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# “The Archive Is Ours”: Rethinking Possession of the Historical Record

*Caitlin Keliiaa*

“They did that for a reason, so it would be passed on.”

—Benny Fillmore

“. . . [T]he archive is ours and full of our voices. . . . When we’re in there together with the peoples who made it for us, we are there because they made sure that, despite the fact that they were living through an ongoing genocide, . . . they were going to carry anything that they could forward for us.”

—Cutcha Risling Baldy

Years after my undergraduate career and before graduate school, I had the urge to find my grandparents’ school files from Stewart Indian School in Carson City, Nevada. Built by the Office of Indian Affairs in 1890, Stewart, along with other Indian boarding schools, was intended to assimilate Indian children especially through vocational labor. For girls like my grandma Helen, this meant an education in “domestic science,” which effectively trained Indian girls to be maids. On the other hand, boys like my grandfather were able to learn carpentry, mechanics, ranching, electrical wiring, masonry, and more—skills that would help my grandfather during World War II and to build a lifelong career.

It was fortunate for me, living in the East Bay at the time, that the Stewart records reside at the National Archives in San Bruno, California—just a BART or car ride away. In my search, I sent an email query and eventually received a response from an archive technician. From the 2,900 cubic feet of records of the Bureau of Indian

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Affairs offices in northern California and northern Nevada, she was able to locate my grandparents as well as my great aunt and uncle.<sup>1</sup> Their lives at Stewart in the 1930s and '40s were filed in the "Carson Stewart School, Individual Student Folders, 1928–1956." Remnants of their upbringing at Stewart were stored in the following boxes:

Box 37

Helen Summers (24 pages)

Esther Summers (35 pages)

Box 64

Marvin Keliiaa (20 pages)

Bertrand Keliiaa (34 pages)

At the technician's recommendation, I scheduled an appointment and took a Friday off work so I could make the trip to San Bruno. Upon my arrival, I took in the stark, heavy-cement midcentury building. I had to sign in before I was able to undergo a brief training on procedures and rules on the proper review of documents. Like all National Archives and Records Administration locations, I had to lock away my personal belongings aside from a pencil and paper. At that visit, I received my first researcher identification card—I felt incredibly official. As I entered the research room, with files waiting for my perusal, I was terribly excited. While my grandparents were Stewart alumni, they did not speak much of those years. Now, at the prospect of seeing their files, I thought I might learn something new about their experiences there.

My grandpa Marvin's file had a lot of the elements I expected to find, like report cards and other school-related correspondence. His file also contained documents related to his enlistment in the US Navy during World War II. Before he enlisted in the spring of 1943, he received A and B-plus grades in social sciences, natural sciences, engineering, math, and "vocational." While he was promoted to eleventh grade, he would not return to Stewart. In 1946, after the war, he initiated enrollment at Merritt College, a business school in Oakland. Stewart provided Merritt with a list of his transcripts, credits, and notes on his characteristics.<sup>2</sup> Ninth grade teacher Florence Callin wrote that my grandfather was "excellent" in cooperation and "discipline." She concluded, "Marvin is a fine student. He cooperates in every way."<sup>3</sup>

My grandfather's file seemed to celebrate his achievements and spoke highly of him as a student. I quickly turned to my grandmother's file and found something different. Early on, teacher Ruth Motley wrote, "Helen is a leader, and enters anxiously in activity work. She does a superior quality of work. She is very bright and dependable."<sup>4</sup> Among these initial notes on her schoolwork was a letter sent to my great-grandfather notifying him of her successful emergency appendectomy.<sup>5</sup> A few other notes changed the tone of my grandmother's file. In 1939, a Nellie Harnar noted that "Helen was with the wrong crowd of girls this year" and had trouble concentrating on her work.<sup>6</sup> In 1941, a Stewart superintendent wrote my grandmother's aunt and guardian informing her that my grandmother had left Stewart with three other girls, and they were unable to find them. She apparently did not seem to "adjust herself to school" that fall.<sup>7</sup>

