the return

[84] "Pratt Responds to Additional Information Regarding Request to Return Lily Huff | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," August 19, 1891, RG 75, Entry 91, box 769, 1891-#30684, National Archives and Records Administration, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/documents/pratt-responds-additional-information-regarding-request-return-lily-huff; "Pratt Responds to Request to Return Celicia Schanandore | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," October 20, 1891, RG 75, Entry 91, box 788, 1891-#37857, National Archives and Records Administration, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/documents/pratt-responds-request-return-celicia-schanandore; "Request for the Return of Abram Hill | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," March 28, 1892, RG 75, Entry 91, box 840, 1892-#11792, National Archives and Records Administration, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/documents/request-return-abram-hill; "Pratt Responds to Request for Return of Louisa King | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," August 18, 1891, RG 75, Entry 91, box 768, 1891-#30513, National Archives and Records Administration, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/documents/pratt-responds-request-return-louisa-king; "Request to Send Home Purcell Powlas | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," February 23, 1895, RG 75, Entry 91, box 1170, 1895-#8728, National Archives and Records Administration, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/documents/request-send-home-purcell-powlas; "Pratt Responds to Request to Return Clara and Roger Jamison | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," July 7, 1902; "Allen Responds to Request to Return Henry Lives | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," February 14, 1902, RG 75, Entry 91, box 2054, 1902-#13312, National Archives and Records Administration, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/documents/allen-responds-request-return-henry-lives.

of William and Sarah Archiquette (Figure 4). The children, coming from the Oneida Nation, entered Carlisle in 1888 for five years.[85] Reverend Burleson wrote to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs in July of 1892 on behalf of Chief Skenandoah (a grandfather to the children) and Mrs. Archiquette for the return of the children. The Reverend followed up in February of 1893, transcribing the words of the parents of William and Sarah Archiquette rather than writing on their behalf. [86]

Church leaders and missionaries undoubtedly have a complicated legacy within Native American history and have committed great acts of violence while advancing Christianizing projects in these communities. Why, then, would the Archiquettes and others have turned to religious leaders for support in advocating for their children? As previously mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, early Indian Boarding School projects highly involved missionaries. Missions initially had stronger infrastructure to support a boarding school environment, leading them to be contracted by the federal government to provide such a service. It was not until the year prior to this letter, in 1892, that the federal government formally ended government sponsorship to missionary schools.[87] Furthermore, multiple parents' letters note they allowed their children to attend Carlisle because their pastor was leading the recruitment effort or spoke favorably of the school.[88] Therefore, parents were aware that missionaries had knowledge of and

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[85] "William Archiquette Student Information Card | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," June 22, 1888, RG 75, Series 1329, box 11, National Archives and Records Administration, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/student_files/william-archiquette-student-information-card.; "Sarah Archiquette Student File | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," June 22, 1888, RG 75, Series 1327, box 53, folder 2621, National Archives and Records Administration, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/student_files/sarah-archiquette-student-file.

[86] "Pratt Replies to Request for William and Sarah Archiquette in 1893 | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," March 3, 1893, RG 75, Entry 91, box 958, 1893-#8097, National Archives and Records Administration, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/documents/pratt-replies-request-william-and-sarah-archiquette-1893.

[87] DeJong, *The Commissioners of Indian Affairs*, 85.

[88] "Petition of Cattaraugus Reservation Requesting Return of Children | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," April 21, 1893; "Request for the Return of Abner Patterson | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," June 4, 1893.

connection to Carlisle that would have made them more adept at navigating its institutional bureaucracy than themselves.

Attorneys were employed by Native parents to advocate for their children as well. Of the letters used in this study, eight were instances of parents using lawyers to gain the return of their children. The earliest is dated at 1897 and the latest is dated 1909, demonstrating that lawyers were used more frequently towards the latter half of Carlisle's history.[89] This can be understood as a development towards different forms of organizing than had originally been used when the school had opened, such as petition writing. Of these cases, half are from families who were Seneca (3) and Cherokee (1), suggesting that these nations had more familiarity with lawyers than others, perhaps because of the Supreme Court cases these groups had undergone (*Cherokee Nation v. Georgia* in 1831, and *Seneca Nation of Indians v. Harrison B. Christy* in 1896).

Unlike missionaries or parents themselves, lawyers were adept at navigating the legal landscape Carlisle was enmeshed in, employing their knowledge of both constitutional law and Carlisle's rules to support their clients. This knowledge often gave these letters more weight than others. For example, the parents of Shay Blanche, a member of the Penobscot Nation, employed lawyer W. H. Powell to support their cause. Powell wrote to the Commissioner in 1907–

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[89] "John Powell Demands Return of His Sons Moses and Stansill | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," September 14, 1900; "Pratt Responds to Request to Return Nicodemus Billy | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," May 2, 1904, RG 75, Entry 91, box 2516, 1904-#31170, National Archives and Records Administration, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/documents/pratt-responds-request-return-nicodemus-billy; "Allen Responds to Request to Return Ida and Thomas Griffin | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," February 11, 1902; "Pratt Responds to Request to Return Clara and Roger Jamison | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," July 7, 1902; "Pratt Responds to Request to Return Lucy Root | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," December 4, 1897, RG 75, Entry 91, box 1483, 1897-#51152, National Archives and Records Administration, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/index.php/documents/pratt-responds-request-return-lucy-root; "Mercer Responds to Request to Return Sophia Green | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," June 2, 1906; "Correspondence Regarding Return of Nora and Geneva Jameson | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," accessed March 8, 2024, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/documents/correspondence-regarding-return-nora-and-geneva-jameson; "Request for Return Home of Old Town Reservation Student | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," October 8, 1907, RG 75, CCF Entry 121, #82074-1907-Carlisle-820, National Archives and Records Administration, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/documents/request-return-home-old-town-reservation-student.

"One of the girls wishes to return and attend the public schools here…Her mother is not well and it is a constant source of worriement to her that the girl is away. The officials at Carlsle [sic] deny to the child the right to return. The parents have come to me. From my point of view they have no right to exercise any such restraint over the child. I cannot conceive how the school authorities at Carlisle can hold one of these children there against her will [sic]."[90]

Here, Powell used his knowledge of parental rights and consent to advocate for the return of Blanche. When confronted with this argument, school officials could no longer deny the questionable legality of their practices. The Acting Commissioner responded to Powell,

"Although there may be some question as to the legal right of the school authorities to decline the return of the child to the parents before the contract period of enrolment has expired, they certainly have a moral right in the premises"

This response is particularly astounding, as it captures that school officials knew that keeping children from their parents under the guise of Carlisle's contract would not hold up in a legal sphere, yet their sense of impunity outweighed any liability concerns. Although Blanche was returned, the Commissioner stated he would be willing to grant her return because Old Town Reservation was a charge of the state rather than the federal government. He did not express concerns about the legality of their methods.

A similarity between the advocacy of missionaries and lawyers was that they could validate Native parents' requests. Letters from missionaries spoke to the truthfulness of parent's claims. Advocating on behalf of father Charles Hill who needed his son's help after becoming blind, S.S. Burleson emphasized "I have known the man for a year and can assure you that he needs his son's help."[91] Letters from these outside advocates also attested to the "civilized" nature of the parents to assuage school officials' concerns that children were being sent back to a "camp" lifestyle. M.R. Steenson, lawyer to the Jameson family, wrote "Mr. and Mrs Jameson are far

[90] "Request for Return Home of Old Town Reservation Student | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," October 8, 1907.
[91] "Request for the Return of Abram Hill | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," March 28, 1892.

above average Indians, and that they reside here in the city, where we have excellent schools."[92] Mrs. Clare Bowers wrote she could come up with a character reference from her minister to assure the Commissioner that she was "civilized" and would be a good influence on her children. [93] These advocates used their whiteness to vouch for Native parents, and in a sense, extended this whiteness to Native parents. The assimilation mission need not apply to these individuals–they were already civilized.

Native parents who employed outside advocates knew their limitations when operating in Carlisle's system. They relied on others who were more adept with the bureaucratic process than themselves and whom school officials would better respect. Native parents must have undergone extensive research to find allies to support them. Although it is unclear exactly what the process looked like, it undoubtedly took skill and persistence.

