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Source: *Journal of American Indian Education*, Vol. 57, No. 1 (Spring 2018), pp. 122-144

Published by: University of Minnesota Press

Stable URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/jamerindieduc.57.1.0122

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Who Gets to Tell the Stories? Carlisle Indian School: Imagining a Place of Memory Through Descendant Voices

LOUELLYN WHITE

I would like to sit by my great grandfather's gravesite and light some cedar for him and tell him how much of a great influence he had on the future.
—Respondent #6, Question #17[1]

Who gets to tell the stories of our loved ones? Most Indian boarding school research emphasizes student experiences. When descendants are considered, the intergenerational impacts on subsequent generations are emphasized. The discussion in this article privileges descendant voices. I analyze a descendant survey paying attention to how descendants recollect their family's experience at Carlisle. I argue stories passed on to descendants become our own stories, informing how we make sense of boarding school history and integrate narratives into our lives. Memories and recollections are co-constructed, reconstructed, and sometimes contested while making significant contributions to Carlisle's legacy. Ownership and responsibility for our stories must be considered as we look at possibilities for creating a heritage center at the Farmhouse located at the U.S. Army War College.

As a child, my dad told stories about Grandpa and Carlisle Indian School. He talked of Carlisle like it was a prestigious institution where his father "got an education." He told stories of the "wild Indians from out West," how Grandpa learned to play clarinet and performed in the marching band. I remember sitting on Grandpa's lap while he played harmonica so his musicality made sense to me. My dad also talked about Grandpa meeting Jim Thorpe and how impressed he was when he shook his "big hands." What I remember most is when my dad ended with "He didn't like to talk about it" (White, 2016, p. 106).

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I went along with stories of Grandpa and over the years I told and retold them because they were family stories and my father was a great storyteller. He liked embellishing his stories, adding to their appeal. It did not really matter to me if events happened exactly as told or not because the stories made me feel closer to my grandpa who passed away when I was six years old. The stories unite multiple generations. They served a purpose greater than providing factual accounts; they became my stories informing how I identify with and make sense of Carlisle's legacy. Lynne Davis says, "Stories cement together generations of collective memory," linking past and present (2004, p. 3). Of course, historical accuracy and reliability matter in interpreting boarding school history, yet when there may be contradictions in family narratives, stories become useful vehicles for descendants to connect to their families, providing unique perspectives that, while complicating existing narratives, contribute to understanding Indian boarding schools.

Jennifer Nez Denetdale, Navajo historian, demonstrates how past informs present: "As a person listens to stories relayed, she or he takes on the memories of the person who tells the narratives. In this way, our ancestors' memories become our memories, and we become part of the vehicle of oral history" (2014, p. 73). Stories hold power. Utilizing oral tradition, William J. Bauer Jr. explains how California Indians interpret history reflecting their "ways of knowing and understanding of the past" (2016, p. 120). In his narrative based on Indigenous perspectives, Bauer explains how American Indians "modified and maintained traditional stories and deployed them as weapons against attempted oppression" (p. 123). Stories are vital to our identities as Indigenous peoples. They inform who we are, connect us to our past and our kin, and they influence how we engage with the world.

Stories we inherit may not always be historically accurate but remain a powerful vehicle transcending generations. I am doubtful my grandfather was a close friend of Jim Thorpe yet, like other descendants, I connect with pieces of story, adopt, and reshape it for my own life, integrating a new narrative into my family legacy. As boarding schools become a usable metaphor for colonialism (Child, 2014), the narratives descendants create help make sense of the past as they are reconstructed in the present to understand our present lives. Boarding school serves as a tool for descendants to understand a dizzying and complicated history. Indian boarding school scholar Brenda Child explains boarding schools are the "best monument to the history of the colonial cruelty of dispossession, but one with the power to educate us about Indian survival both past and present" (Child, 2014, p. 283).

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This article is framed by Child's claim that "boarding school is a useful and extraordinarily powerful metaphor for colonialism" (2014, p. 268). Carlisle descendants have varying family stories, sometimes contradicting archival accounts, or what historians write about boarding schools in the United States. Certainly in Carlisle's 39 years of changing governmental policies and institutional practices, with over 10,000 student lives, not all students had the same experience. Yet they are often lumped together into a single victimization narrative. While horrific atrocities did occur in unimaginable ways, Child argues that boarding schools become a "usable past" (Child, 2014, p. 268) because American Indian people's perception of the boarding school era is "clouded—confused and impaired by terrible losses for our families, communities, and cultures—the disruptive process of settler colonialism" (Child, 2014, p. 275). Boarding schools become a defining memory in multiple overlapping consequences of colonialism.

