1951

Brief history of Indian education on the Tongue River Reservation

David Hopkins

The University of Montana

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.
Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.umt.edu/etd

Recommended Citation
Hopkins, David, "Brief history of Indian education on the Tongue River Reservation" (1951). Graduate Student Theses, Dissertations, & Professional Papers. 1708.
https://scholarworks.umt.edu/etd/1708

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Student Theses, Dissertations, & Professional Papers by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact scholarworks@mso.umt.edu.
A BRIEF HISTORY OF INDIAN EDUCATION
ON THE TONGUE RIVER RESERVATION

by

Dave Alwin Hopkins
B.A., University of Kentucky, 1923

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education

Montana State University
1951

Approved:

[Signatures]

Chairman of Board of Examiners

Dean of Graduate School
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author wishes to take this opportunity to express his grateful appreciation to Dr. W. R. Ames, Professor of Education, Montana State University, for his thoughtful guidance while developing this paper.

The writer also wishes to thank Mrs. Rodolphe Petter of Lame Deer, and Sister Lâmana of St. Labre's Mission, both missionaries to the Cheyenne Indians, for much valuable information, and Superintendent Pearson of the Indian Agency of Lame Deer, Superintendent Schneck of the government school at Busby, Father Marion, pastor of the Lame Deer Catholic Chapel, Rev. David Habegar, pastor of the Mennonite churches on the reservation, and the numerous men and women of Rosebud County who so willingly granted interviews.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Tongue River Indian Reservation lies in the southern part of Rosebud County, Montana, and over-laps into adjoining Big Horn County. This home for the Northern Cheyenne Indians was given to them in 1884 by the United States Government. The purpose of this paper is to present a brief of education among these Indians.

The government had formerly transplanted them from the Platte River territory to Oklahoma, but longings for their cool valleys and verdant hills, forced them to make a break from the parched Oklahoma plains. The rapidly diminishing band capitulated and were given this land, presumably along the Rosebud River. The weary tribesmen, however, established themselves along the Tongue River where later treaty rights assured them permanency.

The Reservation today has over 460,000 acres of plains, valleys and hills, and about 1,850 Indians and nearly half as many white people dwell there.

To reach this Reservation, three good highways enter from the north, and one from the south. The northern roads connect with Lame Deer, the largest town within the Reserva-

tion, one coming down from Colestrip, another from Rosebud, and a third from U.S. Highway 10, comes through Ashland into Lame Deer. From Lame Deer good roads reach to Busby and Birney, while a highway from Sheridan stretches north to Birney, giving easy communication possibilities throughout the extent of the Reservation.

Could one see this entire strip at a glance, he would behold a view somewhat kindred to the Black Hills, gentle curving streams with widening valleys where the cottonwood grows in abundance, and bordered by hills crested with evergreens. The hills are not as lofty as the Black Hills, nor has there yet entered a find of gold or other substance that would make the White Man press in to squeeze out the Redman as was the case in the Black Hills gold strike.  

Ideally constructed by nature for grazing, this terrain supports numerous herds of white-faced cattle. Food, water, and shelter for stock have added to the development of this enterprise on the Reservation. Many believe that other potentialities lie dormant there, but they must await the future when energy and enterprise become characteristics of the inhabitants. Climatic conditions, too, add zest to the brave band of natives. The cool breezes of summer are

---


3Mr. Schneck, Supt., Government School at Busby.
MAP OF THE TONGUE RIVER INDIAN RESERVATION
IN ROSEBUD COUNTY IN SOUTHEASTERN MONTANA

1. Lamedeer
2. Busby
3. St. Labre's
4. Colstrip
5. Forsyth
6. Highway No. 6
7. Rosebud
8. Highway
9. Birney
10. 10 & 12 Highway (No. 10 & 12)
11. Custer Nat'l Forest
12. (with 10)
13. Highway to Miles City
14. Tongue River
15. Highway to Sheridan, Wyoming
16. Tongue River Reservoir
17. Sheridan
18. Ingomar
19. Sumatra
20. Tongue River Reservation in Big Horn County
21. State Line (with Wyoming)
22. Miles City
23. Tongue River Reservation (in green)

Scale 1/2 in. per mile
all that any group could wish, while the hill-sheltered valleys beat off the blasts of winter's fury.

How this band of Cheyennes came to be on this Reservation has required volumes of history to express, but it must be only briefly mentioned here. The Cheyennes, most commonly known as the "Fighting Cheyennes," have had a long and sorrowful story. At one time an agricultural people, they were pushed about from home to home until nomadic life was all that was left to them. With the disappearance of the buffalo, nothing was left to sustain life. With friendly neighboring tribes, a last resistance was made, and Custer's defeat tells that story. The section around Lame Deer was government land, already leased in part for cattle and sheep grazing, and to this area the Cheyennes came. Robbed of everything that they had formerly possessed, they settled down as wards of the all-powerful White Father. As government wards, tribal rights and privileges, with restrictions, were assured these people, who have made varying steps in progress to attain the white man's standards while still clinging to a vanquished past. All that is left for them now is to endure and adjust. In these steps, the Reservation is holding open the doors of opportunity.

---

CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Cheyennes are one of the western-most tribes of the Algonquin family which at one time lived far to the east of their present range, where they dwelt in fixed villages and cultivated the soil. They became separated from their kindred to the east and moved into the plains beyond Missouri where they soon were known as a typical tribe of plains buffalo hunters.

This tribe divided in the early 1800's, part of them going South, settling in Oklahoma, while the other part moved into Montana. This separation gave rise to the names now used, Northern Cheyennes and Southern Cheyennes. The word Cheyenne as tabulated in the Handbook of American Indians had eighty-five names, most of them given by the Sioux, and crystallized into the French spelling as "Cheyenne."

The Cheyennes are first mentioned in history in 1680 under the name of Chaa, when a party of them visited Fort

---

2Published by the Bureau of American Ethnology.
Crevecoeur to establish fur trading relations. \(^3\) Williamson, veteran Sioux Missionary, \(^4\) says that according to reliable Sioux tradition, the Cheyennes preceded the Sioux in the occupancy of the upper Mississippi region. Pressure from the Cree and Sioux forced the Cheyennes from this region and, as stated previously, the tribe divided, some going to Oklahoma, where they now resided and the others coming into Montana. Lewis and Clark mention friendly relations with the Cheyennes on the upper Missouri in 1804 and 1806.

The American Anthropological Society \(^5\) states that the Cheyennes had once lived in Illinois, but were pushed westward by Sioux, until they took refuge in the Black Hills of western South Dakota. This same authority states that the Cheyennes made friendship and alliances with their closest neighbors. No doubt, the Cheyennes, having been buffeted about throughout the northern part of the Mississippi Valley, were eager to become established. This home was taken from them when gold was found in the Black Hills and the present reservation has been their abiding place since the Black Hills eviction. (It is not the purpose of this paper to

\(^3\) La Salle, letter, 1680, in Margry Desouvertes, 11, 54, 1877. La Salle's Fort Crevecoeur was a short distance below Peoria, Illinois.


trace the wanderings of the tribe.)

Lewis and Clark met parties of the Cheyennes, describing them as superior to the Missouri River tribes in manners and appearance and in the dressing and ornamentation of skins and robes.

The earliest treaty made with the government by the Cheyennes was in 1825, under the supervision of General Atkinson, who states that the tribe numbered about 3,000 souls.

From this date until the middle 1870's, the Cheyennes were constantly leagued with the Plains Indians in frequent uprisings against the constantly increasing whites. The too rapid disappearance of the buffalo was the general grievance of the Indians. The last great Indian offensive in which the Cheyennes took part, was the uprising in which General Custer, with his entire force, was killed.

The Cheyenne Indians surrendered after the Little Big Horn battle and were sent to the Tongue River Reservation. Some prominent Indian chiefs of the 1870 period were Dull Knife, Little Wolf, and Hog, who kept up the struggle against the government's insistence that they return to

---

Oklahoma. The government at last realized how unprofitable it would be to attempt further to force the Cheyennes back to the south, and made treaty agreements in 1884, giving the Tongue River Reservation to the Cheyennes. In 1890, citizenship and private ownership of land was bestowed upon the Cheyennes and about 1900, schools and other facilities for modern civilization were begun.