However, in 1942 the aforementioned Florence Callin wrote “Helen is a good student. She has a nice personality and cooperates in every way. She is very dependable when called upon for special assignments.”<sup>8</sup> Then, a year later, my grandmother was again the subject of disapproval. She and a few girlfriends left campus and went for a joyride with one of the girl’s boyfriends, who had enlisted in the Navy. Later that year, she went to Oakland for summer work and found herself unemployed. In a letter to her father, my grandmother and her friends were reportedly “creating quite a nuisance.” On July 30, 1943, Stewart’s Principal Mueller wrote directly to my grandmother to scold her. He wrote, “I am writing this letter in an endeavor to try to arouse within you some little degree of self-respect, and if you have no self-respect, then you should show some respect to your home or the school which you attended.” He asked her to “settle down” and find work or return to school, which was still very much on summer break.<sup>9</sup> The file does not contain my grandmother’s response to the ultimatum, but later that summer she and her friends made plans to return to Stewart in October after they secured enough funds to pay for the trip.

As I perused these documents under government surveillance, I was struck by the clear differences between my grandfather and grandmother’s files. Perhaps my grandfather was a saint in school and there would be no record of reprimands or infractions. But it was surprising to see a young girl who was once deemed “bright,” “dependable,” and a “leader” then be described as hanging out with the “wrong crowd,” and thereafter a “nuisance.” It did not add up to me, and it appeared that discipline and chastisement was unevenly distributed—indeed it was gendered. As I later accessed my Great Uncle Bert’s file, which celebrated his intelligence, potential and success, my assumptions were confirmed. Native girls were deeply scrutinized.

Before I left the archive, I photocopied my grandparents’ files and braved the intense traffic on my commute home. I felt gratified that I uncovered a piece of their story, but I was left feeling uncomfortable with how school officials berated my grandmother. I was not surprised, exactly, but the scorn stuck with me. I had no idea that I would return to the San Bruno National Archives a few years later as I delved into preliminary doctoral research on Bay Area outing. I had no idea that I would later spend a summer there digitizing the outing archive with the help of an undergraduate research assistant. I did not know that I would uncover heinous things, such as death and sterilization, that would make my grandmother’s file seem tame.

Reflecting on that first visit reminded me that Native people have an inherently different approach to archives on and about Native people. We do not have the luxury of a distance between ourselves and the Native lives we find recounted on onionskin paper and federal correspondence. This relation alone means we are often not regarded as objective in our research—too close to the material realities of what is contained in the archive. Indeed, as I saw the underbelly of the outing program, I could not disconnect myself from the Washoe and Paiute girls who suffered in the Bay Area. They were young women just like my grandmother who came to work and build a life outside of institutionalization. In this work, which was at times painful to do and difficult to witness, I had to accept that I could not separate myself from these histories. My history intertwines with theirs. In her intimate study of the Hupa women’s

Flower Dance in Northern California, Cutcha Risling Baldy states, “The research here is interpersonal—necessarily interpersonal.”<sup>10</sup> Scholars cannot separate themselves and their experience from their research—and perhaps it is time we acknowledged that the personal is powerful.

My experience and that of countless other Native scholars motivated the “California Indian Studies and the Archive” panel at the *Bad Indians* symposium. The California Indian Studies and Scholars Association created the virtual symposium to celebrate the tenth anniversary of Deborah Miranda’s groundbreaking memoir, *Bad Indians*. After a decade, Miranda’s use of and association with the archive is still palpable—an incredibly personal and intimate look into archival collections in all manner of the word. The rich sources influenced the creation of this panel, which brought together three historians, Kathleen Whiteley, Yve Chavez, and William Bauer Jr. Throughout the panel, questions of power arose, negotiating the violence of the archive and finding family in archival documents. Of prime concern was how we as California Indian scholars navigate the archive, especially as these are often repositories that were not created by Native people, much less with us in mind. Nonetheless, despite these dynamics, Native people have made the archive their own. In doing so, they practice the power of telling, healing, bringing truth to light, and ensuring that Native stories survive. This article argues for a California Indian methodology to interrogate, learn from, and disrupt the archive.

## THE PANELISTS

To foreground the discussion on the archives and California Indian people, I would like to highlight the panelists. Kathleen Whiteley’s talk began with a photograph from 1975 taken in Trinidad, California: two men dressed as Spanish friars, complete with bald caps, kneel before a wooden cross. Hundreds of community members and Native activists protesting the event surround the reenactors, holding signs like “Get lost!” and “It’s been *discovered*.” Their activism directly challenged the Spanish fantasy at the center of the town’s bicentennial celebration. In her talk, Whiteley connects this rich history of organizing protests and California Indian critique to Miranda’s own critical archival work, work that is steeped in a variety of sources: primary sources, literary texts, poetry, art, journalism, natural sciences, and more. Whiteley then provided the historical backdrop for two parts of *Bad Indians*: Miranda’s poem “Burning the Digger II” and her inclusion of Isabel Meadows’ Bureau of Indian Affairs attestations.