Child explains that Indigenous people may think government boarding schools and assimilation policies lasted longer than they actually did, and may conflate mission schools with boarding school history. This creates a narrow and inflexible lens to view a "dizzying and confusing history" (Child, 2014, p. 271). The convenience of boarding schools as explanation for present-day social problems—while it makes perfect sense because boarding school history crosses "eras and tribal differences" (Child, 2014, p. 271)—prohibits alternative boarding school stories. Despite their differences, alternative boarding school narratives including resistance, resilience, and personal agency do not invalidate other narratives.

Most Indian boarding school researchers emphasize student experiences as relayed directly by students or in archival sources (Child, 1998) and others have written about alumni recollections (Ellis, 1996; Lomawaima, 1994). If descendants are considered, it is within the context of intergenerational impacts (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998). Since Carlisle closed in 1918 and all alumni have passed away, it is not currently possible to collect stories directly from students or alumni. Jacqueline Fear-Segal interviewed Carlisle's last known female survivor, Maggie Tarbell Lazore (Akwesasne Mohawk), before she passed away at age 99 in 2001 (Fear-Segal, 2007). Autobiographical accounts by Carlisle alumni, such as *My People the Sioux,* by Luther Standing Bear (1928), give tremendous insight into student life before, during, and after Carlisle. Archival sources are invaluable to understanding Carlisle's history, as interpreted by numerous scholars (Bloom, 2000; Bufford, 2012; Jenkins, 2007 Waggoner, 2008; Witmer, 1993).

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Who has the right to tell these stories? Who gets to tell the stories when our loved ones are no longer here (Cook-Lynn, 1993)? Archival material and first-hand accounts shed light on historical context while descendant voices enrich and expand narratives, helping us unravel Carlisle's complicated era. Until recently descendant voices were largely absent from Carlisle's history. Descendant voices, including mine, were highlighted in a compilation growing out of the first Carlisle Journey's Symposium in 2012 (Fear-Segal & Rose, 2016). In this article, using a qualitative mode of inquiry, I argue descendant voices are an important component, complementing and enhancing our understanding of Indian boarding schools.

To begin, I provide a brief background of Carlisle Indian School and the historic Farmhouse. Next, I offer an analysis of a descendant survey paying particular attention to family stories. Descendant notions about how their family experienced Carlisle fall on a spectrum from positive to negative and everything in between. I argue that stories passed on to descendants become our own stories, informing how we make sense of boarding school history and how we integrate narratives into our own lives. Memories and recollections are co-constructed, reconstructed, and sometimes contested by descendants while making significant contributions to Carlisle's existing archives. Ownership and responsibility for stories must be considered as we imagine a place of memory at the Farmhouse.

Carlisle Indian School

My grandfather Mitchell Arionhiawakon White; his brother, John White; and my great-aunt, Genevieve Jacobs, as well as other extended family were among thousands of Indian children at Carlisle. John White kept a Carlisle scrapbook with photos of he and my grandfather, and I located official school documents, as well as articles he wrote for the school newspaper. I published a chapter about John's performance in the school play "Captain of the Plymouth" (White, 2016). My father always thought Aunt Genevieve went to a fancy college in Pennsylvania until we discovered photographs of her at Carlisle in a book published by the Cumberland County Historical Society (Witmer, 1993). I learned my grandfather was on the monthly Merit Roll from archival documents ("October Merit Roll," 1904). I also recently discovered a 1948 newspaper interview that told of my grandpa's close friendship with Thorpe (as cited in Friend of Great Thorpe, 1999).Through oral tradition and these tangible pieces of history, I am given a glimpse into what Carlisle might have been like for my family.

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Many students including my grandfather and his brother learned farming skills as part of founder and superintendent Richard Henry Pratt's assimilation agenda. At the school farm, students learned agricultural skills and slept at the Farmhouse (Giffen, 1918).

The Farmhouse

In 2011 I learned through former Farmhouse resident Carolyn Tolman that the army was going to demolish the Farmhouse and build new housing (Tolman, 2016). I wanted to help preserve a physical space connecting me to my grandfather. It may be the only place I could visit where he stayed, in a place that changed him and our family's lives for generations. The Farmhouse became a project because I saw an opportunity to tell my family story and provide a safe space for other descendants.

As Farmhouse Coalition co-founder and spokesperson, I spearheaded a public campaign to save the building.[2] The army relented and made the decision to halt demolition in October 2012, likely due to media pressure (Gibson, 2012; Kearns, 2012a; Kearns, 2012b; White, 2012), a petition with close to 1,000 signatures, and numerous support letters. We have since been working toward creating a heritage center devoted to Carlisle students and their descendants.