The close of 1889 saw the Messiah doctrine of the ghost dance religion take strong hold on the Cheyennes as well as most of the plains tribes, the excitement continuing with waning power for several years. The Indians believed that a general resurrection of their dead would occur and overthrow the whites. This dance was supposed to awaken the dead.

The Cheyennes, like other Indians, had a central government. This usually consisted of a council of forty men, who were elected for a term of ten years. Four of this number, usually the wisest four, were always hold-overs, in order that the new council would not be ignorant of any

---

9Annual Reports of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs from 1881 to 1886.
pressing matters. The men chosen for these high positions were men of dignity and self-restraint, mild-tempered and generous. The tribal aspirations were, of course, that each son could qualify for these honors. These rulers are chosen much the same way today as they have been for so many years gone by, only there is no longer need for so large a number of them.\textsuperscript{13}

Unsupported Indian legend claims that this tribal council was adopted from the Assinaboine Indians, a captive woman introducing the custom. The tribesmen always respected the rulings of the chiefs and council men.

"Chained to the past" may be too strong a statement to apply to the present Cheyennes, yet in the daily living of these people, the customs and mannerisms of the long ago prevail. For a people without a literature, folklore is the chief carrier of what has preceded. Among the Cheyennes, one such authority,\textsuperscript{14} "Standing-All-Night," was highly credited by the Whites. Standing-All-Night died in 1869. He was supposed to have been over one hundred years old, and he had handed down the stories of life and living from the elders before him. The tales related by this aged man pertain to dressing of hides, curing of foods, and fashions in

\textsuperscript{13}Mrs. C. K. McGraw, Teacher in the Lame Deer School.

\textsuperscript{14}Grinnell, \textit{op. cit.}, Vol. I, p. 47.
dress; these same regulations are followed today by those Indians who are not making the effort to follow the white man's way of living. Standing-All-Night could not tell when the braiding of hair came in, or the wearing of the scalp-lock. These styles had been handed down through many generations. Carver tells that men and women, alike, wore rings in their noses and ears, and that hairdressing, though varying slightly in different villages, had the same pattern through the years. Even today, changes come only through the stress of civilization. Rewards and praises for acceptance of modern ways are "musts" in Indian teaching.

The sacredness of his lodge is one of the best traditions of the Indian. It would be futile for any white man to attempt the understanding and learning of all the Redman's customs. The Indian children, early in life, know the lodge etiquette, and the white man's ignorance and rudeness is held up to scorn. For example, smoking in the lodge was sacred and was always accompanied by prayer and meditation. Story telling, also, was a favorite lodge custom. Often, says Grinnell, many friends would gather at the lodge where an elderly story-teller would relate happenings of the past. A favorite custom among the Cheyennes, as well as all other

---

15 Carver's Travels, p. 230.

plains tribes, was the sacrifice. Frequently, this took the form of a "four day hunger," during which the participant tasted neither food nor drink. This practice is common today.18

Among almost all the Indian tribes, descent was matrilineal. The man, upon marrying, went to the lodge of his wife. If, for any reason, he became divorced, the children remained with the mother. "This custom," says Grinnell,19 "no longer prevails." With the invasion of civilization, these practices were neglected, forgotten and lost.

On courtship and marriage, the strangest element of the old traditions is that the brother, or a cousin, of the girl, is the one who decides whom the girl shall marry. Should the brother not be willing for his sister to wed any young man who proposes, the matter is simply dropped. However, the nearness to whites, and their customs now, is breaking down this brother influence. Perhaps, too, school and church training add much in aiding this disintegration of old tribal practices. Exchanging of gifts, though, still prevails. Among the Cheyennes the women have great influence,

---

17Ibid., p. 80.
18Mrs. C. K. McGraw, teacher in the Lame Deer School.
20Mrs. Hodolphe Petter, Missionary to the Cheyennes since 1916.
discussing matters freely with their husbands, arguing over points, persuading and cajoling until they have their own way.  

Formerly, while the main work of the men was war and hunting, the women also had organizations. The principal one of these was decorative art, carried out by working designs on skins and by using highly colored porcupine quills. There was even a division into classes among the quill workers, and an expert worker held a position of high esteem among her peers. Bead work in many forms, also, was made. The designs were always symbolic and talismanic, representing concrete organic objects, while the colors were more emblematic of the abstract in creatures and creation; e.g., white for active life; light blue for quietness, peace, and serenity; red for warmth, food, blood, home; amber for ripeness, perfection, beauty. The meaning of the colors reveal some quality as they are combined, or, as they are lighter or darker in shade, as blue for quietness and amber for beauty.

The occupations of the Indian centered around the making of war materials for the men and household pieces for the women. This division seems to have been a common practice

---


22Petter, English-Cheyenne Dictionary, p. 47.
throughout the plains. The men, who had great need for bows and arrows, were generally behind in production, while shields were just as essential. Living in a country where wood was scarce, the art of making bows from bone was developed to a high degree.  

Arrow heads were usually made by some individual who sold them to the rest of the tribe. Shields, made from tough bull hide, had the reputation of turning pistol balls. The shields were often decorated highly. Moccasins, leggings, musical instruments, pipes, saddles, and such like, kept the men employed.

The women had the work of housekeeping to do. To them fell the duty of making pottery, bed couches, ladles, root-diggers, and all manner of clothing. The constant work of tanning hides kept the women busy. Truly, the Indian did not have time to be lazy. Most of these activities declined when the trader came in, for then the press of time was relieved.

All of the stories handed down in the Cheyenne tribe tell of an agricultural past. "The testimony that they farmed up to 1865 is too general to be ignored." But wars,

---

24 Ibid., p. 190.
droughts, and other unfavorable conditions for farming caused agriculture to be abandoned. Hunting then became the main means of subsistence for the Cheyennes. They followed the buffalo, migrating with them, but roots, herbs, berries and leaves also added to their diet. The Cheyennes had no restrictions on any animal as food, and skunk to them was a delicacy. They ate many reptiles also. To the Indians, hunting was labor. How sad the day was that saw no game taken. Armed with stones and bow and arrows, the Indian went out against the toughest of the big game and won. Grinnell relates an incident that a warrior drove an arrow through two buffaloes, killing both with one shot. (Arrow shots of four hundred yards were common.) Deer, elk and antelope were often caught in pitfalls. Tales of this past are common fireside stories today on the Rosebud Reservation.

In games and sports, the Indian had as rich a variety as the white man. His games were legion, many of them being used today in the best white schools. The Indian was an inveterate gambler, and bets of all his possessions would be freely placed, taking his winnings with rapture, but also taking his losses cheerfully. Even the women would bet

26 Mrs. Rodolphe Petter, Missionary to the Cheyennes since 1916.

27 Handbook for Boy Scouts, see Indian Games.
their beads and other ornaments on the slightest contests. Thus time sped by for them. Mrs. McGraw\(^{28}\) states that for each game of the white children that can be presented, the Indian children can present two of their traditional ones, and each will have more interest than the white children's games.

Failure to mention the Cheyennes' conflict with the government, would be an injustice, for his grievances have been heavy. As a tribe, the Cheyennes were friendly to the whites. The early French traders previously mentioned,\(^{29}\) left records of their peacefulness.

Wars with Indian tribes had decimated the numbers of fighting men long before the whites appeared. In April, 1856, some Cheyennes were summoned by the commanding officer at Upper Platte Bridge (now Casper, Wyoming) to surrender four horses claimed by emigrants. Three horses were given up promptly, but resistance was made about the fourth one, resulting in the killing of one of the Indians. The entire Indian camp then fled to the Black Hills. Troops were sent against them, defeating the Redmen in many engagements. The Indians begged for peace and a permanent dwelling land, both of which were given them. Then came the gold rush to Denver.

---

\(^{28}\)Mrs. C. K. McGraw, teacher in the Lame Deer School.