Letter writing

A persistent action across the time period was letter writing, which specifically refers to instances in which parents wrote on their own to school officials (rather than Congressmen, lawyers, or missionaries) for the return of their children. These letters have been analyzed in "Reasons," and will be analyzed again in "Rhetoric," but it is worthwhile to also analyze them as a method of organizing. They were the predominant action taken by parents and occurred throughout the historical period–essentially every case included in the study was at least initiated by the parent's letter writing (excluding the four petitions previously mentioned).

When writing, parents demonstrated a complex understanding of Carlisle's bureaucratic process. The Commissioner of Indian Affairs was the ultimate arbiter when parents requested the

[92] "Correspondence Regarding Return of Nora and Geneva Jameson | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," May 14, 1901.
[93] "Pratt Responds to Request to Return Emily and Gustave Hardt | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," June 28, 1898.

return of their children–Superintendents at Carlisle had to get approval from the Commissioner to return children to their parents in each case. Parents knew of this and used it to their advantage, as is clear in Franklin Moses' correspondence. Caretaker to Max Mixsooke, Mr. Moses wrote to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs on April 10, 1910, "I have written to Mr. Moses Friedman [Superintendent] at the Indian School for the release of one Max Mixsooke native boy from St. Michaels Alaska. It has occurred to me that perhaps it would be necessary for me to make application direct to your office before the request could be granted" and did so to "avoid any unnecessary delay."[94] This correspondence provides a clear insight into the thought process of parents and guardians who used letter writing to advocate for the return of their children: they clearly understood Carlisle's hierarchy which subordinated the Superintendent under the authority of the Commissioner, and used this understanding to usher the prompt and favorable response to their requests.

Many parents also escalated their cases to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs when they did not agree with the Superintendent's decisions. Alex Cole, father to Annie Cole, initiated correspondence with Carlisle's Superintendent in 1913 for the return of his daughter due to her illness but faced unfavorable outcomes. In July of 1913, Mr. Cole wrote instead to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, and stated "I wrote to the Supt. of the said school; and his reply was also enclosing her monthly report, that she was in good health." As was typical in such cases, the Commissioner requested a report from the Superintendent on the case, in which Superintendent Lipps disagreed with the father's assessment of Anna's health, and the request was denied. However, Mr. Cole remained persistent. He and his wife Mary Ann Cole wrote again to the Commissioner in February 1914, April 1914, and February 1915 including evidence of

[94] "Request for Return Home of Max Mixsooke | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," May 14, 1910, RG 75, CCF Entry 121, #35463-1910-Carlisle-820, National Archives and Records Administration, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/documents/request-return-home-max-mixsooke.

their daughter's condition (letters in which their daughter described her illness to them). Finally, the Coles secured the return of their daughter in late February of 1915; the reason the Supervisor in Charge states being "Anna B. Cole's mother yet insists on having her daughter sent home from the Carlisle school."[95] The Cole's are just one of many families who employed such tactics to advocate for their children.[96]

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[95] "Request for Return Home of Annie Cole | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," June 30, 1913, RG 75, CCF Entry 121, #88677-1913-Carlisle-820, National Archives and Records Administration, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/documents/request-return-home-annie-cole; "Frank Baker Requests Return of Alice and Hattie | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," June 14, 1899, RG 75, Entry 91, box 1679, 1899-#33601, National Archives and Records Administration, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/documents/frank-baker-requests-return-alice-and-hattie; "Correspondence Regarding Return of Nora and Geneva Jameson | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," May 14, 1901; "Mercer Responds to Request to Return Jemima Doctor | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," November 22, 1906, RG 75, Entry 91, box 3370, 1906-#107682, National Archives and Records Administration, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/documents/mercer-responds-request-return-jemima-doctor; "Mercer Responds to Request to Return Willis Peconga | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," December 20, 1906, RG 75, Entry 91, box 3564, 1907-#31900, National Archives and Records Administration, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/documents/mercer-responds-request-return-willis-peconga; "Request for Return Home of George Day | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," April 21, 1909, RG 75, CCF Entry 121, #23152-1909-Carlisle-820, National Archives and Records Administration, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/documents/request-return-home-george-day; "Request for Return Home of Renville Children | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," June 14, 1909; "Request to Return Mary Silas | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," August 31, 1909, RG 75, CCF Entry 121, #70980-1909-Carlisle-826, National Archives and Records Administration, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/documents/request-return-mary-silas; "Vacation Request for Cody Printup | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," August 31, 1909, RG 75, CCF Entry 121, #70980-1909-Carlisle-826, National Archives and Records Administration, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/documents/vacation-request-cody-printup; "Request for Return Home of Mitchell Herne | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," October 2, 1912, RG 75, CCF Entry 121, #97712-1912-Carlisle-820, National Archives and Records Administration, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/documents/request-return-home-mitchell-herne; "Request for Return Home of Annie Cole | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," June 30, 1913; "Request to Return Andrew and Mary Peters | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," July 3, 1918; "Correspondence Regarding Request for the Return of John Covert | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," November 30, 1894, RG 75, Entry 91, box 1344, 1896-#31337, National Archives and Records Administration, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/index.php/documents/correspondence-regarding-request-return-john-covert.

[96] "Frank Baker Requests Return of Alice and Hattie | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," June 14, 1899; "Correspondence Regarding Return of Nora and Geneva Jameson | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," May 14, 1901; "Mercer Responds to Request to Return Jemima Doctor | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," November 22, 1906; "Mercer Responds to Request to Return Willis Peconga | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," December 20, 1906; "Request for Return Home of George Day | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," April 21, 1909; "Request for Return Home of Renville Children | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," June 14, 1909; "Request to Return Clarence De Graff | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," June 24, 1909; "Request to Return Mary Silas | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," August 31, 1909; "Vacation Request for Cody Printup | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," accessed November 26, 2023, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/documents/vacation-request-cody-printup; "Request for Return Home of Mitchell Herne | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," October 2, 1912; "Request for Return Home of Annie Cole | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," June 30, 1913; "Request to Return Andrew and Mary Peters | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," July 3, 1918; "Correspondence

Letter writing was not simply sending one-off correspondence to Carlisle's Superintendent, but compiling evidence and writing numerous officials multiple times in order to secure the return of one's child. It required knowledge of Carlisle's bureaucracy and time to compile evidence and send letters to multiple officials. Impressively, most of these letters do not cite outside individuals – such as Indian Agents, lawyers, or missionaries – who referred them to a given official. This implies that parents learned this information themselves, perhaps through their tribal networks or their children, and used it to their advantage. Overall, Native parents used a diverse set of actions to advocate for their children, starting with petitioning and then shifting to individually lobbying Congressmembers and employing advocates as it became apparent that they would need to operate within white systems, and would thus need the endorsement of white individuals, to back their claims.

Rhetoric

Rhetoric, the arguments parents used to convince school officials to return their children, offers a final area of analysis and provides insights into how parents specifically made their cases to school officials. Rhetoric shifted across time and reflected larger historical themes impacting Indigenous people. Earlier arguments called for school official's empathy. Parents assumed this argument would be successful because they believed they were in a relationship of equals with school officials. As it became clear that this was not the case, arguments shifted towards appealing to school official's assimilationist goals. Throughout the period, Native people also invoked arguments based on their rights to liberty, using American values against school officials to gain the return of their children.

Regarding Request for the Return of John Covert | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," November 30, 1894; "Mercer Responds to Request to Return Arline and Claudia Allen | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," April 26, 1906, RG 75, Entry 91, box 3192, 1906-#59102, National Archives and Records Administration, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/index.php/documents/mercer-responds-request-return-arline-and-claudia-allen.

Cries for Empathy

During the first half of Carlisle's history, parents' letters used rhetoric meant to evoke empathy from school officials for the return of their children. The wider context of Carlisle's recruitment methods reveals why such a tactic was used. Recruiters manipulated Native families to achieve high numbers of student attendance at Carlisle. This was accomplished by developing intimate relationships with Native families based on Indigenous values of reciprocity. When Native parents relied on white reformers and missionaries to care for their sick children, officials leveraged this vulnerable position and used Native parents' feeling indebted to secure their consent.[97] Native parents thus believed they were equals in their relationships with recruiters and school officials and operated on basic values of trust, compromise, and respect. It is this expectation that underlies the first major rhetorical device that Native parents used to secure the return of their children, calling upon school officials to empathize with their families.