The Farmhouse is the only remaining building where Indian students slept, ate, and attended classes; it is one of the school's oldest buildings. Carlisle Indian School occupied a former military post beginning in 1879, and today the U.S. Army War College at Carlisle Barracks occupies the campus. With its four inch thick walls, the Hessian Guardhouse, built in 1777, was used to discipline Indian students, detaining them in one of the four small holding cells. Today it is a small museum dedicated to Barracks history with a barely noticeable Indian School exhibit including a figure of an Indian student in sports uniform.[3] While the Cumberland County Historical Society has a larger and more respectful exhibit of the Indian School including student artwork, photographs, and school uniforms, both are obscured by county and Barracks history.[4] Carlisle Indian School does not have a physical space solely dedicated to its history.

The Survey

The coalition faces unique challenges because there are no surviving former students. Carlisle created a diaspora of descendants scattered

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across the continent. Many are isolated and disconnected from their communities and from family histories at Carlisle. The online survey I designed to gather descendant input for planning a heritage center was completed by 124 Carlisle descendants from across the United States and Canada.[5] They are sons/daughters, grandchildren, nieces/nephews, and cousins. Several said they had multiple generations of family at Carlisle.

The Spectrum of Experience

Many factors contribute to Carlisle's varying narratives. Experiences were informed by governmental policies and institutional practices as they were initiated and subsequently changed over thirty-nine years of assimilation attempts. It will be both challenging and imperative in any interpretation to acknowledge the complexity of student experiences and not make student lives seem better or worse than they were.

Most descendants had some knowledge of Carlisle through family stories about daily life, including working and living conditions, music, and industrial training. Stories, whether gathered directly from their family member, or passed through multiple generations, or collected from government documents, fall on a *spectrum of experience* from "positive" to "negative" and everything in between. Indian boarding school stories are vast, complex, and multifaceted. The survey skims the surface of the complexities, yet it contributes to understanding Carlisle descendant interpretations. A look beyond the archives to include family accounts can enrich and add to existing narratives, formulating a broader and deeper understanding of Carlisle's history.

A Dark Chapter

Stories of forced separation from family and language and cultural loss are common themes for descendants. One descendant, whose father went to Carlisle, describes how the boarding school experience affected linguistic continuity: "My mother, a fluent Mohawk speaker, told me my father didn't want them to talk to me in Mohawk. He didn't want me to get beat up at school, like he was" (Respondent 46, Question 10). Others describe harsh punishments: "My great-auntie told me of being slapped for speaking the language. She spoke of the little jail where repeat offenders were imprisoned without food or water. I also heard how older students were chosen to punish younger ones" (Respondent 14, Question 9); "My grandmother wrote to Carlisle saying, 'stop beating

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my boy'" (Respondent 61, Question 8). Overall, respondents characterize Carlisle as a dark chapter in American Indian history. They describe it as horrific and inhumane: "Carlisle was similar to Jewish concentration camps like Dachau" (Respondent 121, Question 24). Archival evidence provides further glimpses into what these experiences might have been.

During a 1914 Senate investigation into Carlisle, which contributed to its closing in 1918, students, staff, and teachers described inadequate nutrition, unsanitary conditions, unfair expulsions, and unjust punishments. The guardhouse jail was a focus of the investigation, with student accounts of up to thirty days of confinement for petty offences. One boy was jailed for 30 days after stealing a pie. While imprisoned, students had no bed, were fed "two meat sandwiches" per day or bread and water. Some were forced to work in the boiler house shoveling coal (Carlisle Indian School Hearings, 1914). The guardhouse was described as an "airtight compartment with no light and inadequate ventilation and is in a most unsanitary condition. The conditions under which the Indian boys are confined are worse than our county prison" (Ripley & Brinton, 1910).

Resistance

Given the harsh conditions, some Carlisle student resisted promises of a "good education" by running away: "My grandmother didn't like Carlisle at all and ran away from there, making it all the way back to North Dakota" (Respondent 75, Question 7); "My aunt told us stories about our grandfather when he was at Carlisle and he ran away back home to Wisconsin by himself" (Respondent 121, Question 10). Archival documents shed light on runaways. John Miles (Osage) ran away three times between 1909 and 1911 (Descriptive and Historical Record of Student, 1910). A school newspaper clipping describes his life after Carlisle: "He is now a married man and enjoying life on his farm near Pawhuska, Oklahoma" (as cited in "Living on a Farm," 1911). The description demonstrates Carlisle's effectiveness in training students to embrace agriculture but denies reality. The Senate Hearings accused the administration of inflating enrollment numbers by counting runaways as enrollees after they were gone (Carlisle Indian School Senate Hearing, 1914).

Accounts of resistance are crucial in making sense of what Child calls the "wide-ranging continuum of Indian experiences" (2014, p. 275). Boarding school narratives include "students who found happiness or refuge in the schools, while clearly others were abused and suffered" (Child, 2014, p. 275). Child stresses that we must "search for historical

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context for the decision that students and parents made, to show how Indian people actively shaped the boarding school era" (Child, 2014, p. 275). The continuum of Indian experiences at Carlisle vacillated back and forth in a dynamic expression in response to an ever-changing world controlled in many ways by Indigenous people.