\(^{29}\)Cheyennes visit Fort Crevecoeur in 1680.
The Indian saw the wild game swept from the plains. Colonel William Bent gave urgent warning that the Indians must be provided for, as their means of life had been taken from them. Depredations were occurring along a widely scattered front, but the Indian agents themselves called the acts results of hunger and starvation, and that peace would come if relief were brought to the Indians. In the meanwhile, the Civil War had drained the forts of manpower. Colonel J. M. Chivington was placed in command of a volunteer force which surrounded, attacked and massacred a large force of Northern Cheyennes who had been promised safety as they were withdrawing from that country to the North. The proud Redman held in memory the white man's promises, making future dealing difficult. Indian Agent Leavenworth, Colonel Bent, Kit Carson and Major Wynkoop kept up contact with the Indian chiefs urging them to accept reservation lands and government protection. Then followed Colonel Chivington's Massacre of Cheyennes near Fort Lyon, Colorado, which only blood could erase. The opportunity soon came when allied with Sioux and other tribesmen, General Custer felt their thirst for vengeance. Custer's defeat brought a large band of soldiers

---


31"One hundred fifty men, women and children were there massacred under circumstances of atrocity never exceeded by the worst savages in America." Amer. Anthro. Society, pp. 385-86.
against the Indians. General Crook, General Terry, Colonel Gibbon and others, who were leaders, wanted peace instead of victories. The Indians, after a few losing encounters, accepted the government's offers. The Northern Cheyennes were placed on the Tongue River Reservation in 1884, and cattle-men and lawless whites were ordered to withdraw. In true Indian tradition, the Cheyennes still deny that they were defeated--they won their reservation and they place the achievements of their past in the forefront as they rear their children. The reticence of the Indian is laid under deep layers of broken trusts, which the white man caused. And, too, childhood memories are long lasting. Some day, when peace has won over strife, the bitter may grow too thin to be kept alive, but the Cheyennes are still too closely connected with their past. Their children's children, in all probability, will hear the ancient traditions.
Religious training among the Cheyennes has had peculiar turnings. They have held on tenaciously to their tribal traditions. The Indian, reverencing the story teller, has learned at an early age the folklore of his tribe. In a far greater degree than in any other form of teaching, stress is put upon the spirit world, which is the religious world of the Indian. Many may regard the Indian legends as simply superstitions, but there are very few people without some superstitions. The Indian found solace for his wants and lacks in the dream-woven versions of after life handed down to him through many generations. Usually, the Medicine Men of the tribe were the chief ones in their religious propagation. They were the wisest and best, mentally, of the whole population and spared no pains or efforts to see that the tribal beliefs should not be neglected. Although many churches, (Catholic, Mennonite and Baptist) have established missions on the Rosebud Reservation, the ancient beliefs get first hearings because they are taught at home. A glance at some of these beliefs will establish the reasons for the hold these customs have upon the people.

These beliefs are not those of primitive minds, for the Indian was never outwitted by the superior thinking of
the white man. For mother-wit and cunning, the Redman always held his own. Why, then, did he hold to his tribal beliefs? The average white man today has religious, political, economic, and social beliefs, much after the same pattern as the Indian. And for complexity, the Indian has little choice; the average white man has at least a dozen churches seeking his membership. The Indian, too, just as the average white man has his individual differences and interpretations, so that from a small group, one might find quite a diversity of opinion.

The Cheyennes hold to the belief that there is a God above the earth and also one living underground,\(^1\) possessing like powers. They also believe that four powerful spirits dwell at the four points of the compass and to these six spirits, the ordinary people pray, asking for what they want.

He-amma-wikio, the Wise One Above, was the chief God, and to him the first pipe was smoked. (The derivation of the name comes from he-amma; adverb, above, and wikio; noun, chief.)\(^2\) After He-amma-wikio, the earth God comes next, for in him is power for growth or blight, for good or ill, for fair or foul. Such reverence for the earth is general among

---


the western Indians. ³ Many Indians believe the sun, moon, and He-amma-wikio to be the same person.⁴ Sacrifices to the four directions are offered that the owner of the lodge may have long life, and that his lodge may be firm on the ground and not blow down. Sehan⁵ is the place of the dead where all go except those who have killed themselves. Brave and cowardly, good and bad alike go there. After death there is neither reward for virtue nor punishment for sin. Sehan is reached by following the Hanging Road, the Milky Way.⁶ There life goes on much as it does here, only unhappiness is ruled out.

A man's spirit or living principle is called his shade or shadow.⁷ Those who die become shadows or spirits. The Indian holds it very bad luck to see his shadow. For this reason, he does not want a mirror.

The cardinal points hold prominent place in the Indian's religion. These are:

Where the cold wind comes from—the North
Where the cold wind goes--------the South
Where the sun comes up--------the East

⁴Grinnell, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 89.
⁵Sehan; dead, Petter, The Cheyenne Dictionary, p. 344.
⁷Ibid., p. 93.
Where the sun goes over the West.

In connection with these points, the contest between sun and clouds, (or heat and cold) is presented. Each one of these has its own power. Of special significance for joy or sorrow is the thunderbird. An almost universal belief in spirits or powers exists. These are thought to dwell in springs, rivers, hills and certain high bluffs. Sacrifices are offered and prayers made at such places—for example, at the Painted Rocks, on the west side of the Rosebud, six or seven miles below Lame Deer, where pictures have been painted. Honoring these spirits may keep them propitiated and unlikely to work harm to individuals. The Cheyennes believe, also, in underwater spirits and underwater monsters.

Ghosts are greatly feared by the Cheyennes. They do but little harm, but are very frightening. They are believed to be from the dead and are harbingers of bad luck and misfortune. Only the singing of medicine songs could frighten away ghosts.

Many animals were held sacred, among them the buffalo, which furnished the Indian with food and clothing, the beaver, the deer and elk, the skunk, the badger, and the bear—each

3 Ibid., p. 95.
9 This place was visited by the writer.
one of these was held in esteem for a peculiar reason. The deer and elk were held in this same esteem.

Eagles, ravens, hawks, owls and magpies possessed power in matters of war, and their feathers were highly prized for decorative purposes for war bonnets. Prairie owls, wood-peckers, meadow larks and sand-hill cranes were believed to have protective power, and wearing head dressings of feathers of these birds was highly desirable.

The good or evil spirits were placated to a great extent by the wearing of amulets and charms. Naturally a warrior going into battle felt the need of these and often was highly decorated. Dream charms, armlets, protective charms, and necklets were worn in abundance by the women and children. The Indians, today, on the Rosebud Reservation hold strict accord with these spirit charms.¹¹

The only doctorings the Indian knew were the sacred rituals of the medicine men. No one knew when disease came into the world or its causes, but the Indian was sure that spirits which inhabit places took out resentment on those who violated their dwelling places.¹² Healing, to the Indian, was a mingling of natural and supernatural remedies. The medicine could go only so far, then the supernatural had to

¹¹Petter, op. cit.
¹²Grinnell, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 120.
enter. The medicine men would sing, dance, smoke, exhort, and wail, if need be, to awaken the spirits. The belief was common that sickness was caused by the presence of an evil spirit that had to be placated. Healing came to the sick only through satisfying the offending spirit, or overcoming it. Either one was a case of religious sacrifices.

The Medicine Men, or doctors, claimed connection with the spirit world, and boldly asserted that spirits gave them the cues for the "herb medicine" which they concocted. Even present day medical authority recognizes benefits in digitalis, gin-seng and yellowroot, and it is no marvel that centuries on the plains have revealed something of healing to the Indians. The doctor never lost sight of the spiritual side of his healing, no matter what medicines he administered. His patients relied more on the religious than on the physical healing. The doctors were very jealous of their profession and it was with difficulty that a new aspirant could get a medicine man to teach him this art.

The Cheyennes have four outstanding religious ceremonies. These are the Medicine Arrows, the Buffalo Hat, the Medicine Lodge and the Massaum.