Lewis Elm (Mr. Elm), father to Levi Elm, exemplified Native people's attempts to capitalize on the expected empathy of school officials towards their children and themselves. Levi had arrived at Carlisle from the Oneida Nation in September of 1885 for five years.[98] By the start of the next year, Levi became unhappy at Carlisle causing Mr. Elm to write Commissioner Atkins and Superintendent Pratt multiple times requesting his release. In April of 1886, Mr. Elm sent the following letter to Commissioner Atkins:

"My son, Levi Elm, is at the Indian Training School, at Carlisle, Pa…he is getting to be very down-hearted, and I am very sure something bad will happen to him if he is kept there much longer against his will… I cannot be happy when I know my youngest son is so un-happy away form his home [sic]; for he has a good home here, and a large farm on which he can work; and he will be glad to work on it with me; you can, I think, give an order to have my son sent home it will be a small work for you to do but it would give great happiness to me, to my son, and to his

[97] Margaret D. Jacobs, *White Mother to a Dark Race: Settler Colonialism, Maternalism, and the Removal of Indigenous Children in the American West and Australia, 1880-1940* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 153 https://muse.jhu.edu/pub/17/monograph/book/11886.

[98] "Levi Elm Student File | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," September 30, 1885, RG 75, Series 1327, box 21, folder 982, National Archives and Records Administration, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/student_files/levi-elm-student-file.

mother…I appreciate your kind wish, and Capt. Pratt's kind wish to do good to my son, but I know his disposition better than either of you do, and I am sure that every day my son is kept there against his will, real and permanent harm is being done to him. If you will please give the order to send him home I am willing, if necessary, to pay his RR fare - Please do as I request now and lift a heavy load of sorrow form my heart [sic]."[99]

Mr. Elm used multiple rhetorical strategies to secure the return home of his son. First, Mr. Elm emphasized the unhappy feelings of his family, describing his son as "very down-hearted" and himself as "unhappy" and worried about his son's well being. Mr. Elm further positioned the goal of his letter as ensuring his son's welfare, something he believed the Commissioner cared about: "I appreciate your kind wish…to do good to my son." Mr. Elm further described the type of life he could provide for his son, and assured the Commissioner he had a "good home here and a large farm on which [Levi] can work." This can be understood as an attempt to assuage any concerns the Commissioner or other officials might have had that Levi would be returning to worse conditions than existed at Carlisle, signaling respect for school officials' viewpoints. Mr. Elm closed by calling for Commissioner Atkins's empathy, pleading "an order to have my son sent home it will be a small work for you to do but it would give great happiness to me, to my son, and to his mother…" Mr. Elm considered his request in the context of his relationship with the Commissioner, thinking about what it would cost the Commissioner to fulfill the request and what it would do for him and his family if the request was fulfilled. He highlighted the small labor involved would have profound positive impacts, and tailored the request in such a way that pulls upon the empathy of the school officials.

Similar calls for empathy are demonstrated in the Rosebud Sioux Tribe's petition. After many of their children died at Carlisle, the Sioux Council and parents sent a petition in 1881 to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Secretary of the Interior, and President Garfield asking for the return of their children. The following passage is particularly impactful:

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[99] "Levi Elm Student File | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center."

"We love the children just as dearly as the whites do theirs. It grieves our hearts when we hear they are sick and we mourn hard and long when they die and are taken away from us. It is far harder for us to bear these afflications [sic] when they are separated from us… We would not want our children to come away from Carlisle if they could always keep well and not die away from us. We cannot bear to hear of the sickness and deaths of our children and we want you to listen to our words. We tell them in all kindness and love to the Great Father we ask you, as you love and sympathize with us to send our children back to us and with them a school and teachers to educate there. This is all we have to say to you. We are your true friends…"[100]

In contrast to Mr. Elm's letter above, the Sioux Council stressed they were similar to white parents, loving their children "just as dearly." The Sioux understood that they were viewed as lesser in the eyes of white school officials, and attempted to remedy that by showcasing their humanity. Like Lewis, however, the Sioux put weight on their feelings. It "grieves our hearts" when their children are sick or pass away. They end by reminding school officials of their relationship with each other: they send this letter in "all kindness and love" and ask these officials "as they love and sympathize with us" to send their children home, even signing off as "your true friends." This letter also demonstrates Indigenous peoples' belief that they had important relationships with school officials, and these relationships came with expectations of empathy, respect, and most importantly a common goal for the well-being of their children. It is with these assumptions that Native people advocated for their children by employing rhetorical strategies that highlighted their emotions and these relationship values. Both these letters and letters of a similar style were much more common towards the beginning of Carlisle's existence (1881-1891). [101]

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[100] "Sioux Chiefs Protest Deaths of Their Children to Interior and Ask for Local School | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," May 23, 1881, RG 75, Entry 91, box 22, 1881-#9493, National Archives and Records Administration, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/documents/sioux-chiefs-protest-deaths-their-children-interior-and-ask-local-school.

[101] "Request for Return of Edwin Schanandore | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," December 31, 1885, RG 75, Entry 91, box 280, 1886-#317, National Archives and Records Administration, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/documents/request-return-edwin-schanandore; "Physician Report and Treatment Plan for William Butcher | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," June 2, 1886, RG 75, Entry 91, box 313, 1886-#14645, National Archives and Records Administration, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/documents/physician-report-and-treatment-plan-william-butcher; "Se He Du Ba

Appeals to white supremacy

As school officials used more coercive tactics to recruit children, and parents were not having their children returned, rhetoric shifted towards appealing to the white supremacist, assimilationist goals of Carlisle. One way in which Native parents appealed to such goals was through their involvement in the school's recruitment process. Carlisle needed support from members of the Indigenous community, especially in its early years when the concept of Indian boarding schools was new. These individuals could speak to tribes in their own languages and cultural contexts to convince parents to send children to boarding schools and gave more legitimacy to Carlisle in the process. This started from the earliest years of Carlisle's existence when Pratt employed a Native man who had undergone Pratt's earlier re-education campaign of prisoners of war at Fort Marion. Once children began graduating from Carlisle, some former students also became highly involved in the recruitment and operation of Carlisle.[102]

As parents tried to request the return of their children, they reminded school officials of their support of Carlisle's recruitment efforts. Two requests from 1893 and 1902 exemplify this. Black Coyote (Mr. Coyote), requesting the return of his son Harry Mann, had an Indian Agent and recruiter write on his behalf, who attested to Mr. Coyote's support in recruitment: "Coyote was very instrumental in helping me to get the party and was first to give his son…If you can possibly allow Harry to come home without injuring his future prospects it will be greatly appreciated…"[103] The 1902 request from James Down (Figure 5) also included an endorsement by a recruiter–"He comes from one of the best families of his people, [and] was of great service to me securing the first batch of Kickapoo children that were sent away to school, and I agreed

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Requests Return of Son Thomas Mitchell | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," June 7, 1886; "John Logan Requests the Return of His Three Children | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," August 1, 1887; "Request for the Return Home of Carlo French | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center."

[102] Jacobs *White Mother to a Dark Race* 153.

[103] Pratt, "Pratt Responds to Request to Return Harry Mann | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center."

with him that I would use my influence and see that he was not required to remain in school longer than three years…"[104]

Some parents promised to recruit more children if theirs were returned. The grandfather of Samuel Wilson and Minnie Finley did just this (Figure 6). When requesting his grandchildren's return due to his poor health and need for help on his farm, Mr. Wilson promised that "if our Commissioner will grant us this favor whenever Capt Pratt wants any more children I will work hard and get him what every number he wants."[105] The subtext of these requests shared the underlying concept of reciprocity that calls for empathy had–having done something for the school, parents now expected a return on the favor.