Fond Memories

The spectrum of student experiences swung in a positive direction for many: "My grandmother had good memories of Carlisle . . . she would sing the school song" (Respondent 75, Question 9); "I never heard many bad things from grandmother" (Respondent 120, Question 17). One descendant said, "It wasn't as bad as the stories that some people tell" (Respondent 19, Question 19). The last known living Carlisle student was Andrew Cuellar (Absentee Shawnee), who died in 2002 at 103 years old. His daughter Ory says, "It was all positive . . . they had fond memories. They loved the interaction with the other students. The people I met through him never had a negative thing to say" (Cress, 2014, para. 3). Although Ory acknowledges Carlisle has more than one narrative, she believes firsthand accounts by each individual student are the only valid descriptions: "I have problems with people in subsequent generations who just automatically speak only in negative terms of boarding schools . . . They project their feelings on somebody else's experiences rather than just reflect on what the actual student experienced" (Cress, 2014, para. 9). She admits, however, "I am doing the same thing. . . . I am reflecting a positive thing of what my father experienced because that is what he told me but I can't speak for everybody" (Cress, 2014, para. 10). Ory argues a valid point about projecting our own feelings, and perhaps neglecting individual expression of experiences, but what happens when those individuals with firsthand accounts are no longer with us?

Positive stories, of "happy students and satisfied parents—Indians who liked boarding school—can be mystifying, even troubling to Indian people today," says Child (2014, p. 275). This is difficult to accept for those Carlisle descendants who believe their family suffered at Carlisle.

Adaptation

As part of Carlisle's diverse narratives, some descendants explain Carlisle as "not all bad, not all good. They were trying to educate to help students survive a changing world" (Respondent 127, Question 17). They adapted to their situation: "Great-grandpa embraced the Carlisle opportunities.

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He was shrewd and took advantage of the education offered. He was told by his father . . . using education was his duty. Thus, there were positive aspects to his experience—even though his culture and language was systematically stripped" (Respondent 74, Question 16). The sentiments attest to boarding school's complexity and contradictions in student experiences: "Complex institutions result in complex responses" (Adams, 1995, p.60), whereby Indian people were often active agents attempting to adapt U.S. institutions like Carlisle to fit their own needs.

Several tribal leaders embraced U.S. education and supported Carlisle's assimilation program using the colonial tool of education to their own benefit. Appointed as Comanche chief, Quanah Parker, whose mother was White, sent his four children to Carlisle. Because of his high status among the Comanche, Pratt expected Parker to use his influence to help recruit students. Parker was permitted to have his children accompany him to Washington, DC, where he advocated for Indian land rights (Hagan, 1995; Landis, n.d.). He realized the old ways were gone: "No like Indian school for my people. Indian boy go to Indian school, stay like Indian. Go to white school, be like white man. Me want white school so my children get educated like whites, be like whites" (Hagan, 1995, p. 111).

Carlisle alum Delos K. Lone Wolf (Kiowa) also advocated for white education: "If the Indian is going to be a man he must leave his prison, the reservation, to compete with the world" (Lone Wolf, 1896, p. 2). He served as interpreter for his uncle Chief Lone Wolf, accompanying him to Washington, DC, to advocate for Indian land rights.[6] While Lone Wolf supported U.S. education, he was loyal to Indian people and causes, thus straying from Pratt's influence. He supported the Native American Church movement, defying Pratt, who opposed use of peyote. Lone Wolf's school records reflect the administration's disapproval: "He is not up with the times, he has ambition to be head of his tribe and lead them in the old tribal ways, which is a thing of the past in Oklahoma. . . . Aims to be an old time chief" (Record of graduate and returned students, 1910; Report After Leaving Carlisle, 1910).

Many Carlisle alums strategically used their education and fought for Indian rights, founding organizations like the Society for American Indians (SAI) and the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) (Lomawaima, 2015). Carlisle was meant to break up Native nations and disrupt traditional values. Because some Carlisle students envisioned opportunities to utilize their knowledge of English and governmental bureaucracy to benefit their people, they became a unifying force. Pan-Indianism was born. They recognized their world was ever-changing and

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while caught in the vacillating pendulum of a confusing and complex system, took hold of the reins as best as they could and steered in a direction suiting their own needs.

Silence

While archival material, firsthand accounts, and descendant narratives contribute a depth and breadth of knowledge into boarding school life, we cannot forget about the silent ones. Some descendants say their family never talked about Carlisle or had a difficult time: "She never ever talked about her time away at Carlisle" (Respondent 7, Question 90). Negative experiences might be implied in silencing and privileging some stories over others: "When asked about Carlisle, my grandpa would only say: 'That was a long time ago.' But he would readily share stories about serving in WWI and experiencing mustard gas" (Respondent 112, Question 9). Silence cannot be found in the archives, yet refusal is open to a wide range of interpretations about how students perceived Carlisle. We must remain vigilant in allowing those silent spaces to exist without attaching an inaccurate narrative to them.