Whiteley declared, “Miranda expertly peels back layers to see the visible workings of power. Looking skeptically and critically upon existing archives, Miranda speaks to the challenges of assembling texts, especially those that claim to speak for, to, and through powerful institutions. Finally, Miranda complicates how historians must analyze California Indian history, especially interpreting historical sources by drawing on Native ways of knowing. Indeed, power imbues the archive, but Miranda provides a frame for interpreting these sources.”

Dr. Yve Chavez's talk "Challenging the Archive" focused on the visual culture archive and Miranda's use of photos and drawings. In particular, she examined a photograph of three Luiseño women and a sketch of a Mission Carmel mass, both featured in *Bad Indians*. Critically, Miranda humanizes the Native subjects of these images by identifying them by name. As Chavez asserts, "By identifying these people and explaining their relationship to the mission, Deborah is humanizing not just the scene itself but also the period it represents." Where the archive rendered these individuals nameless, Miranda reminds us that they are real people with lived experiences. She pushes against the limitations of the archive and centers Native individuals. Chavez noted that Miranda's critical examinations of these images are one of the few that exist. She called for scholars to engage in similarly deeper readings of the visual culture archive.

William Bauer Jr.'s talk explored how *Bad Indians* retells and challenges the archive and its stories. In his discussion, he noted the wealth of different archives that exist in the book, including the Spanish archive of violence, the public history archive, and the personal archive. Bauer declared, "Miranda asks us to consider who creates these archives. Where are they coming from? What are their origins?" He continued: "The archive can be an invasive space. It is produced by people who attempted to make invasive moves into Indigenous peoples' lives." Bauer then described finding his relatives in the National Archives, first his great grandmother and thereafter his great grandfather. His grandmother reviewed her father's documents, including a tobacco receipt, and fondly remembered him socializing over a pipe. *Bad Indians*, Bauer argued, "points us to those spaces where the archive just cannot actually gain access." Indeed, personal anecdotes and testimony can begin to fill in the gaps. Nonetheless, the fact is that California Indian scholars will find their relatives and ancestors in the archive. Bauer affirms that Miranda "reminds us of the intimacies and the relationships between Indigenous scholars and the archive and the relationships we find and create with those . . . who we find in the archive." The presentations by Whiteley, Chavez, and Bauer all point to the important question of finding family in the archive, interpreting sources, humanizing Native individuals, and constantly negotiating the power of the archive.

## "THE ARCHIVE"

Deborah Miranda's *Bad Indians* serves as the foundation for that panel and this special issue. Through her seminal text, Miranda's investigation of the archive remains intimate and personal, offering a unique perspective into the potential of archival work. *Bad Indians* is a powerful interdisciplinary memoir interwoven with a diverse array of sources, including poems, photographs, drawings, government documents, forms, diaries, interviews, newspaper articles, and more. Miranda's carefully entwined sources span hundreds of years across numerous spaces and represent dozens of archives. According to Deloria and Olson, an archive "is something like a museum (an 'archive of objects') or a library (an 'archive of books')." <sup>11</sup> Scholars often use the term *archive* to describe where material sources are housed, such as the National Archives or the

Bancroft. But, of course, the word can refer to the material itself, such as in my own research, a cache of documents related to Native women's labor. What is more important, official archival collections have often been created by non-Native individuals and curated by librarians and archivists. Therefore, these are not neutral sources of data. Indeed, in my outing research, most archival documents were created by federal employees writing about Native women. Without a doubt, their predispositions imbue the data, and that data itself is incomplete. These deficiencies prompt Michel-Rolph Trouillot's notion of the "absences in the archive."<sup>12</sup> These silences are laden with power and speak to the fact that certain histories are privileged and upheld while others are obscured. Amid the silences and the privilege are stories that remain hidden from the historical record. Yet, outside of these formal archives, are informal archives that can disrupt the power dynamics.