---

14 Ibid., p. 128.
15 Ibid., pp. 192-93.
The four Sacred Arrows are the property of the Cheyennes proper, having been delivered to them at the beginning of their existence as a people by their own great culture hero, "Standing Medicine." The reverences for the four arrows is much deeper than that for the Sun Dance. The ceremonies for the Sacred Arrows, so far as possible, are guarded from the whites. The last public Sacred Arrow dance was performed in 1904. Unwrapping the sacred Buffalo Hat always accompanied the display of the arrows. No white man, presumably, knows much of the mysteries veiled in these two most revered emblems.

The Medicine Lodge Dance, which also contains the Sun Dance, is one in which the individual tortures himself in payment for some vow or pledge. The man would have the skin pinched up on the right side, and the left side of his breast, a knife run through this skin, and then a wooden skewer passed through each incision, which same skewers were fastened to the end of a rope fastened to the center pole of the Medicine Lodge. The man then would dance at the length of this rope, trying repeatedly to break free by breaking this skin. The suffering, endured in this ordeal, may

\[\text{\footnotesize 16 American Anthropological Association, pp. 417-18.}\]
\[\text{\footnotesize 17 Ibid., p. 418.}\]
\[\text{\footnotesize 18 Grinnell, \textit{op. cit.}, Vol. II, p. 211.}\]
obscure the benefit supposed to be derived from it, yet it is not in discord with Old Testament teachings. Even today the most enlightened may vow penances in times of physical or mental stress, which are in close analogy with the Medicine Lodge. The writer has seen the remains of the Lodge at Busby where the Cheyennes held a Medicine Lodge last year, (summer of 1950). Grinnell states that he was a guest at a Medicine Lodge August 13, 1911. 19 His impressions were that the Indians had taken their vows seriously and suffering and prayers were the surest release the Indian could think of.

The ritual, meaningless to the whites, consisted of unending pointing of arrows, which doubtless pertained to man's own spirit. Feasting and smoking also were part of the ceremony. Originally the Medicine Lodge ceremony lasted eight days but it is much more brief at the present time, lasting two days and two nights. Since this celebration entailed the most suffering, it was held the epitome of the Cheyenne faith.

After the Medicine Lodge ritual, the Crazy Dance came next in seriousness with the Cheyennes. The dancers are said, on apparently reliable testimony, 20 to have had knowledge of a secret plant, from chewing a portion of which at their public dances, they became endowed with superhuman

19Ibid., p. 220.
20Ibid., p. 415.
strength, throwing heavy weights, jumping immense distances, and doing many things impossible and unthinkable in a normal condition.

The foregoing ceremonies, and many others, are still the leading role in the Cheyenne Indian life, although government restrictions on body lacerations has made the Indian secretive with his cherished rituals and no longer may the white man look on. Today the Indians follow the ancient faith of their fathers, but you cannot get interpretations from them on their beliefs. Their spirit world is very close to them and their love for ritual easily allows them to worship in the Denominational Churches without conflict with their deep-rooted, heartfelt tribal customs.

The Cheyenne Reservation boasts four good schools--Lame Deer, Busby, Birney and Ashland. These schools hold out the hopes of modern civil life to the children and through the steps of learning, bring to this populace the gospel of the white men. If we grant the constitutional right of religious belief to the Indian, we should not hold him too wrong in what many whites call paganism. It is, indeed, a long stretch from the "Satan Deluder Law" in New England to the Indian home along the Tongue River.

The law says that the children on the Reservation must attend school, but legislation cannot put meaning into a meaningless sentence. The Indian boy or girl goes home to
a language that is different from the one used in the classroom. He has limited opportunity to hear correct forms in natural speech intercourse. The day school will build for citizenship on the best moral principles, but always with the white man's attitude. The Indian, feeling that his welfare is intended, absorbs all of the training that he can, but it is an uphill pull. The school subjects which best interpret to him a way of life are music and art. In these he excels, but in learning thought interpretations, he is still at sea. The English words must grow into his vocabulary.

The schools enrich their curriculum with pageants and dramatized events which help greatly, but these, however good, lack the fervor of the tribal rituals. Growth has been rapid, though, when you compare in years the studies of the Red and White races and the workers in the Reservation schools have more to encourage than to discourage them. Through the children of today, the men of tomorrow will be trained, and the Indian's understanding of the white man's religion will be developed. As in every other country of the world where unchristian beliefs are practiced, Christ-loving men and women have begun the work of presenting the teaching of Jesus to the Cheyennes. The labor of the very great Rodolph Petter, making a Cheyenne dictionary, cannot be overestimated. This man, a missionary of the Mennonite
Church, began work with the Cheyennes in 1891 and perhaps knew their customs and language better than any other white man of our time. He celebrated his jubilee year of service in 1941. With the aid of his own children, he set up a press and edited his dictionary, a work highly praised by the American Anthropological Society. Dr. Petter's still greater works will be discussed in another chapter.

Christian churches have had representatives in the Reservation for many years, the ones making the most headway being the Catholic and the Mennonite Denominations. There are churches of these faiths in each of the four prominent towns, but their work, too, will follow in another chapter.

Thus we find the Indian's religious training growing along with his educational development. The old and the new are blending, and the ancient culture is amalgamating with the ways of the newcomers, and peace with tranquility is reigning over the abodes of both Red and White men.
CHAPTER IV

GOVERNMENT PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The United States Government made a treaty settlement with the Cheyenne Indians, giving them about 460,000 acres of land for a permanent home. This land lies along the Tongue and Rosebud Rivers and covers the southern part of Rosebud county.

The land, not particularly suitable for agriculture although many small parts are tillable, was chosen by the Indians for its similarity to their most recent home in the Black Hills. (They had surrendered to the Government in 1884, and had been taken to Oklahoma, where the parching summer suns compelled them to think with yearning of the cool valleys they had given up. Their break for freedom and its attendant circumstances have been related previously.) The Government, realizing that it would be better to locate the Indians on land where they would be contented, than to use force in keeping them where they would not stay willingly, made this Rosebud settlement. The Reservation appeared fully ample for the number of inhabitants that would dwell there. This agreement was entered into in 1884, and within a very few years all the Northern Cheyennes had moved to the prescribed limits. The Chief, "Lame Deer," had settled in the Reservation prior to the treaty, and the present site of
Lame Deer has preserved the original name. This settlement, the Tepee of Lame Deer, had been made before 1884, the year that the Reservation was established, for in that year, Nannie T. Alderson, with her husband, moved to Lame Deer. 

The name, according to Mrs. Alderson in her memoirs, covered a stretch of territory extending about twenty to thirty miles along the Tongue River. A few white people had moved into this section, living on land leased from the government, because of the prospects of easy money in cattle raising.

Mrs. Alderson, at the age of eighty-one, began writing her memoirs of this early life at Lame Deer. She speaks of several neighbors who lived in the vicinity. The nearest one was fifteen miles distant. Often, she says in her book, these people would drop in, roast a leg of deer, talk until late at night, sleep on the floor which was Mother earth, and go home in the morning. Some of these people are worth mentioning here, for their families were the foundation that made possible the starting of government schools in the Reservation. The Miller Ranch was a favorite visiting place of Mrs. Alderson, and not far from the Millers' was Jack Lynch's ranch. These two families had young children which created

---

2 Ibid., p. 16.
3 Ibid., p. 45.
a bond of interest between the mothers. The chief center of interest in this galaxy was Young's store. Mrs. Alderson says that nothing much that women treasured, was kept, but everyone gathered there. The men found sale for cattle and a place to purchase leather goods—as well as patronize the bar. Joseph Sharp and his lively family also added to the sociability of this vast range. One Indian, "Chief Two Moons," was a welcome and respected guest at all the homes of the whites. His influence with the Indians went far to help in getting the school started. It was not until about 1900 that the first public school was opened on the Reservation. The school was opened in 1900 more on the insistence of the white employees, who wanted schooling for their children, than it was to bring learning to the Cheyennes.

Martin Lennon, a venerable man, residing in Lame Deer, was one of the first board of trustees. He was visited by the author of this paper and found to be very alert mentally and physically vigorous. Mr. Lennon was glad to talk of this early beginning. He relates that the original district extended more than fifteen miles along the road, and later had three distinct divisions or partitionings.