Intergenerational Impacts

Survey responses refer to intergenerational trauma: "Carlisle set the stage for generations of historical trauma" (Respondent 110, Question 19); "They were injured by this experience as are the families who descend from them" (Respondent 105, Question 19); "The experience scarred adults and children who have yet to heal, generations later" (Respondent 59, Question 19). Some believe Carlisle is responsible for disconnection from their Indigenous roots, and many are searching for belonging and connection to their identity: "My Grandmother died when my Mom was five months old. Mom was raised by a German Aunt and Uncle, so had little knowledge of her heritage" (Respondent 15, Question 9).

Descendant stories are informed by a multitude of factors. When contemporary personal and societal struggles are explained via boarding schools alone, the depth and breadth of colonization is ignored and does not allow alternative stories to come forward. Child argues that reducing social problems to the boarding school era does not always consider the "complexities of a colonial past" (Child, 2014, p. 271).

Angela Cavender-Wilson (1996) states, "Our role as historians should be to examine as many perspectives of the past as possible—not to become validators or verifiers of stories, but instead to put forth as many

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perspectives as possible" (p. 13). Descendant perspectives are important and should not be dismissed even when interpretations of Indian boarding schools serve as a metaphor for the broader history of colonialism. Their narratives help them understand a complicated history. It is understandable boarding schools are blamed for negative intergenerational impacts. Boarding schools stand out foremost for Indigenous peoples because they targeted children and disrupted cultural continuity within families. Regardless of how boarding school history is perceived, their existence embodies cultural genocide aimed at Indigenous children.

Survivance

Descendants also express wishes to honor relatives while celebrating their survival and resilience. Some descendants understand assimilation was a failed experiment that made Carlisle students "more educated and savvy about the outside world and contributed to a worldliness that they used to their own advantage in remaining Native people" (Respondent 47, Question 19). Others point to survivance of their people: "Although our families were torn apart and damaged by boarding schools, we still exist, we are strong, and want to ensure our culture survives" (Respondent 89, Question 19); "The Indian inside us has not been killed and our traditional ways still thrive" (Respondent 121, Question 19); and "We are thriving because of this experience" (Respondent 49, Question 19). Child argues, Indian boarding narratives are incomplete without considering "agency, resistance, survival and the sometimes heroic actions of people both young and adult who had lost significant freedoms" (Child, 2014, p. 282).

Assumptions and Interpretations

Because the survey was developed for descendants and not survivors, it is not always clear if stories told there are assumptions, or if a family member conveyed them to the survey respondent. While many respondents report stories were passed down orally, many cannot remember the exact stories; or their family member passed away before they were born; or they were too young to have much recollection. Assumptions based on silences or interpretations by descendants may not reflect student reality: "Apparently, it was a fairly abusive experience" (Respondent 125, Question 11); "He told me . . . never let anybody touch you in private parts. Later I realized he must have been sexually abused" (Respondent 46, Question 9). Another assumed: "She was too upset/traumatized

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by her experience that she always had a hard time talking about it" (Respondent 59, Question 9).

Assumptions abound when descendants try piecing together a complex history. Most boarding school students did not write of their experiences. If they did not pass on stories, memories die as one generation replaces the next. Incomplete stories become new narratives, sometimes based on assumptions. But what do we say to descendants convinced that their parents and grandparents were abused and their lack of cultural and linguistic knowledge originates with boarding school? Do we tell them they are wrong because archives show otherwise? Other descendants may assume their family member had a good experience. Do we argue, trying to convince them their grandparents must have been abused? Or do we allow space for all descendant voices and stories to come forward without trying to legitimize or validate them? We can encourage them to look for Indian boarding schools in historical context, but it is up to descendants to decide if and how they want to integrate their family's boarding school narrative into their own lives. Indian boarding schools will remain a convenient explanation for colonialism for some, while others may grapple with contradictions but eventually recreate their family narrative based on new information.

Acknowledging that perhaps our families embraced and maybe enjoyed their experiences can seem as if we are condoning assimilation and abandoning Indigenous ways of life. Descendants can feel as if they are turning their backs and abandoning their family and the historical narrative held true for so long. The same may be true for descendants who refuse to go beyond their family narrative and possibly discover horrible truths about what their family experienced. Shaking up the foundation of what was always thought to be true can be unbearable.