As *Bad Indians* attests, archives can also be remnants of a larger story threaded together. Historian Kelly Lytle Hernández employed the "rebel archive" in her own work on carcerality—that is, scribbles, songs, handbills, and more that escaped destruction by the LAPD and LA Sheriff's Department.<sup>13</sup> Archives can also include ethnographies and oral histories. In *California through Native Eyes*, William Bauer Jr. relies on an archival collection of depression-era ethnographic interviews conducted with California Indian elders.<sup>14</sup> To an extreme degree, archives are digital and contain both newly created content as well as digitized historical documents, such as the Denshō Digital repository and the Genoa Indian School Digital Reconciliation Project—both of which provide new avenues of access to materials that are otherwise difficult to locate and ascertain. Whichever form, official or unofficial archive, digital or analog, the archive has the power to illuminate.

Miranda's use of the archive reveals the stories in the margins. In the first section of *Bad Indians*, Miranda's ancestor Isabel Meadows has a story of her own to tell. Meadows, a Rumsen Ohlone and Esselen speaker, was regularly interviewed by linguist J. P. Harrington. His work, much like that of his contemporaries, was invested in a practice called "salvage ethnography."<sup>15</sup> With the assumed demise of Native people, anthropologists and other scholars flocked to collect as much as they could of the "vanishing" California Indians. This included languages, songs, cultural paraphernalia, and more. These efforts make up the bulk of source material for the UC system, well into the millions of catalogued items.

In an excerpt titled "Dear Vicenta," Miranda includes an image of Harrington's scribbled notes written in both Spanish and English. The field notes reveal an unexpected anecdote about a young woman by the name of Vicenta Gutierrez. Meadows reveals that one evening during lent, Padre Real sexually assaulted Vicenta. While likely insignificant to Harrington, Miranda finds this powerful moment in the archive as resistance in the form of truth-telling. Miranda writes directly to Vicenta, asserting, "Isabel didn't forget you, though. One hundred years after the padre raped you in the church, Isabel told your story to Harrington. She told it like it happened yesterday. And she was *mad*. She used Spanish and a brutal English to make sure Harrington understood. Vicenta, she used the priest's *name*. 'Padre Real.' And she used your name. She made certain we knew which family you belonged to, connected you with your

brother.” From the margins, Vicenta is not nameless. And Isabel told her story to reveal a hidden truth. In the face of the most egregious violation, Isabel named the perpetrator. To Vicenta, Miranda declares, “. . . I hold on to this: Isabel remembered your story, and she told it to Harrington, and he told it to me, and I’m telling it to everyone I can find.”<sup>16</sup> Miranda holds onto Vicenta’s story in the margins as a testament to the power of telling and healing. *Bad Indians* serves to reconcile pain and injustice and gives voice to the voiceless. The text ensures that stories survive.

It is in these at times obscure places that California Indian stories survive, from fragmented pieces that can be made whole. Miranda declares, “California Indians . . . have many other stories. They aren’t easy; they are fractured. To make them whole, what is needed is a multilayered web of community reaching backward in time and forward in dream, questing deeply into the country of unknown memory—an extremely demanding task.”<sup>17</sup>

## AN EXTREMELY DEMANDING TASK

I engaged in such a task many years ago as I embarked on a historiography of *wa:šiw* reclamation efforts. As a master’s student in a Native American linguistics course, I studied Washoe alongside Chickasaw, or *Chikashshanompa’*. The course would inspire my master’s thesis. I thus began on a path that led toward a personal and scholarly journey with one of my heritage languages.

As with many other California Indian languages, anthropologists and linguists conducted quite a few studies involving Washoe speakers in the early and mid-twentieth century. Much of these efforts were rooted in the practice of “salvage ethnography.” Therefore, my initial work relied on studies based on ethnographic interviews and fieldwork that were housed in the Phoebe A. Hearst museum collections, the Survey of California and Other Indian Languages, and the Bancroft Library, to name a few.<sup>18</sup> These recordings, notes, songs, and details on ceremonies were plentiful, but limited by the fact that they were intended for documentation and not preservation, much less community distribution. Further, many of these materials required a linguistic skill set of which I did not have formal training. Crucially, these materials were created on the premise that California Indian people, and Washoe people specifically, were a subject of study—a fact and tension that will forever remain within the archive. Indeed, this is a universal experience shared in the California Indian community.