Mrs. Alderson speaks of five children who boarded with

4Ibid., p. 86.
5Ibid., p. 88.
the teacher while attending school, but she does not state that this was a public school. The first school designated as a government school was located near the present site of the village of Lame Deer. Since it was wanted by so many, it was well attended. The building, now used as a shop, is located about five miles north of the village on the Colestrip road. Then the government decided that through learning, modern culture could be most quickly introduced. Following this conclusion schools were started in four centers of the Reservation and later required attendance was added. The trial and error method would be used to discover the types of learning that would best meet the needs of the Indian children. Today, such rapid advancement has been made that state standard courses are offered.

It was the original district six that he helped open. Lennon could not recall the first teacher who taught there, but he thought it was Fay Alderson. He did know some other teachers who were among the first to work there. Miss Alice Russell in 1906 was a general favorite in the whole region; Miss Fern Clark and Edward Jack also taught there in 1907 and 1908.

May B. Kendricks was county superintendent and left

---

6 Martin Lennon: Testimony.

7 Files of County Superintendent's Office, Forsyth.
interesting files of visits to all county schools. Misses Anna Phiffner and Jean MacRae were teachers there in 1908 and 1909.\(^8\) The first school board was composed of Martin Lennon, John Davidson, and J. C. Burns. (The county superintendent's office has an account of the first opening at Lame Deer School on April 1, 1905, Miss Alice Russell, teacher.\(^9\) In 1909 a school election was held, and district number six was divided, forming districts number eight and eighteen, and again in 1925 a re-districting was made under county superintendent Sallie M. Adams,\(^10\) and district number six was re-formed. At the very first, only the children from the white families took advantage of schooling, but gradually all the children were drawn in. The Cheyenne Agency was established at Lame Deer, and a center was formed which, today, stands as the lovely Lame Deer Village. In 1910\(^11\) the village designed the present school system which consists of six modern class-rooms, a gymnasium, auditorium, play room, bath rooms, and physical education and home economics equipment. This year the system has five teachers and ninety-seven pupils. Mrs. Cecil McGraw, Mrs. Delores Stag-

\(^{8}\text{Ibid.}\)
\(^{9}\text{Ibid.}\)
\(^{10}\text{Ibid.}\)
\(^{11}\text{Ibid.}\)
\(^{12}\text{Jimmy Lennon: Testimony.}\)
ner, Mrs. Ruth Spang, Mrs. Catherine and Mrs. Josephine Pegram are the teaching corps this year. The pupils are mostly Indian\textsuperscript{12} at the present time and according to Mrs. McGraw\textsuperscript{13}, show ability and skill in the academic work. Since the major part of the pupils in Lame Deer are Indian, the school program is built around their needs. A half century of progress has brought many changes and no doubt another fifty years will see today's accomplishments outmoded just as today's plant outstrips the little log school house of 1900. There are very few now, who can recall the early days of the Reservation, but there are a few survivors down to the present day. Mr. Lennon, already mentioned, was an early leader in the educational movement. Mrs. Julia Burns, whose husband was prominent as a school board man in the early days, is still alert mentally and physically. Mr. J. M. Strane, living now on the Rosebud Road, was also prominent in the early school progress. These elderly people talk with delight now of what was accomplished then. They tell with merriment of the Herculean tasks they overcame. They performed well in the planting and have lived to see the flowering of their efforts.

\textsuperscript{12}Files at County Superintendent's Office, 81 of 97 are Indian.

\textsuperscript{13}Mrs. McGraw is the School Superintendent.
CHAPTER V

MISSION SCHOOLS

The religious awakening, which swept Europe during the Renaissance, found a lodging place in our Rosebud Reservation. The early French and Spanish explorers came to America to bring the message of Christ. The Jesuits were particularly zealous in their work, leaving no part of the world untouched; but they found a reception among the Indians that compensated them for their efforts. The work of devotion and sacrifice carried on by these representatives can not be overemphasized.

The Protestant denominations, also, entered the field of evangelism for the Indians. To understand correctly the great task of all the Mission workers, one must realize that government mismanagement of the Indian affairs⁴ had filled the Indian with distrust for the whites. Border warfare had flamed time and again, always increasing the peril and the faith of the Mission workers.

Into this terrain of unrest came representatives of two great faiths, the Roman Catholic² and the Mennonite.³

---

¹Helen Hunt Jackson, A Century of Dishonor.
³Petter, op. cit., preface.
These two great faiths work side by side, each realizing that there is work enough for all, and though they overlap they do not conflict. Because these faiths permeate the entire Reservation, from the centers of St. Labre and Lame Deer, the work of the Mission school of each will be treated separately.

The Mission of St. Labre is located on the banks of the Tongue River about seventy-five miles south of Miles City, which places it in the north-central part of the Cheyenne territory. ("The Cheyennes had been assigned all the territory between the Rosebud and Tongue Rivers in south-east Montana. The proud tribe was in the dust, bitterly poor, and without future, but they had won their desperate fight, and they were home. . ."5) In the western part of Montana, the Black Robes, Fathers of the Catholic Faith, had already established Missions and made converts, but the Cheyennes in eastern Montana were yet to meet the zealous priests.

A discharged soldier from Fort Keogh, a man named George Yoakum,6 who was a frequent and welcome guest at the Alderson home, mentioned previously, was impressed by the need of the Indians. He brought their case before the Rt.

---

4 Father Seraphine, St. Labre. Testimony to the author.
Rev. James O'Conner, the Vicar Apostolic of Nebraska to whose jurisdiction the eastern part of Montana belonged. At the request of this superior, Father P. Barcelo from Helena visited the Cheyennes in 1882-83, spending several months among them. In 1883, the Rt. Rev. J. B. Brondel was appointed to the spiritual charge of all Montana, and he set out at once to provide missionaries for the Cheyennes.

Bishop Brondel appealed to Bishop Gilmour of Cleveland, Ohio, for aid, and this Bishop asked the Ursuline Nuns to help in this cause, receiving thirty volunteers. Father Palladino, writing of this order, states that there is no hardship from which this worthy band of noble women will shrink. Only six of the thirty who had volunteered were chosen, all Americans by birth. Mother Amadeus headed this band, brave but small, which reached Miles City on the seventeenth of January, 1884, the same year of the founding of the Reservation.

Father Eyler made a reconnaissance trip to find a location for the sisters to establish their school, buying a small piece of land with a log cabin on it just where Otter Creek empties into the Tongue River.

The commanding officer of Fort Keogh sent a small

---

escort to accompany the sisters on their journey from Miles City to the new home. This first house was anything but cheerful, but the sisters exulted in having reached it. Mud roof, dirt floors, and poor windows would discourage many, but not them, for they had a purpose in coming. The energy of the sisters soon had the house clean and an altar set up where the first mass was heard on April 3, 1884. So forlorn and desolate was the place that the name St. Labre was chosen for the Mission.

St. Benedict Joseph Labre was born in 1748 at Amettes in France. Having tried without success to become a Carthusian and a Trappist, he chose as the manifestation of God's will in his behalf, the life of a pilgrim. He loved above all places, Rome, Loretto, and Assissi. He died in Rome on April 16, 1783, and was canonized by Pope Leo XIII in 1896. St. Labre because of his great poverty was chosen as the patron of the Cheyenne Mission.

The Cheyennes celebrated the coming of the "Lady Black Robes," in true Indian style with a great war dance.

The Cheyennes held steadfastly to their homes on the Tongue River, an act which grieved many of the cattle men who wanted this land for grazing. Even Indian agents withheld badly needed supplies because the Indians refused to move to the Rosebud, an act which resulted in starvation in a few instances.