Descendant Voices

Second- or third-hand stories can be impossible to verify. Some descendants report inconsistencies and contradictions between documents and family stories. A descendant describes her grandfather: "I found out through his records that he never played football. My grandfather always said that he played football with Jim Thorpe. Actually he played French Horn in the band" (Respondent 61, Question 10). Everyone wants to be connected to Jim Thorpe, including my grandfather. Whether fact or fable, these stories were passed down, becoming a part of descendants' own narratives and connections to Thorpe, illustrating how experiences at Carlisle are processed and remembered or contested. As

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memories are co-constructed, descendants give new meaning to narratives that are an important reflection of how descendants themselves have been impacted by Carlisle. What is important here is that descendants consider the stories to be true; "interpretation of the tale, not the tale itself" (Heimo & Peltonent, 2003, p. 45) is most meaningful.

Descendants do not hold stories in isolation and separate from Carlisle's broader history. Broad narratives impact individual stories and draw on "countless scraps and bits of knowledge and information from the surrounding culture . . . inserted into larger cultural narratives" (Hodgkin & Radstone, 2014, p. 5). Many general comments about Carlisle appear to replay a generalized boarding school narrative in which descendants believe children were kidnapped and forced to attend. Child asserts, "Differences will continue to exist between how scholars write about boarding school history and how American Indian people remember that experience, which is a tension between history and memory" (Child, 2014, p. 282). Tensions arise between oral narratives and scholarly work on Indian boarding schools as memories and stories pass down through generations.

Different types of information and various methods of transmission construct the world of stories. The types of stories descendants carry may be extracted and constructed from snippets of torn and yellowed documents, or from bits and pieces of information passed down from parents, or found in silent spaces left when elders refuse to talk about Carlisle. I was not sure anecdotes about my grandfather were accurate stories, or that anyone but me would be interested. But I realized, as Elizabeth Stone (2009) reminds us, "Almost any bit of lore about a family member, living or dead, qualifies as a family story—as long as it's significant, as long as it has worked its way into the family canon to be told and retold" (p. 5).

As descendants tell their stories a new narrative emerges. Stories are reconstructed, becoming living, breathing ways of connecting to loved ones. In her ethnography based in the Yukon territories, Julie Cruikshank (1998) explains that "personal narratives based on shared metaphors and responses to common problems in one generation may be reworked quite differently by the next generation" (p. 2). Descendant voices should not be ignored because they did not experience Carlisle firsthand. Their voices enrich our understanding of Carlisle's complex era. While student experiences can be pieced together from government records, archives, and photographs, those sources provide a one-sided colonial perspective. By adding descendant voices, new narratives form and familial histories come alive.

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As Carlisle students chose stories to share and pass on, descendants too—based on what they heard, read, or observed—choose stories or fragments to share. The telling keeps stories alive. The storytelling process itself becomes a step in reclaiming their histories. Reclaiming begins as descendants share their grief, pain, and pride regarding Carlisle's legacy and their need to connect with their cultural identities as Native people.

Choice

Children's lives were dramatically altered when they entered Carlisle; they were forced to adapt to coercive government policies aimed at assimilation within a sinister agenda of colonial control, subjugation, and land dispossession. How Indian children came to various boarding schools across the United States and under what circumstances is often generalized as forcible removal and resistance by their parents: "My grandfather was forcefully taken away" (Respondent 97, Question 7). Most descendants do not know how or why their family came to Carlisle but there were various means by which Indian children found themselves at Indian boarding schools.

Adams (1995) notes that boarding schools appealed to some Indians because they provided security, opportunities to explore the world, and exposure to music, drama, and sports. In some instances, parents were driven to send children in desperation after poverty, disease, and cultural disruptions created a vicious cycle of forced dependency (Burich, 2016). Drawing from autobiographical accounts, Michael Coleman (1993) concludes, half of the children were sent to boarding school by close kin or other tribal members but warns we cannot assume those children embraced schooling.

I do not know how my grandfather found himself at Carlisle. He was born in 1889 at a time when reservation life meant living under dire conditions. His parents likely thought boarding school would provide a better future. My grandfather started his education at the Lincoln Institute, a smaller Indian boarding school in Philadelphia, inspired by Carlisle's industrial model (White, 2016). In the 1892 Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, St. Regis Mohawk Chiefs said they were grateful to the Lincoln Institute for their "kind sympathy in educating our dear children" (Sixty-First Annual Report, 1892, p. 170). Students called it a "first class school," recruiting others in hopes of improving their situations: "our people are very poor and will never be able to do better unless they are educated" (Sixty-First, 1892, p. 170).

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There was no choice when the decision was between extreme poverty and sending children to a distant, strange place designed to eradicate Indigenous ways of life (White, 2016).