Another way parents appealed to the assimilationist goals of the school was by characterizing themselves as civilized. Such was the case for parents Sampson and Rose Renville, who were seeking the return of Fleeta and Germaine, their daughters. The Renvilles experienced difficulty securing their children's return home in 1909 as they had arrived only a year earlier but signed up for a five-year enrollment. They initially wanted their children returned just for the summer, but this request came after Carlisle had instituted a rule preventing the return of children even for short visits home. The Renville's reaction to this, as they wrote to the Commissioner, is as follows:

"The new rulings, I understand were made for those Indian children whose people live out on reservations and in Indian state. These children in going home for a time would naturally go back to camp life and speak their own language, and hence, have to begin anew upon their return to school. These are the children whom Supt. Friedman has reference to I believe. Now I do not think our children can be classed with these, as we are living in town and have been in business here a number of years, and have a good home…"[106]

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[104] "Allen Responds to Request to Return James Down | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," February 26, 1902.
[105] "Request for the Return of Samuel Wilson and Minnie Finley | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," July 12, 1893.
[106] "Request for Return Home of Renville Children | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," June 14, 1909.

In this passage, the Renvilles demonstrated an advanced understanding of the assimilationist goals of Carlisle and leveraged it to their advantage. They understood that it was unfavorable for children to "go back to camp life and speak their own language," as it would backtrack on Carlisle's progress in civilizing these children. At the same time, they positioned themselves as a part of the assimilationist project–they were "good" Indians who lived in town and were employed in a respectful business. The Renville's insist they are on the same, or at least similar, socioeconomic level as white parents and should be entrusted with their children's upbringing.

The larger trend apparent in these letters is that Native people understood what the Carlisle Indian Boarding School sought to do: Carlisle wanted to influence as many Native children as possible and prevent children from returning to Indigenous culture. Parents used this information to their advantage when requesting the return of their children. A tragic outcome of this was Native people becoming pitted against each other. Parents were willing to send other children to Carlisle even when they knew how difficult it would be for those children to return home and were aware of the school's poor conditions. Ultimately, these parents were willing to put other Native people down in an attempt to save their own, demonstrating how Carlisle's assimilation project created tension within Native communities.

Liberty for Indigenous People

Throughout Carlisle's existence, Native parents asserted agency by calling upon Indigenous people's rights to liberty. In contrast to the above rhetoric, these letters did not rely on or ask school officials to see Native people as human, but drew upon inherent rights Native people believed they were granted.

Clara Braves, mother of Emily and Gustave Hardt, requested the return of her children after getting word from her son that he was experiencing abuse while on outing. Her son wrote:

"…All letters that you get from me and talk good about this place Capt. Pratt read but it is a lie, but letters like this one is the kind you must believe…They treat me very bad here, the scraps that are left from their table gets full of bugs and then they give it to me to eat, I sleep out in a shed, in the night any body could come and kill me while I am asleep. Sometimes they keep me working until 10 o'clock and get up at 5 o'clock and the worst thing is that I don't get any pay, and still I work hard all the time so that when I get home I will know how to get a job and work. Dear mother please try your best to bring us home, and I will work and earn some money when I got there. I will now close my sad letter good night from your most true son…"[107]

Motivated by the urgency of her son's words and the horrific conditions he described, Clara wrote to the Commissioner demanding his return:

"…I have been patient for over a year conserning [sic] my children Emily and Gustave Hardt because I believed them to be in a good place and all right, now I know better. And I demand that they be sent home at once. I received a letter from Gustave this morning the first in months and why because the poor little fellow is a slave yes sir a slave for the Government to here we are sending out men our husbands, brothers, and lovers to free the people of Cuba fighting for other countries fighting and suffering, while our children are being made slaves of here in our own so called free country. I will not stand it not another day no sir. If they are not send home at once I shall see…[108]

Clara emphasized the injustice her son faced by comparing his situation to slavery and condemning the hypocrisy of the U.S. government especially concerning Cuba. This letter was written in 1898 just thirty-three years after the ratification of the 13th amendment. Indicting the U.S. government for enslaving her son should be understood in this context: Clara saw her son's condition as a continuation of the U.S. government's greatest sin to date, even though slavery had ended and the United States was a "so called free country."

Clara argued that this was even more heinous in the context of the U.S.'s involvement in the Cuban war for independence from Spain. As Cuba sought to free itself from colonial rule, the U.S. saw an opportunity to eliminate European powers in the Western Hemisphere and therefore had a vested interest in Cuba's liberation. However, for a nation that proclaimed a policy of neutrality in international affairs, the U.S. needed popular support to enter the conflict with

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[107] "Pratt Responds to Request to Return Emily and Gustave Hardt | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," June 28, 1898.
[108] "Pratt Responds to Request to Return Emily and Gustave Hardt | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center."

legitimacy. A publicity campaign was undertaken by government officials and made its way into magazines, music, and newspapers. It characterized Cuba's struggle as one for liberation and argued the U.S. should become involved as a fellow formerly colonized nation.[109] Clara has a similar understanding of the U.S.'s involvement in Cuba: the U.S. was seeking to "free the people of Cuba." Yet, to Clara and her son, freedom was not realized in the United States: how could she and others continue to make such a sacrifice for another nation when they did not enjoy full and equal rights themselves? When their children were being made to perform menial labor in conditions without proper food or shelter in exchange for subpar wages?

In contrast to the above letters, Clara did not rely on her relationship with these school officials to convince them to return her child home but used the rhetoric of the U.S. government against itself. Liberty and freedom–both so heavily emphasized as American values in the wake of the Civil War and Spanish-American war–are what Clara used to justify the return home of her child. She believed these concepts were a guaranteed right, and implied that if the Commissioner did not grant her request he would be perpetuating a hypocritical system incongruent with the U.S.'s actions in Cuba. She drew upon her power and inalienable rights to make her case and threatened the Commissioner if he did not follow through on her request ("If they are not send home at once I shall see").

Other families used similar rhetoric, particularly a petition of the previously mentioned Cattaraugus Reservation and a letter by Elvira Anderson on behalf of her daughter Melissa Anderson. The Cattaraugus petition laid out seven reasons for their request to return their children. The last reason outlined is as follows: "That the undersigned believes that the United States of America is a free country and no person should be detained in any manner unless

[109] Louis A. Perez Jr., "Incurring a Debt of Gratitude: 1898 and the Moral Sources of United States Hegemony in Cuba," *American Historical Review* 104, no. 2 (April 1999): 357–58, https://doi.org/10.2307/2650370.

through crimes."[110] Elvira's mother, writing in 1914, used a similar argument. Trying to get her daughter returned after she fell into ill health, and facing roadblocks from the Commissioner and Superintendent, Elvira argued that Melissa is being "held in that institution…and restrained from her just rights of liberty." The Cattaraugus petition and Elvira's letter also draw upon the Fourteenth Amendment, that no person shall be deprived of life, liberty, or property without due process of law. Again, like Clara, these writings are shaped by the aftermath of the Civil War. The rhetoric employed in these letters shows us that Native people were aware of rights laid out in the Constitution and conceptualized these rights as applying to them also.

Rhetoric explored in this section paints a picture of the complex ways parents argued for the return of their children. Calling upon the empathy of school officials was predicated on Indigenous concepts of reciprocity, mutual respect, and empathy. Especially as recruiters and school officials developed relationships with Native parents to obtain their consent to send their children to Carlisle, parents expected government officials to express empathy towards parents and grant their requests. Later on, additional arguments were introduced including appeals to the white supremacist mission of Carlisle. Parents offered to advance Carlisle's assimilationist goals in exchange for the return of their children, even when this occurred at a cost to other Native people. Throughout the period, there were a minority but notable number of instances in which parents emphasized American values of liberty and freedom to gain the return of their children. These letters highlight that some Native people had an advanced understanding of American values and law, and believed they too had such rights.

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[110] "Petition of Cattaraugus Reservation Requesting Return of Children | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," April 21, 1893.