Outside of these sources, another resource I came to rely on was *Washo Grammar*, a 1964 dissertation by William H. Jacobsen Jr.<sup>19</sup> This grammar is the essential resource of Washoe language material. It also includes a standard Washoe orthography or writing system. The dissertation is geared toward advanced linguistic students and is thus inaccessible to emergent Washoe speakers. Thankfully, in 1996, Jacobsen authored *Beginning Washo*.<sup>20</sup> This workbook-style tool was much more accessible and published with the intent to teach the Washoe language to community members. Jacobsen worked with tribal elders to create twenty-two lessons for the beginning student. He used this same book to teach students on the Washoe reservation. While



accessible and built with community involvement, the workbook does not capture the history of the language. In fact, the history of *Wa:šiw* and its attrition in the last centuries was the focus of neither linguistic nor anthropological studies. Yet, I knew of a Washoe immersion school that was prolific in the 1990s, I was aware that a community language program and classes existed, and I quickly realized I needed to speak with those individuals to get at this unexplored history.

Over the course of two years, I made multiple research trips to Nevada. I conducted interviews with elders, language students, program staff members, and linguists, and I attended language classes and analyzed learning materials and pedagogy. As an urban Indian person born and raised in the Bay Area, this project literally brought me closer to home and allowed me to connect with my community. Through this work I also became a student, learning alongside elders and children in the classroom. One of my favorite parts about this work was taking research trips with my father. He joined me in language classes, and together we created silly sentences with random “who,” “where,” and “what” parts. These kinds of engaging activities were commonplace in language courses across the Washoe colonies.

Alongside the classes, I was most struck by my interviews with community members. Our in-depth discussions, some lasting for hours, became the core of my research. I learned about previous generations of language efforts, elders’ perspectives on language attrition, and students’ experience learning the language. Most important, our interviews encapsulated Washoe language ideologies. For many, *Wa:šiw* language was integral to their identity as Washoe people, inalienable and rooted in place, thoughts that perhaps elders knew from generations before.

A statement from these research trips sticks with me today. As Jacobsen started his fieldwork in the Washoe community in 1955, generations of Washoe children had been subject to Indian boarding school education that prohibited Native languages and followed English-only standards. When children returned home on school break, Washoe was unlikely to be the only language spoken in the household. In fact, English was probably the language most families used. Perhaps this is the reason why elders who worked with Jacobsen allowed him to record their words, songs, and stories. Perhaps even then, they wanted to save the language and carry on the knowledge for future generations.

That is exactly what one Washoe community member believed. Benny Fillmore’s own children were part of the Washoe immersion school in the 1990s, and in the 1950s, Jacobsen had interviewed his great-grandmother and other elders while conducting research. Fillmore reflected on her agency to participate and preserve the Washoe language, saying to me, “They did that for a reason, so it would be passed on.”<sup>21</sup> In their quest to study and save the vanishing language, scholars—whether linguists, anthropologists or historians—often get the credit for documenting Native languages and culture. But Fillmore’s comment reminds us that the credit belongs to the elders, without whom these studies would not have existed.

In fall 2022, the California Indian Studies and Scholars Association hosted a virtual panel at the American Studies Association, and my colleague reminded me of Benny Fillmore’s words. At this panel, Cutcha Risling Baldy made a powerful

statement that directly links to the archive. She posited, “It is California Indians themselves that built the archive, the scholarship and the work that often people rely on when they talk about the history of California. It is California Native peoples who served as the collaborators on these projects. It’s California Indian voices, stories, and ways of knowing that are featured in many of the most popular studies, and that build what become the disciplines of things like anthropology and history in the state of California. Those things could not have been built without California Indians.”<sup>22</sup>

Risling Baldy then argued, “The archive itself was never really built for anybody else but California Indian peoples in California. It was our peoples and voices that built it. It was our peoples and voices that made sure that it was going to be there for those of us that would one day find it again. . . . I truly don’t think that any of these California Indian people were sitting and talking to Alfred Kroeber because they wanted to make sure that he got tenure. In fact, I think they probably didn’t care about that at all. What they mostly were looking for was someone who they could make sure would document what they wanted to have documented and carry forward what needed to be carried forward, so that we as the future of California Indian peoples could rebuild, resurge, revitalize, and make known that we are still here.