After the Indian wars ended, taking children ensured the chiefs behaved themselves; education was presented as a benefit (Adams, 1995). During the first wave of recruitment Pratt pleaded with Brule chief Spotted Tail: "Spotted Tail, Do you intend to let your children remain in the same condition of ignorance in which you have lived? Cannot you see that they will be of great value to you if after a few years they come back from school with the ability to read and write letters for you, interpret for you, and help look after your business affairs?" (Pratt, 2003, p. 223).

After some deliberation Spotted Tail relented. Chief American Horse (Rosebud Sioux) sent three children, including his daughter Maggie Stands Looking, who became a model student and a Pratt favorite (Pratt, 2003, p. 275). Believing in the White man's education, Luther Standing Bear recruited other young Lakota from Rosebud and Pine Ridge. Tragically, nine children from Rosebud would die at Carlisle within Carlisle's first seven years (Landis, 2016). In 1883 Spotted Tail's daughter Gertrude died of pneumonia while on Outing in Byberry, Pennsylvania, where she is buried. Rosebud Sioux chiefs White Thunder and Swift Bear also had children die at Carlisle; Ernest White Thunder and Maude Swift Bear died on the same day on December 13, 1880 (Landis, 2016). They were buried in the Carlisle Indian School cemetery despite repeated requests by the chiefs to send their bodies home.

Risky Stories

Carlisle stories live on through descendants who create their own narratives. The story "lives on and breathes with them" (Lowery, 2009, p. 517). Allowing Indigenous peoples to tell their own stories "approaches real truth telling about Indian history while allowing Indian people to decide who owns the keys to their past" (Lowery, 2009, p. 518). This is essential in Indigenizing boarding school history. As Carlisle students become subjects of study, their stories embody Indigenous experiences. Issues then arise in their telling and interpretation. Lynne Davis (2004) asserts, "Stories that belong to the collectivity and are passed on intergenerationally, rather than being the product of one individual experience" (p. 10), become "risky stories" as they enter the public realm, vulnerable to exploitation and misinterpretation, as they flutter out of the storyteller's control. Carlisle descendants want to share family stories, photos, and other materials, but are concerned about

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protecting information. We must question whose interests are being served through sharing stories, as they become contested terrain of research requiring accountability and ethical responsibility.

As we return to the question "Who gets to tell the stories?" we must consider multiple and sometimes disparate voices. Carlisle descendants are numerous. Descendants may have different stories or disagree about sharing family stories: "Who else would like to lay claim of being a direct descendant?" (Respondent 49, Question 16); "Stories are very personal. I'm concerned with the people alive it might impact" (Respondent 5, Question 16).

How is access to stories in the public realm controlled? While descendants cannot control public record access, in a decolonizing process of reclaiming space and re-narrating Carlisle history, descendants can be caretakers of their own stories, their own interpretations, their own memories, sharing them when, where, and how they choose. As Indigenous people of oral cultures, we have a responsibility for our stories, to remember them, and to share them with our families. We develop a relationship with our stories rather than a colonial view that objectifies memory into lifeless data.

Place as Memory

The Farmhouse symbolizes a physical archival space where descendants can reconnect with loved ones. Not all students stayed at the Farmhouse, but they all shared common experiences and were all connected, just as Indigenous peoples across Turtle Island are connected as original inhabitants who share common histories. Despite attempts to eradicate and assimilate Indigenous peoples, we endure and seek to thrive through respecting and honoring our relatives' lives and stories.

This *place* has become a part of our lives, made significant not by our relatives choosing. Yet, it holds their memories and stories. We, as descendants, continue to honor them by remembering the Farmhouse, holding our relatives close with a sense of dignity they were often denied.

As Julie Cruikshank asserts, place serves as "anchor of memory" and stories link history to place (1998, p. 17). Specific landmarks—the spring, creek, dormitories, bandstand, and the Farmhouse—hold stories. And they hold power to the past. What is remembered about a particular place leads to possibilities of what might have been, bringing past into present (Basso, 1996). I imagine the Farmhouse as a space for telling our own stories and creating our own meaning.

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Respecting the Narrative

Since the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Canada[7] publicized horrific abuses and atrocities committed against Indigenous children in residential schools, public awareness has increased, and tends to gravitate toward sensationalizing survivor stories. When I teach U.S. and Canadian boarding and residential school history, many students do not want to hear about anything other than abuse, leaving little room for alternative stories. At the same time, some audiences are tired of hearing about boarding school trauma, advocating for a focus on resiliency and agency instead. Because Indian residential school survivors are sometimes in my courses, I have to be cognizant of differing narratives and sensitive to varying reactions. It is a difficult balancing act, trying not to minimize horrific abuses, common across Canadian residential schools, as I urge students to consider alternative survivor stories emphasizing positive experiences. For context, I instruct students to look beyond residential schools to colonialism's lengthy history, of which residential schools were one part.