School Officials' Response

Thus far, this thesis has focused on the experiences of parents within the Carlisle Indian Boarding School. They are the main actors of this story, and it is not the author's intention to detract from them. However, integral to this story is how school officials responded to Indigenous parents' advocacy for their children, as their responses help explain some of the earlier changes described and reveal information about what sorts of appeals were most successful. While there were undoubtedly many factors influencing school officials' interactions with parents during this period, and it in fact could be its own thesis topic, I will be narrowing my analysis to the following. In Carlisle's first decade, there was a brief window of collaboration between Indigenous parents and school officials, which is characterized by school officials largely being willing to comply with parent's requests to return their children. As more requests came in, the willingness of school officials to comply with parents' requests decreased as they became skeptical of Native people's motivations, and developed a perception that parents were against education for their children. This was exacerbated by pressures to increase the size and retention of the student population at Carlisle. These factors led school officials to create stringent policies and coercive tactics to keep children from their parents and achieve assimilationist goals.

Moment of collaboration

The period from 1879 to 1890 saw more willingness of school officials to comply with parents' requests. This makes sense within the broader economic and political context. Although Congress was obligated through treaties to contribute $708,000 for 417 tribal schools, it funded only $44,000 under Commissioner Price's tenure from 1880 to 1885 (during Carlisle's earliest days).[111] This, coupled with the lack of infrastructure for Indian Boarding Schools, meant

[111] David H. DeJong, *The Commissioners of Indian Affairs: The United States Indian Service and the Making of Federal Indian Policy, 1824-2017 / David H. DeJong.* (Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press, 2020) 74.

missionaries were involved in providing Native children with education during this period and were competitors of schools like Carlisle. Furthermore, Carlisle was still proving its need to exist in the first place: it was the only boarding school of its kind, fulfilling a service that missionary schools had primarily undertaken. Therefore, Carlisle could not police the retention of its student body, nor would it have been a prudent political decision to do so. Officials were far more reliant on parents' willingness to send their children to boarding school and had no legal enforcement mechanisms to make them do so (education was not yet compulsory for Native children, and rules eroding parental rights were not yet in place). Carlisle needed to instead persuade parents to send their children, and part of this flexibility was allowing children to return.

One case that exemplifies this is the return home of High Bear Jr. who fell into ill health within the first ten months of arriving at Carlisle. While Superintendent Pratt was on a visit to the Ponca Chiefs, Chief Harry Bear requested the return home of his son, and explained that "he had lost five children of consumption at about Harry's age." The other Ponca Chiefs confirmed this and supported the request to return the boy, leading Pratt to "let the boy go."[112] Implicit in this correspondence is the dynamic described above. This letter from Superintendent Pratt to Commissioner Price in January of 1881 implies a political visit between Pratt and the Ponca Chiefs. Coming two years after Carlisle's opening, it is likely Pratt aimed to strengthen his relationship with leaders of the Ponca to retain and recruit more children. Pratt did little to question the Chief's concerns about his son: he did not ask for death certificates of his other children to confirm they died at a similar age as High Bear Jr. or ask for a physician's report of the child to confirm his present condition.[113] Pratt was reliant on these individuals for their children, and needing to maintain good relationships with them, he complied with their requests.

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[112] "Return Home of High Bear Jr. | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center."
[113] "Return Home of High Bear Jr. | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center."

This sort of compliance was not limited to Native people who were in positions of power. In 1883, Pratt informed Commissioner Price of the return home of Frank Engler, a Cheyenne boy. He explained Frank had "received a letter informing him that his mother "[was] dying…[and] his father [urged] that [Pratt] permit him to return home..."[114] Once again, Pratt did not push back on the request. He did not investigate to determine the validity of the parents' claims or warn them about the negative consequences a return home could do to Frank's progress at Carlisle. He said simply, "I think it well to allow him to go home for a time and would request your authority for him to go at his own expense." Other requests show a similar pattern of Pratt largely complying with requests from parents.[115]

School officials started to display a bit of resistance towards the end of the 1880s. An 1886 request for the return of Joseph Hamilton by his father Sin-da-ha-ha typifies this. Sin-da-ha-ha requested the return of his son due to his poor health and need for support on his farm. Pratt wrote in his letter to Commissioner Atkins "that the boy is sixteen and small for his

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[114] "Request to Allow Frank Engler to Visit His Home | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," January 22, 1883, RG 75, Entry 91, box 120, 1883-#1532, National Archives and Records Administration, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/documents/request-allow-frank-engler-visit-his-home; "Chief Spotted Tail's Request to Return His Children and Relatives Home | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," June 23, 1880, RG 75, M234, roll 485, frames 1023-1025, National Archives and Records Administration, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/index.php/documents/chief-spotted-tails-request-return-his-children-and-relatives-home; "Return Home of High Bear Jr. | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center"; "Request to Return Alfred Brown and Clement Black Deer Home | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," March 26, 1883, RG 75, Entry 91, box 130, 1883-#5871, National Archives and Records Administration, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/index.php/documents/request-return-alfred-brown-and-clement-black-deer-home; "Pratt Seeks Information Regarding Return of Nez Perce Students | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," March 28, 1885, National Archives and Records Administration, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/documents/pratt-seeks-information-regarding-return-nez-perce-students; "Request to Return Kent Black Bear to His Home | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," October 30, 1885; "Request to Return Zippa Metoxen Home | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," February 4, 1889, RG 75, Entry 91, box 501, 1889-#3166, National Archives and Records Administration, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/documents/request-return-zippa-metoxen-home.

[115] "Chief Spotted Tail's Request to Return His Children and Relatives Home | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," June 23, 1880; "Return Home of High Bear Jr. | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center"; "Request to Allow Frank Engler to Visit His Home | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," January 22, 1883; "Request to Return Alfred Brown and Clement Black Deer Home | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," March 26, 1883; "Pratt Seeks Information Regarding Return of Nez Perce Students | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," March 28, 1885; "Request to Return Kent Black Bear to His Home | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," October 30, 1885; "Request to Return Zippa Metoxen Home | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," February 4, 1889.

age [and thus] not able to run a farm, and ought to be in school."[116] Despite this, because of Sin-da-ha-ha's situation and the recommendation of the Agent writing on Sin-da-ha-ha's behalf, Pratt proposed a compromise in which Joseph would be sent to support his father but returned in the fall if his father's health was restored. Although Pratt was not immediately willing to comply with the request, he heard Sin-da-ha-ha's concerns and compromised on the request, illustrating some willingness to collaborate with Native parents.

Development of stringent policies

This period of willingness to comply gave way by the 1890s. In 1891, the Office of Indian Affairs was given the privilege by Congress to "make and enforce by proper means such rules and regulations as will secure the attendance of Indian children of suitable age and health at schools."[117] Just two years later, as previously mentioned, the Office of Indian Affairs was granted the right to withhold rations, clothing, and other resources from Native parents who refused to send or keep their children in these schools. These two developments meant boarding schools, for the first time, would have state-sanctioned legal authority to compel children's attendance. Funding was also contingent on student population, leading to fierce competition between missionary schools, reservation boarding schools, and off-reservation boarding schools. These factors were external pressures on Superintendent Pratt and other school officials influenced them not to comply as readily with Native parents' requests, and to develop strict policies that limited when children could be returned to their parents.

From the early 1890s into the 1910s, such policies developed and created new roadblocks for parents seeking the return of their children. One such rule is apparent in the previously

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[116] "Request from Sin Da Ha-Ha for Return of His Son | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," accessed October 4, 2023, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/documents/request-sin-da-ha-ha-return-his-son.
[117] David Wallace Adams, *Education for Extinction : American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928 / - University of California Berkeley* (University Press of Kansas, 1995) 63.

mentioned 1893 correspondence between school officials and the Archiquette family who sought the return of their children. Although the Archiquette children had already attended Carlisle for the five-year period they signed up for, and their parents wanted them to return home, the children were not allowed to. They instead remained at Carlisle for some time after their parent's request due to "the rule...that when a student determines at the close of a school year to remain for another year it was final and would last until the end of the year when the opportunity would come to decide the same question again."[118] It became the policy of Carlisle to ask children if they would like to remain at the school and respect the child's wishes above their parents. Considering children would have been easier to manipulate than parents due to their age and proximity to school officials in Carlisle, the intention of this policy was likely to exert more control in keeping children at Carlisle.