“[T]he archive is ours and full of our voices, and . . . when we’re in there together with the peoples who made it for us, we are there because they made sure that, despite the fact that they were living through an ongoing genocide, they were going to carry anything that they could forward for us. I often think about how people probably sat together and thought, ‘I can’t remember everything, but maybe I can remember *this*.’ And they would say the one or two things that really mattered, that they needed to make sure that we could find later. I know this is true because as I do work in the archives, I will often come across the transcripts of people talking, and they will say things like, ‘I want you to write this down, because someday they are going to find me again.’ . . . That’s me. That’s me in the archive, looking for the people that I can find again, that I can repeat, [so] that I can sing their songs and tell their stories. And again, that was never for Kroeber; that was always for me.”<sup>23</sup>

Just like Fillmore, Risling Baldy affirms that ancestors knew another generation would follow, and their words, songs, and stories would be waiting for them. Indeed, this is the work that sets the foundation for Miranda’s “Dear Vicenta” and *Bad Indians* as a whole. This is the labor of reclaiming fractured histories and making them whole. This is the demanding task that Miranda asks of California Indian peoples. Returning to Risling Baldy’s words, she goes a step further by asserting that the archive is built for California Indians. This dramatic ontological shift rethinks the possession of the archive. The archive was largely created and curated by non-Native individuals. Archives are not neutral, but if we heed Risling Baldy’s words, then we know that the archive is indeed ours to interrogate, to learn from, and to disrupt.

This phenomenon, while perhaps not uniquely California Indian, is decidedly a Native experience. In my own archival work, the dynamics are different. My main archive is a federal archive—the majority of which was written by outing matrons. Their early twentieth century record-keeping resulted in often deeply detailed records, including federal forms that quantified the lives of Native women, commenting on

their training, characteristics, and morals, and whether they might be “good,” “attractive,” or “big-headed.” Outside of these documents, my archive contains bank records, YWCA flyers, and federal correspondence from Indian agents and Indian boarding school superintendents. At times there are letters from concerned parents as well as undelivered letters the matrons confiscated. The materials I follow closely are letters written by outing girls and women asking for better pay, more desirable placements, and financial advancements.

Further, while my archive is revealing, it can only tell the story matrons captured in letters, forms, and documents. Nonetheless, there are certainly issues in the archive that outing women may have intended to conceal from their relatives, such as an unplanned pregnancy or incarceration. Such events are often painstakingly detailed in federal letters and reveal much more than Native women may have intended. And while outing matrons’ biases permeate the archival data, it nonetheless offers a glimpse into the complex lives of Native women.

In the context of my archive, it is harder to know if Native women knew I would be coming to learn their stories and tell their truths. In some cases, it is harder to know if Native women would have appreciated my view into deeply painful moments of their lives. I wonder what it means for me to do work with an archive of Native voices that was not built with the same intention Risling Baldy spoke to. Nonetheless, are their stories less worthy of carrying forward? Does that make my archive less “ours”?

I look to the work of scholars who built the canon of our knowledge on Indian boarding schools, such as K. Tsianina Lomawaima and Brenda Child. Their scholarship, likewise built on research in federal archives, gives context to the deep impact of Indian boarding schools on generations of Native children and their families.<sup>24</sup> I am reminded of Child’s detailed appendices that list the names of Red Lake students at nonreservation boarding schools and burial records at Haskell Cemetery. Each person on those lists has a story, a family, and a community to which they belong. Child’s appendices make it clear that they are claimed, they do belong, and they are “ours.” Indeed, these appendices act as an invitation to their descendants to find them. In my own work, I often find that the descendants of outing women do not know that their relative lived and worked in the Bay Area, whether for a short stint or a few years. Some may not know that, to this day, their relatives are still buried in Bay Area cemeteries. If a familiar name pops up in my files, I make a point to share that record with their descendants. It is akin to an act of repatriation—to return the files back to their family, even if they had no idea the files existed. Perhaps especially so.

In fact, on that Friday off work as I perused my grandparent’s files in San Bruno, I did exactly that. I copied my grandparent’s files in the exact order as found in the archival record. I immediately shared these with my father so that he could get a glimpse into his parent’s lives at Stewart. So, of course, the archive is ours. Those Stewart records *do* belong to my family. Those outing records belong to the descendants.