We may not understand why some people report positive experiences and others only negative. But they are not mutually exclusive; humans are capable of feeling a multitude of emotions at once. Certainly the era of Indian boarding schools was a confusing time, eliciting an array of emotions spanning lifetimes. Sometimes recollections are shared decades later; only good times are emphasized, which may be a testament to resilience and survival strategies. Others may only share stories of brutality, or maybe they were perpetrators themselves toward fellow classmates, carrying decades of guilt and shame. Perhaps they were victims of abuse, but as with many survivors of childhood trauma, they can still love and protect the only caregivers they ever knew.

Basil Johnston (1988) wrote about his bittersweet experiences at a Spanish Indian residential school, using humor to describe some cheerful moments amid recollections of harsh punishments, hunger, and homesickness, while avoiding a narrative of victimization. Many years later, he finally wrote about the shame he carried because of sexual abuse he experienced at the hands of priests and teachers. For years he thought he was alone, but then realized that "all were damaged in some way" (McKegney, 2007, p. x). Johnston kept his secret from his wife for decades because he did not want her to know she had married "damaged goods" (McKegney, 2007, p. ix). He coped by continuing to embody the resiliency of so many Indigenous children: "I don't dwell on the hurts; it's a waste of time" (McKegney, 2007, p. xv).

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As some historical records and recollections of former Indian boarding school students attest, their experience was genuinely positive. We need to listen to and respect the entire spectrum of experiences while knowing our families refused, resisted, negotiated, and incorporated Western education into their lives, often on their own terms. We need to allow space for all boarding school interpretations by survivors and descendants who feel what they describe as historical trauma and a need for healing. The healing process is helped by filling in gaps, gathering information, and claiming our own narratives while recognizing our continued survival as Indigenous peoples. After all, "good or bad, Carlisle continues to hold a prominent place in our collective Native consciousness" (Respondent 47, Question 24).

Putting the Pieces Together

Descendants want to know about Carlisle's history because it is a missing piece of family history. Some have so little information they are desperate for anything to be able to put the pieces together. A heritage center dedicated to Carlisle and its former students must prioritize descendant voices, thereby giving them agency to form their own narratives from their various perspectives. We ultimately envision a safe space where visitors can walk the school grounds; perhaps view collections including photographs, student artwork, and writing; view objects made by students; and come to understand boarding school history, exploring student experiences in a space while respecting the grounds' sacredness, including the cemetery where 186 Indian children are buried (Fear-Segal, 2016; Landis, 2016).

The cemetery represents Indian boarding school's most tragic outcome. After numerous requests, Native Nations are reclaiming their children buried at Carlisle. The Northern Arapaho attempted to reclaim three children in August 2017: Horse, Little Chief (both teenagers), and the youngest, Little Plume, who was nine when he died (Gammage, 2017a). As Indian children's graves are disturbed we are reminded of colonial control over our lives and bodies. In a gut-wrenching turn of events, Little Plume's gravesite held two sets of remains. Neither belongs to Little Plume. No one knows where his body lies, who the remains belong to, or if remaining graves hold the same horrible mysteries. Horse and Little Chief returned home for burial at Wind River while other nations may follow suit in reclaiming their children (Gammage, 2017b).

Carlisle closed one hundred years ago, yet the past has come to the present. Little Plume was renamed Hayes Vanderbilt Friday when he

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arrived at Carlisle. His descendant Millie Friday laments: "Nobody talks about what happened to us or our children. We all have broken hearts" (Gammage, 2017b).

There is no place for visitors to go after touring the school grounds and visiting the cemetery. The Farmhouse heritage center can help facilitate grieving, reflecting, and celebrating Indigenous people's resiliency. The Farmhouse could be a place where Carlisle's narratives can be discovered, remembered, processed, and shared. If Indian boarding schools are a metaphor for colonialism, then healing from the impacts of boarding schools contributes to healing from the much broader effects of colonialism.

In N. Scott Momaday's fictional screenplay about Carlisle, he imagines the lasting influence Carlisle had on Luther Standing Bear. As a grown man, Standing Bear's character reflects: "We were all shaped by that experience. Some of us were destroyed and some were made stronger" (Momaday, 2016, p, 52).

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NOTES

1. To protect confidentiality survey results are coded by respondent number and question number.
2. The petition can be found at https://www.change.org/p/u-s-army-war-college-public-affairs-officer-stop-the-demolition-of-the-historic-ciis-farmhouse
3. See Hessian Powder Magazine, https://www.visitcumberlandvalley.com/listing/hessian-powder-magazine/1087/
4. See Cumberland County Historical Society, https://www.historicalsociety.com/explore/permanent-exhibits/
5. The survey was posted on www.surveymonkey.com from March to September 2015.
6. See Supreme Court case Lonewolf v. Hitchock, 1903, https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/187/553/case.html
7. See Truth and Reconciliation Commission, http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/index.php?p=905

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