By 1895, it became the policy of Carlisle to enforce the five-year enrollment period and deny parent's requests to have their children returned if the requests occurred before the expiration of five years. In a series of correspondence between Daniel Covert, father to John Covert, and various school officials, the impacts of such a policy are revealed. Although Daniel insisted he had only signed up John for enrollment for one year and that John was ill, Pratt refused to believe him and insisted John would need to remain at Carlisle for five years.[119] Unlike previous requests, Pratt did not take the parent's concerns at face value but rather conducted an investigation by asking a school physician to perform an exam on John to determine the status of his health, who determined him to be well. Daniel wrote from November of 1894 until March of 1897 requesting the return of his son from the Superintendent, Commissioner, and members of

[118] "Pratt Replies to Request for William and Sarah Archiquette in 1893 | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," March 3, 1893.
[119] "Correspondence Regarding Request for the Return of John Covert | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," November 30, 1894.

Congress before John was finally returned. Daniel and John's experience reveals that much more extreme measures had to be taken by parents to get their children returned as these stringent policies developed.

Shifting perceptions

School officials' shifting perceptions of parents are also relevant to their unwillingness to work with parents and return children home. Superintendent Pratt's shifting perception was especially clear in the correspondence files. This is relevant because Pratt served as Superintendent for twenty-five years of Carlisle's thirty-nine-year existence, and his opinions on when to return students were mostly respected and enacted by Commissioners. His changing prescription is a letter to the Commissioner regarding the request for the return of William Good Thunder in 1891. His grandfather Andrew Good Thunder requested William's return home so that William could help care for him in his elderly age. Pratt noted in the correspondence that he "finds a great deal of application of this kind, and some of it false." He then described an instance in which a parent requested the return of "one of the best boys in the school," but upon calling his father found his mother was not ill as was stated in the previous correspondence.[120]

While before, Pratt was willing to believe parents' stated reasons for wanting to reclaim their children, these letters highlight the increasing distrust that Pratt carried towards Native parents. Underlying this distrust was a belief that Native parents simply did not value education for their children, and thus were hindering their children's progress. In a letter to the Commissioner in early 1895, Pratt complained that "It is not in many of the Indian parents to do as whites do and compel their children to attend school and make the necessary sacrifices for that,

[120] "Request for the Return of William Good Thunder | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," May 18, 1891, RG 75, Entry 91, box 733, 1891-#17862, National Archives and Records Administration, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/documents/request-return-william-good-thunder.

so that is a duty resting upon us…"[121] Pratt came to feel Native parents were taking advantage of Carlisle's resources and were unappreciative of the opportunities the school provided for their children. Again speaking to the Commissioner about the previously mentioned case of William and Jennie Tallchief, Pratt argued that "inasmuch as the Government undertakes the education and industrial training of their children, which they themselves have proven unable to give, and there is no cost to them, it is as little as they can do to be contented with what the Government is doing, and to encourage their children, instead of discourage them."[122] According to Pratt, Native parents held their children back when they requested the return of their children: they were motivated by selfish desires to keep their children close to them despite the opportunity Carlisle presented to civilize Native children in the white man's way. This shift in perception would have profound consequences for his interactions with parents moving forward.

By 1899, Carlisle created a particularly cruel rule that prevented children from being returned home for any sickness or death in their families. Pratt described this rule when writing to George King, the father of Charley King who requested his child's return due to an unspecified family illness. Pratt wrote, "if we allowed the question of sickness among those at home to govern the stay of the child at Carlisle, there would be many students on the road all the time…" [123] This of course had heartbreaking consequences on families. For Mrs. Sampson, who wrote in 1902 that she was dying of consumption and wanted to see her children before her death, this was exactly the case. Mrs. Sampson employed many people to help see the return of her children, including Sheriff Henry Kenney from Bay City Michigan, her supervisor Mr. John Washer, and

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[121] "Pratt Responds to Request to Return Shield Thunder Bull | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," accessed March 8, 2024, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/documents/pratt-responds-request-return-shield-thunder-bull.
[122] "William Tallchief Requests Return of Jennie Tallchief | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center."
[123] "Pratt Responds to Request to Return Charley King | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," November 8, 1899, RG 75, Entry 91, box 1719, 1899-#53568, National Archives and Records Administration, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/documents/pratt-responds-request-return-charley-king.

her Congressman Henry Aplin who all supported the return of her children and verified her condition. A news article even took up the story and printed the clip "CAN'T VISIT DYING MOTHER. Young Indian Kept at Carlisle School by Stringent Regulations."[124] None of this would be enough to have her children returned to her. They are reported as leaving in May of 1907, five years following her request.[125]

Beyond this cruelty, school officials and in particular Superintendent Pratt held on to these policies even when they were not particularly beneficial to them. Nora and Geneva Jameson were requested to be returned to their parents in 1901 so they could attend a nearby school that did not require industrial education. A lawyer employed by the family highlighted the Jameson's good character ("Mr. and Mrs. Jameson are far above average Indians") and that there were good public schools nearby. Pratt admitted, "Your information…inclines me to the belief that they ought to be at home and the government relieved of their further support," but still required them to stay since the children and their parents had agreed to a five-year enrollment period.[126] Even though it would have been beneficial at this time to prioritize students who did not have access to public schools in their area to ensure government funds were going towards children that most needed it, Pratt insisted on following the school's policies. The Interior Secretary, at least, saw beyond this illogical decision and ordered the girls to be returned by mid-September of 1901.

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[124] "Correspondence Regarding the Request to Return Lucy and Henry Sampson | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," January 22, 1902, RG 75, Entry 91, box 2046, 1902-#10687, National Archives and Records Administration, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/index.php/documents/correspondence-regarding-request-return-lucy-and-henry-sampson.

[125] "Lucy Sampson Student File | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," November 20, 1899, RG 75, Series 1327, box 48, folder 2388, National Archives and Records Administration, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/index.php/student_files/lucy-sampson-student-file; "Henry Sampson Student File | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," September 5, 1894, RG 75, Series 1327, box 11, folder 533, National Archives and Records Administration, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/index.php/student_files/henry-sampson-student-file.

[126] "Correspondence Regarding Return of Nora and Geneva Jameson | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," May 14, 1901.

When considering school officials' response to Native parents' advocacy, a clear shift occurred as a result of federal policies and shifting perceptions by school officials. In the early years of Carlisle, school officials largely complied with requests that parents made to have their children returned home, likely because they needed parent's goodwill to continue to recruit children for Carlisle. However, as Carlisle further developed and federal policy granted school officials with power above and beyond the rights of Native parents, policies developed at Carlisle that made it increasingly difficult for parents to see the return of their children. This included policies that prevented children from returning for vacations, to see their sick or dying relatives, and required them to stay for their full period of enrollment. Eventually, Carlisle came to a point of only allowing children home before their expired terms if they themselves were critically ill. It was not only federal policy that influenced this trend, but school officials' own changing perceptions, which saw parents as enemies of their child's education and Carlisle's mission.

Successful appeals

Within the context of the stringent policies and increasingly racist perceptions of Native parents described above, it is unsurprising that the types of appeals that were most successful were those that aligned with Carlisle's institutional goals and structures. However, there was still interesting diversity in the types of appeals that were successful. Successful appeals included arguments related to assimilation, appeals that used Carlisle's own policy, and appeals that were endorsed by Indian Agents. Although these appeals by and large were more successful than others, there was still a great degree of arbitrariness in the decisions Carlisle's officials made, demonstrating another level of injustice that took place within Carlisle Indian Boarding School.

One example of a successful appeal includes Mitchell Connors' request to return his daughter for summer break. Writing to the Commissioner in 1910, Connors stated:

"I am much grateful to learn that she has a good job and that everything is being done to promote her in her studies and afford her all the opportunities granted by the school. I am thankful for everything that is being done for my daughter in Carlisle School"[127]

Here, Connors validated Carlisle's education and emphasized his gratitude for the resources the school provides her. Writing in such a way prevented school officials from characterizing him as a man standing in the way of his daughter's education or taking advantage of Carlisle's system. Superintendent Mercer responded,

"In view of the fact that you are so appreciative of what has been done for your daughter during her enrolment [sic] at Carlisle and because I am of the opinion that a vacation for her would mean a constitution of the training she has been receiving here, your request has been given special consideration and it has been decided to grant what you desire"[128]

Mercer's response implies that Connors's request would be granted because he was a "good Indian." In Mercer's view, Connors demonstrated he understood and respected Carlisle's educational model, and thus Mercer was not concerned that sending his daughter back to him would reverse the assimilation process. By supporting Carlisle's educational model, Connors aligned his goals with those of the school and was successful at dismantling perceptions that Native parents were enemies of Carlisle, enabling him to secure the return of his child.