---

9Sister Limana, Principal, St. Labre High School.  
10Testimony left by the Ursulines, to Father Palladino.  
Bishop Brondel was so moved by the Indians' pleas for food that he ordered a steer bought and slaughtered for the hungry tribe. Such was the happy auspices of the beginning of the mission. Bishop Brondel at once made intercession to Governor Hauser of Montana for help in getting the promised aid from Washington, D.C. So appealing were his letters that relief was quickly sent. St. Labre was not without troubles. Until the government ordered them out, the cattle men made life difficult for all who favored the Indians. Palladino, in writing on the unkindness and unfairness of the cattle men toward the Indians, says, "In fact, the cattle men would rather rejoice at an opportunity to inaugurate an open armed resistance against them and drive them from the country."

Father Barcelo, writing about the Cheyennes, states that they are upright, brave, honorable, and of remarkably good morals. Converts to the Catholic faith were disappointingly few, for learning a new language was difficult, and the Indians lacked an understanding of English. Another drawback to the Mission School was that too many of its workers did not remain long in the field, either because of poor health or discouragement. In 1885, the Jesuit fathers

---

12 Ibid., p. 246.
13 Ibid., p. 246.
took over the care of the Mission,\textsuperscript{14} holding on through dis­
cord and strife even to bloodshed, before they became dis­
gusted and abandoned the Mission.\textsuperscript{15}

However, the sisters would not give up, and were en­
couraged by an occasional visit from a priest, probably from
Miles City. Then after a long wait, a resident priest came
to St. Labre, and renewed courage and hope came with him.
Bishop Brondel, the founder of St. Labre, was called to his
reward in the fall of 1903, and was succeeded by the Rt. Rev.
M. E. Lenihan, Bishop of Great Falls. Bishop Lenihan, be­
lieving that if some religious community took interest in
the Mission, the work would prosper more rapidly, managed to
enlist the Edmundite Fathers, who labored there for ten
years.\textsuperscript{16} The Mission management realized that if the Chey­
ennes were to be converted, Mission stations would have to
be established throughout the Reservation, so that contact
might be kept up with the scattered elements of the tribe.
Father Lenihan enlisted the sympathy and interest of the
Capuchins, who took over the Mission in 1920. The work of
these priests was felt throughout the Reservation, for they
had men to send into each center of population. Chapels

\textsuperscript{14}Ibid., p.249.

\textsuperscript{15}Catholic Mission Annual, 1950, p. 17.

\textsuperscript{16}Ibid., p. 19.
were built and every effort was made to give the Indians an understanding of the white man's Bible. This necessitated ability to read, and the energetic priests started classes in reading. The work was not always easy. Father Regis Nesser states\(^{17}\) that he believes the Indians come, too often, for the sake of the clothes and food which they get, rather than in any interest in Religious purposes. Notwithstanding these difficulties, the Mission continued to expand. In 1928, a spacious garage was erected, a root cellar was built, and the district at Birney received a new church.\(^{18}\) In 1929, a new two story brick school for Indian girls was completed, and the Chapel of "Christ the King" at Busby was dedicated. In 1930 a new Chapel at Muddy was built and dedicated to St. Francis of Assissi. This same year, 1930, saw the completion, at St. Labre, of a granary and a machine shed. In 1931 a dormitory for boys was built at St. Labre's. A diesel power plant was installed a few months later which furnished light, not only for the Mission, but also for the town of Ashland. Also, St. Francis Hall, a huge stucco building, was completed. Father Bece came to the Mission in 1939 to take over the management, and he in turn was followed by Father Seraphin in 1942.

\(^{17}\) Report to Mission Almanac, 1930.

\(^{18}\) Catholic Mission Annual, 1950, p. 32.
The valiant Ursulines, who had come to St. Labre's in 1884 and had put up such a noble fight for education and religion, were replaced in 1934 by the Franciscan Sisters, commonly known as the Greenfield Sisters of Milwaukee. 19

Under the guidance of the Most Rev. William J. Condon, the Mission of St. Labre's decided to include white children with the Indians in the Mission School. This made the Mission a center of learning, indeed, and again renewed the high hopes of the brave workers. The cause of this elation was the recommendation of Bishop Condon to include the white children of the surroundings as well as the Indians. This helped greatly, for the presence of the white children brought the Indian youth in contact with their white neighbors.

A large gymnasium-auditorium has just been finished and a new power plant is now under construction.

From 1884 to 1951 is short as history counts time. These years have seen such changes at St. Labre that the beholder is moved to wonder and marvel. Could so much be done in so few years? The founders of St. Labre must have felt the same confidence the "poorest of God's poor" felt when he asked God for blessings.

After the Mission of St. Labre was founded, the

19 Ibid., p. 47.
workers there knew that unless they developed the whole Reservation their work would be futile. In consequence of this idea, Missions were established at Lame Deer, Busby, Birney, Ashland and Muddy. The Lame Deer Mission serves as a center for these last named churches. Father Marion, the resident priest at Lame Deer, has oversight of these. The Lame Deer Mission was established about 1889, and Busby was established some years later. No early records have been kept and the date of opening there is obscure. The Lame Deer Chapel stands proudly on a small eminence overlooking the village, and its pastor, Father Marion, energetically travels throughout the Reservation. His devotion to the Mission work keeps him constantly moving. Much of his time is spent away from Lame Deer. He has a membership of approximately two hundred people at Lame Deer, and has the care of other parishes as well. The strong force at St. Labre is a bulwark for Father Marion in his work to educate, convert and civilize the Redmen.

In each of these locations, humble beginnings were made. The visiting priests were glad to get any kind of building to make a start. The beautiful chapels of today would not have been had the leaders waited for this finished

---

Father Marion: Testimony.

Lame Deer Church Record.
product. Since time was so precious, the field workers gave all their efforts to visiting and teaching, leaving no records in writing. These early years, that now appear invaluable, are lost to us except through legend. Who can evaluate the influence of these pioneer Black Robes? Certainly no man can; and, only when an infinite God has measured their work, will the whole story be known.

The Mennonite Church, very early in the history of the Reservation, sent Missionaries to help the Cheyennes. This powerful faith has done a good and great work with the Indians. The chief work of this denomination lies in the accomplishments of the very eminent Rodolphe Petter. This remarkable man spent over fifty years as missionary among the Cheyennes. He knew their language as few others ever did. Dr. Petter was born in Vessey, Switzerland in 1865. He was deeply religious, even as a child, and early in life decided to spend his life among the Indians of America.

His call to come to America occurred in 1890, and having newly wedded, the Petters reached their field the next year. Realizing the need of knowing the Cheyenne language, Reverend Petter commenced the study of it, learning its words and grammatical structure. In 1913–1915, Missionary Petter absented himself from work on the field, in order to publish the English-Cheyenne dictionary. The printing was done by Dr. Petter's son Valdo.
Dr. Petter in his great work, The Cheyenne Grammar, has given us an insight into Indian speech and thought trends that was impossible before. He says,

In working out the Cheyenne grammar, I was careful not to mold it after preconceived ideas, but to let it naturally evolve itself from the language. After twelve years of constant study the mutation of vowels and consonants impelled me to search for the actual value of these sounds. It was after three years of unabated research that I was rewarded by a definite result.  

Dr. Petter explains that the Cheyenne language has three vowel sounds only, but they are changed when the thought of the speaker is uttered in faster or slower time. The Cheyenne language is one composed more of syllables than words. This is possible because the language is rich in prefixes, infixes and suffixes. An understanding of the noun presupposes an understanding of the verb, and the noun's real place in the sentence comes after the verb. The Cheyennes' noun is divided into fourteen different forms, and each noun can adopt either one or several of these. Adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, interjections, and articles are, as a general rule, expressed as infixes in the verb.

The embryos of the Cheyenne verb are in the three vowels, a, e, and o, and from these embryos are developed

---

23 Ibid., p. 451.
verbal stems, forms, persons, states, and modes.

The Cheyenne is very careful of the syllables, and the rest takes care of itself. The Americana states that the Cheyenne is one of the most difficult of all the Indian languages, and mastering it and making a written grammar from a non-written dialect has been the accomplishment of Dr. Rodolphe Petter.