## CONCLUSION

As I write this, thousands if not millions of cubic feet of archival records on California Indian peoples sit in shelved boxes across the country, and perhaps internationally—some in official federal archives, some in local historical societies, and others housed in personal collections. Within these archival documents are fragments of individual lives and pieces of Native history. It is our job as California Indian peoples and California Indian scholars to investigate these records, reclaim the fractured histories and make them whole. We do not have the luxury of distance between ourselves and the Native lives we find in the historical record. We cannot separate ourselves from these histories, for our lives are intertwined with theirs. But the personal is powerful. *Let us do the labor of this interpersonal work.* This is the demanding task that Miranda asks of California Indian peoples. May the next generation of California Indian scholars rise to the invitation. For the archive is ours, and this practice of telling is healing and ensures that Native stories survive.

## NOTES

1. Because of the Freedom of Information Act, which protects the personal privacy of living persons, I was unable to secure my great aunt Esther's file without her permission.
2. "Ralph M. Gelvin to Merritt Business School," March 26, 1946, Student Files, National Archives, San Bruno.
3. "Keliiaa, Marvin," May 22, 1942, Student Files, National Archives, San Bruno.
4. "Helen Summers," undated, Student Files, National Archives, San Bruno.
5. "Don C. Foster to Jimmie Summers," January 12, 1943, Student Files, National Archives, San Bruno.
6. "Nellie S. Harnar re: Helen Summers," May 25, 1939, Student Files, National Archives, San Bruno.
7. "Don C. Foster to Sadie Jones," October 24, 1941, Student Files, National Archives, San Bruno.
8. "Summers, Helen," May 22, 1942, Student Files, National Archives, San Bruno.
9. "Mueller to Helen Summers," July 30, 1943, Student Files, National Archives, San Bruno.
10. Cutcha Risling Baldy, *We Are Dancing for You: Native Feminisms and the Revitalization of Women's Coming-of-Age Ceremonies* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2018): 24.
11. Philip J. Deloria and Alexander I. Olson, *American Studies: A User's Guide* (First edition) (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017): 161.
12. Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997): 48.
13. Kelly Lytle Hernández, *City of Inmates: Conquest, Rebellion, and the Rise of Human Caging in Los Angeles, 1771–1965* (First Edition) (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017).
14. William J. Bauer Jr., *California through Native Eyes: Reclaiming History* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2016).
15. Cutcha Risling Baldy, "Wung-Xowidilik (Concerning It—What Has Been Told): Anthropology and Salvage Ethnography," in *We Are Dancing for You: Native Feminisms and the Revitalization of Women's Coming-of-Age Ceremonies* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2018): 73–99.

16. Deborah A. Miranda, *Bad Indians: A Tribal Memoir* (First Edition) (Berkeley: Heyday, 2013): 24–25.
17. *Ibid.*, 194.
18. These vast archives on California Indian languages serve as the foundational resource for the biennial Breath of Life Language Restoration Workshop hosted at the University of California, Berkeley.
19. William H. Jacobsen, *A Grammar of the Washo Language* (University of California, Berkeley, 1964).
20. William H. Jacobsen, *Beginning Washo*, Occasional Papers (Nevada State Museum, 1996).
21. Caitlin Keliiaa, “Washiw Wagayay Majal: Reweaving the Washoe Language,” *EScholarship*, January 1, 2012, 40, <http://escholarship.org/uc/item/4zd060kz>.
22. Risling Baldy was unable to contribute to this special issue, but her book *We Are Dancing for You* speaks to the issue of California Indian methodologies and practices.
23. “California Indian Studies and Scholars Association (CISSA): Reorienting Research toward Anticolonial, Land-Back, and Communal Futures” (American Studies Association, Virtual, 2022).
24. Brenda Child, *Boarding School Seasons: American Indian Families, 1900–1940* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000); K. Tsianina Lomawaima, *They Called It Prairie Light: The Story of Chilocco Indian School* (Reprint Edition) (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995). In this work, Lomawaima interviews Chilocco alumni and asserts that boarding school survivors are “living archives”: “Native Americans who attended boarding schools are living archives, storehouses of memory and experience. Their memories and experiences, shaped into spoken narratives, continue to shape families, communities, and educational endeavors among Indian people”: xii.