Other successful appeals included those that were endorsed by an Indian Agent at the parent's reservation. This can be seen as an extension of Native parents employing outside advocates, which has been previously discussed. However, as opposed to working with lawyers and missionaries, using Indian Agents was particularly successful because they existed in the same institutional bureaucracy and spoke the same language as school officials, lending them increased legitimacy in the process and thus to the requests they endorsed. U.S. Indian Agent L.W. Cook submitted such a request to return James Grant to help care for his mother's farm after

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[127] "Request to Return Nancy Connors for Summer Break | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," July 28, 1910, RG 75, CCF Entry 121, #35755-1910-Carlisle-826, National Archives and Records Administration, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/documents/request-return-nancy-connors-summer-break.
[128] "Request to Return Nancy Connors for Summer Break | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center."

his father's death. He explained the family's situation, that "his mother…has lately lost her husband by death and is entirely alone. She has a ranch, 19 head of cattle, and 9 horses to look after." When providing a recommendation to the Commissioner on the case, Superintendent Pratt endorsed the request strongly: "I have great confidence in the judgment of Capt. Cooke and believe that his recommendation should be complied with."[129] This request occurred in 1894, the same year Daniel Covert sought the return of his son due to illness. The difference: Daniel did not have an Indian Agent working on his behalf. This had consequences for each case, with the Coverts having to engage in writing for over a year to see their son returned compared to Cooke's request being granted one month following the initial correspondence.

A similar trend is observed with the request of U.S. Indian Agent Edgar Allen to return Philomene Badger on the grounds of an expired term. Allen affirmed that "this girl accompanied [him] to the school…[and] there [was] no question that the time for which this girl entered school [had] expired, and if she [desired] to return to the reservation it [would] only [be] just that the promises made when she was enrolled, be kept."[130] This contrasts significantly with previously analyzed cases such as the request from the Standing Rock Agency to return children because their three-year term had expired. While those parents, and other parents who made similar complaints, had their cases go under investigation, this statement was taken at face value. Philomene Badger, the young girl whom Allen requested to be returned home, was approved for return within three weeks. These cases are characteristic of the wider array of letters sampled. Nearly every request that included the endorsement of a U.S. Indian Agent was successful.[131]

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[129] "Request for the Return of James Grant | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," April 16, 1894, RG 75, Entry 91, box 1089, 1894-#19263, National Archives and Records Administration, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/documents/request-return-james-grant.
[130] "Request for Return Home of Philomene Badger | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," March 26, 1908, RG 75, CCF Entry 121, #14956-1908-Carlisle-820, National Archives and Records Administration, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/documents/request-return-home-philomene-badger.
[131] "Request for Moses Nonway to Be Sent Home | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," May 10, 1882, RG 75, Entry 91, box 76, 1882-#8743, National Archives and Records Administration,

Parents thus could be at great advantage or disadvantage based on their relationship with a U.S. Indian Agent on the reservation. This would have introduced unjust power dynamics and created inequitable outcomes in requests for parents to return their children home.

The final category of successful appeals includes parents who used Carlisle's policies to their advantage. Parents paid attention to policy changes Carlisle underwent particularly in the early 20th century, and leveraged such policies to secure their child's return. For example, a policy report by the Acting Commissioner in 1908 changed which students from New York qualified for enrollment at Carlisle.[132] Instead of accepting all New York students, only children who were between 14 and 22 who could no longer access the state's public schools would be eligible for enrollment in Carlisle. A follow-up letter clarifies that "all New York children are to be sent home whose parents make such request."[133] Following this decision, multiple parents requested the return home of their children. One example is Thomas Casey, requesting the return of his son John Casey, who was only twelve years of age but had not returned with other children from New York. Superintendent Friedman explained that John "had such a good country home [at Carlisle] and…was doing so well" which was why he was not returned but ultimately complied with the request "In view of the general policy of the Office in regard to the pupils of New York

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https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/index.php/documents/request-moses-nonway-be-sent-home; "Request for the Return of James Grant | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," April 16, 1894; "Request for the Return of Belknap Fox | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," March 22, 1893, RG 75, Entry 91, box 965, 1893-#10925, National Archives and Records Administration, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/documents/request-return-belknap-fox; "Request to Return Hartley Ridge Bear to His Home | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," February 16, 1888, RG 75, Entry 91, box 448, 1888-#5165, National Archives and Records Administration, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/documents/request-return-hartley-ridge-bear-his-home.

[132] "Return of Richmond Martin and Discontinuance of Enrollment of Pupils from New York State | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," May 12, 1908, RG 75, CCF Entry 121, #32211-1908-Carlisle-826, National Archives and Records Administration, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/documents/return-richmond-martin-and-discontinuance-enrollment-pupils-new-york-state.

[133] "Dispute Regarding Release of New York Students | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," accessed March 8, 2024, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/documents/dispute-regarding-release-new-york-students.

State…"[134] Other requests from the period follow a similar pattern, and the Commissioner advised the Superintendent to comply with any parents requests who came from New York.[135] Parents thus must have learned about Carlisle's policy changes and these requests were met with significantly more ease because they aligned with Carlisle's own goals.

Despite this general trend of Carlisle more readily complying with requests that aligned with the school's goals, school officials' decisions were also arbitrary. In one instance, Superintendent Pratt admitted quite frankly that he purposefully "[made] the return of the son [Francisco Calderin] a matter of some difficulty in order that it might not at least too readily be used by parents of other Porto Ricans here."[136] Never mind the validity of the request, Pratt deliberately chose to make the process difficult for the Calderins to dissuade other parents from making similar requests. In yet another instance, a year after the Sampson children were denied return to see their dying mother, a similar request made by Jack Shawbooes to have his son returned to see his dying mother was approved by Superintendent Mercer.[137] This case demonstrates that policy could be inconsistent in the transition between Superintendents; although Mercer later became hardline with the policy of returning children for an illness of a family member. What these examples demonstrate is that parents could not particularly count on any type of appeal to be successful all the time. There was a lack of clear policy and adherence to

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[134] "Request for Return Home of John Casey | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," accessed March 8, 2024, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/documents/request-return-home-john-casey.
[135] "Request for Return Home of Henry Logan | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," accessed April 17, 2024, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/documents/request-return-home-henry-logan; "Request for Return Home of John Casey | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center"; "Request for Return Home of Thomas Bero | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," accessed April 17, 2024, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/documents/request-return-home-thomas-bero.
[136] "Pratt Responds to Request to Return Francisco Calderin | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," September 7, 1901, RG 75, Entry 91, box 1975, 1901-#49384, National Archives and Records Administration, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/documents/pratt-responds-request-return-francisco-calderin.
[137] "Requests for Return Home of Harry Shawbooes and Charles Honyoust | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," January 13, 1908, RG 75, CCF Entry 121, #3915-1908-Carlisle-820, National Archives and Records Administration, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/documents/requests-return-home-harry-shawbooes-and-charles-honyoust.

it at Carlisle–sometimes intentional, and sometimes not. Regardless, this created another layer of injustice and uncertainty for parents: without clear guidelines or expectations for children's return home, school officials had a great degree of flexibility in denying or accepting requests, limiting parent's rights even further.

Conclusion

This thesis has considered the reasons, actions, and rhetoric parents used to advocate for their children at the Carlisle Indian Boarding School, and in turn, what school officials' responses to these advocacy efforts were. Reasons parents requested the return of their children included illness in the family or child, need for a child's labor at home, expired school terms, a lack of consent by parents to send their children to schools, and complaints against Carlisle's curriculum and conditions. Parents initially focused on illness and the need for their child's support. However, as recruitment strategies and the outing system developed at Carlisle, new issues of consent, and the quality of Carlisle's education became additional reasons parents requested children to be returned.