Reverend and Mrs. Petter, who had worked at first among the Cheyennes in Oklahoma, were transferred to Lame Deer in 1916. The new Cheyenne dictionary was now showing its usefulness. In 1926 a large part of the Old Testament was published in Cheyenne, and in 1934, the entire New Testament was published in Cheyenne. This accomplishment was the crowning glory of his life. It would enable all who follow to read the Bible to the Indians in the native tongue.


Long before Dr. Petter came to Lame Deer, Mennonite Missionaries had been in that field. In the year 1906, the site of the chapel at Lame Deer was selected. The building
was erected under the supervision of Rev. P. A. Kliemer and dedicated in 1908. At the present time, the church conducts five Sunday School Classes, one of them being in Cheyenne, for the older people. The children and young people are taught in English. Through its years of service the Lame Deer Church has seen 239 baptisms, 130 of whom are still communicants of the church. The Lame Deer Church is spacious and fair, a worthy monument to its founders and planners. On an adjoining lot is the Petter Home, where the widow of Dr. Petter resides. The home contains the library and very many other valuable things which Dr. Petter had collected during his long life. The Billings Gazette recently carried an article on Dr. Petter's collection of Cheyenne relics, calling them "One of the finest, if not the finest, collections of Cheyenne artifacts in the United States." This collection is loaned to the Yellowstone Historical Society, which organization seeks to keep the prized findings, permanently. Mr. Krieg paid tribute to the worthy Missionary who had toiled fifty-six years among the Cheyennes, and attributed to this devotion the possibility of leaving

24Mennonite Church Record at Lame Deer.
25David Habegger, Missionary, testimony during interview.
26Ibid., testimony during interview.
27Billings Gazette, Feb. 18, 1951, 2nd Section, p. 1
to America a testimony of skill among the Indians that otherwise would have been lost. Dr. Petter died in 1947, at the age of eighty-one, and was buried at Lame Deer, preferring to rest forever among those to whom he had dedicated his life.

The Busby Mission was started in 1904 by Reverend G. A. Lindachied, who was the first permanently located missionary. The first Christians were baptized here in 1906. At the present time, thirty-five to forty adults are regular in attendance at the Mennonite Chapel. Since other denominations are in the town, and the town is small, this is considered a goodly number.

The Catholic and Mennonite Chapels in the village add greatly to the intellectual stimulus of the Indians, who love religious pageanty, and can be reached through this channel more readily than through academic study.

The Mission School at Birney undertakes a great part of the educational load of the Indians. The Mission has assigned hours for Indian groups to attend and do ritual and choral work. Since excellent help is available at the Mission, the day school gladly takes the opportunity for aid in instruction. By this service the Indians are drilled in the

---

29 Malcolm Wenger, Pastor, Mennonite Church; interview.
30 Schneck, Superintendent of Busby School; interview.
White man's Christmas, Easter, Fourth of July, and other important days. The Indians take particular pride in their dress-up pageantry for these events.\textsuperscript{31} Their love of art and singing finds an easy outlet in these events.\textsuperscript{32}

The Birney Mission under the Mennonites is conducted by Rev. and Mrs. Daniel Schirmer, Hopi Indians, who have come to help the Cheyennes, and being of an Indian race, have had an exceptional approach to the confidence of the neighborhood Indians.\textsuperscript{33}

Thus toiling, rejoicing, sorrowing, the work goes on. When one servant falters or falls, another steps in, and the labor continues.

\textsuperscript{31}Daniel Schirmer, Pastor, Mennonite Church; interview.

\textsuperscript{32}Mrs. C. K. McGraw, Teacher in Indian School; interview.

\textsuperscript{33}Delia Carolan, Superintendent Rosebud County Schools; interview.
CHAPTER VI

THE GOVERNMENT SCHOOL AT BUSBY

The Government School at Busby is a remarkable monument, given by our nation for the aid and betterment of one of the bravest and most intelligent of American Indian Tribes. The young people here have forebears who gave an illustrious past to their tribe and who, as a tribe, were the last to yield to reservation life.

Many things hampered them, but their poverty was the most oppressive. Their leaders made manful efforts to better their conditions. Some of these Chiefs and their work deserve and merit mention. Outstanding among the Indians is Sitting Bull, who inaugurated the Ghost Dance—a belief that swept the plains and continued in fervor until suppressed by the national government. Sitting Bull was descended from a line of Chiefs. His father, Jumping Bull, was a Sioux Chief and two uncles, Two Horns and Hunting His Lodge, also were chiefs. Sitting Bull's exploits had endeared him to his people and when the old chief, who had heard a story told1 of a Messiah who arose from the dead, concocted the dream of the "Ghost Dance" in which according to Sitting Bull's dream, all the departed would return to make war on

1Billings Gazette, March 28, 1929. "A man probably named Johnson."
the Whites; the fantastic theory, sponsored by so prominent a leader, was eagerly accepted by the Cheyennes, who made innovations to suit themselves. (The Ghost Dance has been introduced in a previous chapter.)

Chief American Horse of the Cheyennes was the leader to life up this torch to his people willing and eager to believe. This Chief enlarged on a vision of Utopia where buffalo would have destroyed the white people, leaving nothing for discord or misery. American Horse, in later life, saw that his plan could not succeed and he became a recluse.

The Ghost Dance, however, gained in spirit, many of the participants lacerating themselves so severely, that the government authorities intervened. (The Ghost Dance is still practiced, but in a much more ameliorated form.) More leaders among the Cheyennes in this religious movement were Dull Knife, Little Wolf, Two Moons, and Standing Elk. The point that is noteworthy is that all the leaders realized the power of the government in time to influence their tribesmen and children, thus paving the way for today's great central school.

A noble example of this change in Indian leadership is found in the story of Iron Shirt, who was believed to have been over one hundred years old at his death. He made

---

annual pilgrimages to Forsyth each spring, and was thought to be acquainted with every man in Rosebud County. Such cordial social relations could not pass unnoticed by the tribe in general.

From war cries and bloodshed to brotherhood and fraternity in one generation has been the history of the Cheyennes and Whites.

The prominent leaders of these Indians scattered the seed of good will and trust and their children profited in the reaping of the harvest. Just as the Cheyenne language rates as one of the most complex, the native intelligence of this tribe is one of the highest. Grinnell writes that the honor of the Cheyenne men, and chastity of the Cheyenne women are of the highest level of all the American Indians.

Their Reservation was founded in 1884. From this time on, the Indian has rated as an American with all the privileges of citizenship. One of the great rights of every American is the opportunity to learn. The Government, realizing that the offspring of the tribal leaders of the Cheyennes could be helped most through learning, established the great Tongue River School at Busby.

The first view of this school that greets the traveler

---

as he approaches from Lame Deer, gives an impression of a mirage. As one emerges from the deep grade in the highway, he sees spread out on the plain, stately buildings in a well formed plan with looks and order that seem out of place. The author saw this village for the first time in January, 1951, at which time it was blanketed with snow. The stately red brick buildings stood out in striking contrast to the surrounding whiteness. The two large dormitories were especially beautiful, with their curtained windows and flowers. Each of these halls has a sixty pupil capacity, which is crowded to the limit and has a waiting list.5

Within these halls the cleanliness and order is of such marked perfection that one is made to wonder. Comfort, neatness, color combinations in decorating, everything that should go into a well-ordered home, abounds there.

The school building, a massive structure, with its large gymnasium for physical education, is everything that a teacher could desire for improving youth. The neat, well-painted cottages where the school workers and teachers reside are in the background, while still farther in the rear are the barns, granary, machine shops, and light plant.

A complete picture of this Tongue River School would

5W. A. Schneck, Superintendent Tongue River Schools; testimony.
have to include the personnel as well as the working facilities. Twenty-six trained workers are employed on the ground. The writer has been received in the home of Superintendent Schneck, a man of far more than usual abilities. One hundred-two young people are enrolled in high school and are taught in the academic studies by five teachers, while six teachers take care of the one hundred twenty-one elementary pupils. (The school is maintained on the "Boarding and Day" plan.) Many of the pupils who are in reach of the school come in daily, but those who are too far away board at the school and live in the dormitories. The curriculum offerings will be discussed in a later chapter.