Parents' actions taken to advocate for their children increased in sophistication over time with increased knowledge of bureaucratic processes at Carlisle. Starting with private letters and petitions within their communities, and shifting to advocacy through Congress and employing outside advocates–including missionaries, lawyers, and US Indian Agents–Native people came to learn their reasons and arguments for returning children home were not taken seriously by Carlisle's officials, requiring them to engage with white allies when possible to bring their children home. Consistent throughout this period however was letter writing.

Rhetorical strategies employed by parents were also diverse and saw a shift over time. Early rhetorical strategies focused on calls for empathy by school officials, emphasizing parents'

feelings and needs for their children's support. Later, parents began to appeal to assimilationist frameworks used by Carlisle itself, emphasizing their own "civilized" characteristics or promising to recruit other children for Carlisle. Although it was a minority, Native parents also called upon their own rights to liberty supposedly guaranteed by the United States, revealing an Indigenous understanding of American constitutional values as well.

Finally, school official's responses to these efforts were influenced by federal policy changes and their changing personal beliefs about Native Americans. While there was an initial window of collaboration between parents and school officials who largely cooperated with parents' requests, this changed dramatically as Carlisle expanded and acquired greater legitimacy. Instead, appealing to Carlisle's "civilizing" mission and working with Carlisle's institutional framework led parents to more success in their appeals.

Although Carlisle closed in 1918, American Indian Boarding schools remained in place until the 1960s and one-third of Native children were removed from their homes and put in non-Native households throughout the 1950s-70s.[138] Negative, racialized stereotypes of Native parents developed before and throughout the Carlisle period are clear reasons why such policies were perpetuated until just fifty years ago. The development of Indian Boarding Schools and in particular Carlisle was predicated on the belief that Native parents and Native communities were not effective caretakers or educators of their children. Superintendents, Commissioners, and other school officials characterized parents as selfish, "a weak lot,"[139] and having a "natural childishness and weakness of purpose."[140] Native communities "practically demoralized

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[138] Nina Totenberg and Meghanlata Gupta, "The Supreme Court Leaves Indian Child Welfare Act Intact," *NPR*, June 15, 2023, sec. Law, https://www.npr.org/2023/06/15/1182121455/indian-child-welfare-act-supreme-court-decision.
[139] "Request to Return Onondaga Nation Students | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," December 1, 1883.
[140] "Oneida Sachems and Councilors Request Return of Students from Carlisle | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," December 11, 1885, RG 75, Entry 91, box 282, 1886-#1501, National Archives and Records

[children] on these lines [of stability, intelligence, and industry] by reservation and tribal conditions" according to school officials.[141] Overall, Native homes were made out to be unsafe and harmful environments for children.

There has been work to dismantle these harmful stereotypes and systems. In 1978, the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) was passed by the United States Congress and was designed to prevent the separation of Native families by providing increased protections to Native parents and tribal governments.[142] However, challenges to ICWA demonstrate that we are not too far from the boarding school era. In 1989, *Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians v. Holyfield* argued that children born off-reservation but to enrolled tribal member parents were not covered for protection under ICWA. In 2013, *Adoptive Couple v. Baby Girl* claimed non-custodial parents could not use ICWA to block adoptions, and that blood quantum arguments made the child ineligible for ICWA–ignoring the Cherokees' right to determine their citizenship status which for them, does not depend on blood quantum. The Supreme Court ruled in favor of the Adoptive Couple in the former, leading the federal government to develop stronger guidelines around ICWA in an attempt to protect Native parents and children. This was met with an explosion of lawsuits that have persisted until the ruling of *Haaland v. Brackeen*, the most recent Supreme Court Case on the issue which found ICWA constitutional and not a threat to states' rights, as was argued by the plaintiffs.[143]

Common within the discourse about ICWA is a clear racialized stigma against Indigenous

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Administration, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/documents/oneida-sachems-and-councilors-request-return-students-carlisle.

[141] "Pratt Responds to Request to Return Clara and Roger Jamison | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," July 7, 1902.

[142] Kathryn Fort, "The Road to Brackeen: Defending ICWA 2013-2023," *American University Law Review* 72, no. 5 (July 17, 2023): 36.

[143] Julia Gaffney, "'The Gold Standard of Child Welfare' under Attack: The Indian Child Welfare Act and Haaland v. Brackeen Family Law and the Supreme Court, 2022-2023," *Family Law Quarterly* 56, no. 2–3 (2023 2022): 238.

parents. In a study of editorial commentary on ICWA, "Native biological parents [were found to be] often depicted as unfit and neglectful…[while] foster or adoptive parents are described in glowing terms as financially stable, affectionate, and generous"[144] This bias also impacts how ICWA is currently implemented and has led courts to "give more weight to immediate individual interests of foster families rather than future broad interests of Indian children and their tribes."[145] Here, we can see major parallels to the perceptions of Native parents and structures that Carlisle perpetuated, which prioritized the interest of white school officials above all.

Today, ICWA remains vulnerable to attack. Common amongst ICWA legal challenges is the argument that the placement preferences established in the law interfere with the "right" of non-Native adoptive families to adopt Native children, violating the equal protection clause. In past cases, this argument has not been withstood, as being "Indian" is understood to be a political category rather than a racial one.[146] However, the Supreme Court in *Haaland v. Brackeen* did not rule on the constitutionality of ICWA on this basis. This leaves room for ICWA to be overturned as unconstitutional, which would be especially dangerous for Native American parents and children with this racial stigma still in play. Without ICWA, there is even more room for the separation of children and parents based on the subjective "fitness" of Indigenous parents as determined by white supremacist institutions and actors.

This is what is at stake when discussing the history and legacy of Indian child removal policies of the United States. By understanding the history of Native parents' advocacy for their children sent to boarding schools at the turn of the twentieth century, we can combat narratives

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[144] Sarah Deer, Elise Higgins, and Thomas White, "EDITORIALIZING ICWA: 40 Years of Colonial Commentary," *The Indigenous Peoples' Journal of Law, Culture, & Resistance* 7 (2022): 50.
[145] Fort, "The Road to Brackeen: Defending ICWA 2013-2023" 1701.
[146] Meschelle Linjean and Hilary N. Weaver, "The Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA): Where We've Been, Where We're Headed, and Where We Need to Go," *Journal of Public Child Welfare* 17, no. 5 (October 20, 2023): 1045, https://doi.org/10.1080/15548732.2022.2131696.

used in the modern context that question the fitness of Native parents as caregivers, and understand the powerful legacy modern Native parents continue by fighting for and raising their children.

Figures

Figure 1.
Studio Portrait of Jennie Tallchief while on outing with Mrs. Winifield Scott Davidson. John N. Choate, “Jennie Tallchief, 1893,” digital image, Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center, 1893, accessed April 24, 2024.

Figure 2.
Portrait of Richard Henry Pratt and Chief Spotted Tail with Rebecca T. Haines (standing at left), Susan Longstreth (standing in center), and Mary Anna Longstreth (standing at rear right). John N. Choate, “Richard Henry Pratt and Chief Spotted Tail with the "Quaker Ladies" [version 1], 1880,” digital image, Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center, 1880, accessed April 24, 2024, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/images/richard-henry-pratt-and-chief-spotted-tail-quaker-ladies-version-1-1880.

Figure 3.
Studio Portrait of Louisa Provost. John N. Choate, "Louisa Provost, c. 1897," digital image, Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center, 1893, accessed April 24, 2023, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/images/louisa-provost-c1897.

Figure 4.
Studio portrait of William Archiquette, Libbie Archiquette (seated), and Sarah Archiquette (standing), in school uniform. John N. Choate, "William Archiquette, Belinda Archiquette, and Sarah Archiquette, c.1888," digital image, Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center, 1893, accessed April 24, 2023, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/images/william-archiquette-belinda-archiquette-and-sarah-archiquette-c1888.

Figure 5.
James Down on a horse-drawn cart with his child and dog c. 1909. "James Downs (ma-she-nah), c.1909," digital image, Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center, 1893, accessed April 24, 2023, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/images/james-downs-ma-she-nah-c1909.

Figure 6.
Studio Portrait of Minnie Finley c. 1893. John N. Choate, "Studio Portrait of Minnie Finley," digital image, Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center, 1893, accessed April 24, 2023, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/images/minnie-finley-c1893.

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