In addition to the school and two dormitories already mentioned, several other buildings grace the campus. A large modern dairy barn is one of the most serviceable adjuncts. This unit has been the center for building up a beef herd of 110 head this year. Of course, the operation is student manned, thus combining learning and labor. The school also is assured an abundant supply of whole milk.

A horse barn, with all modern conveniences for feeding and caring for stock, houses a herd of fourteen blooded Morgan horses. These have been issued to the school children for breeding purposes, but the knowledge of animal husbandry gained is worth far more than any monetary rewards.

A modern laundry, student operated, services the
school, giving opportunity for many to learn this popular vocation. Indeed learning by in-service training is one of the best means and these necessary skills are valuable and welcome aids in the school.

A central heating plant services the building in the whole area. This is not only for economy, but also for safety and comfort. A machine shed adds its bit to the training of young people in care and operation of tools and machinery. This gives everyone who desires it a chance to learn farm machine operations.

Two garages help not only to keep motor controlled units in operation but also furnish schooling and training in operation and repair of the same.

A commissary where student necessities and knick-knacks may be bought is also in the grounds. Students here have a chance to study budgeting first hand, as well as getting the most and best for their money.

"The quarters" consist of eight strictly modern cottages for employees. These facilities have invaluable proportions in these days of housing shortages. Not only are there eight cottages for employees, but in addition to these, there are twelve apartments of two and three rooms each for single people. A direct hook-up on a high line for electricity is another desirable feature of the plant.

In addition to the cattle and horses, student projects
in chickens and swine are carried on. The school consumption takes care of all surplus, beside lending encouragement to the students. The buildings are worth approximately $550,000 and the worthwhile service that is being carried on there makes it a notable investment.
CHAPTER VII

CURRICULUM OFFERINGS

The curriculum offerings of a school are the register of a school's potentialities for success. Success is not, therefore, a chance or a happening, but a well planned procedure. In the Reservation schools the courses of study are most thoughtfully worked out. The basic work in each school is the Montana course of study; and, on this foundation, supplementary work is added to the limit of the pupil's ability.

The Tongue River Schools furnish an example that will compare favorably with the best schools in our land. In this system, a pupil has an opportunity to major in many different studies—mathematics, history, science, languages, physical education, journalism, forensics, animal husbandry, general shop, dairying, home economics and farm management. The pupil-teacher ratio is such that course-sequences can be offered to all who wish to take four years of study in most of the studies.

A great advantage in this school lies in the fact that it is mainly a "boarding" school, and the extra-curricular activities may be presented appropriately and properly. The spacious gymnasium is equipped for all muscular sports, and those with athletic ability are given the time and encouragement to develop it. The school has had an enviable
basketball record through the years.

The 1950-51 schedule had bookings in basketball with St. Labre's, Rosebud, Colstrip, Forsyth, Lodge Grass, Hysham, Sheppard, Warden, Custer, and a few independent games in addition. Sportsmanship for its true value rather than victory, right or wrong, has been the keynote of the Tongue River School athletics. The discord and bitterness so common among many small towns, is not found between the Tongue River School and any other neighbor school. Athletics, however good, is usually of concern for the school day's occupation. The school at Busby, in consideration of things which will last a lifetime, places more emphasis on stock raising, shop-work, dairying, home economics, and other training of a vocational nature.

Journalism is high in the rank of subjects obtainable in the Tongue River schools. A remarkable feature of The Warrior, the school paper, is that so many of the pupils contribute to it with signed articles.\(^1\) One of the editorials in the March number would grace any paper. "Much misconstruction and bitterness are spared to him who thinks naturally upon what he owes to others, rather than what he ought to expect from them."\(^2\) The work reflected throughout the

\(^1\)The Warrior, March, 1951.
\(^2\)Ibid., p. 2.
paper reflects creditably on the attainments of the school efforts in expression.

Caring for the stock in animal husbandry is another popular feature for the boys where they learn by doing. Practice, along with theory, often proves the deciding factor in a choice of life-work, and here that factor is supplied and presented with interest.

The home economics department here is a "must" for all girls. The kitchen and dining room work is done by supervised student labor. A girl who has attended this school has a great many points in her favor for success. The machine and garage work with the accompanying training will always send out useful, skilled workmen—not units for a breadline.

Thus, through all the vocational offering, poultry, swine, laundry work, dairying, designing, and sewing, the pupils are kept busy and happy. What will the harvest be? Certainly failure is not anticipated. Academic training combined with vocational guidance is surely the best safeguard for living.

The Lame Deer school offers elementary grades only, but here Mrs. Cecil McGraw, Mrs. Delores Stagner, Mrs. Ruth Spang, Mrs. Catherine Newlin, and Mrs. Josephine Pegram hold forth with ninety-seven pupils, of which number all but eight are Indians, or of mixed blood.
The standard state course of study is followed, and all the extra curricular activities that can be introduced are used. It is worthy praise that the Lame Deer basketball team took the Rosebud 1951 county tournament. The attendance is very good up to the age of sixteen. One-fourth day per week is given in this school to manual training for the boys and sewing for the girls. Once per week is bath day at the school where shower facilities help out the lack of such in many of the homes.

The Mission school of St. Labre at Ashland is a very complete institution. In its curriculum, practically everything for a well-rounded development is offered. Six beautiful, modern, well-equipped buildings are on the campus. These include dormitories for boys and girls, a gymnasium, a light plant, a granary, a laundry, and kitchen and dining-room facilities.

The school has nine teachers in academic work, while the Mission has four priests, one brother, eight sisters, two lay teachers, and five workingmen. This school was founded in 1885 by Bishop Brondel, and today offers a general academic course through the elementary and high school courses. While the mission was founded for the Indians,

---

3 School record, Lame Deer.

4 Sister, Limana, Principal St. Labre's Mission School.
white children were later included in the enrollment. The course of study followed is the State Course, but, in this school, as in the Tongue River boarding school, unusual opportunities for enrichment are present. The major purpose for the school is religious training and in this the response of the pupils is proof of a job well done. Here, in an environment of culture and poise, the pupils see Christianity at its best. The sordid and spiteful has been eliminated, and the religious work is on the plane of Holy Writ standards.

The academic work is supplemented by many vocational studies in journalism, cooking, sewing, laundry, art-craft, music, and physical education. The one hundred eighty pupils here have rare opportunities. They are especially proud of The Arrow, their school paper which has a high degree of personal work.

George Standing Elk wrote an editorial on "What is an American," in the First Quarter of 1951 edition, that should be the heart's desire of every American school boy. In this same edition an animated cartoon by Joe Little Whirl Wind is more expressive than a period of lecture. An interesting note in this same paper is the plea of the Indian children for the canonization of Catherine Tekawitha, an Indian girl who endured much for her beliefs. (The power of the press may again be exemplified in The Arrow.)

St. Labre's gives cooking as part of its regular
training for girls. Along with the actual labor of preparing, cooking and serving foods, balancing diets and corrective diets are required. A modern steam laundry aids not only in cleanliness, but also offers a vocational advantage which may help many a boy and girl in after life to economic stability.

Much of the building on the campus is done by the boys' carpentry class. Here, indeed, is shop-work that will pay dividends. The pupils who take this course are able to enter the commercial world as skilled artisans. As with cooking, so it is with sewing in the Mission school. This required subject is an ever popular one, for the students see the benefits for after life. Music has always been a prime favorite with the Indian and this is particularly true here. Sacred music is a general favorite. The art-craft of the Indians has won a place with the American public. The pupils at St. Labre's are developing this skill to their highest ability.

The gymnasium is the center of physical education for boys and girls alike. Intramurals are popular, but the basketball squad carried chief honors. A very busy schedule was booked for the 1950-51 season. The team played engagements with Sacred Heart of Miles City, State School of Miles City, Busby, Broadus, and Forsyth B Squad. In a fourteen game schedule, the Mission school broke nearly even in
wins and losses.

The schools at Busby—the Tongue River and the Mission School at St. Labre—are able to offer far more occupational courses than the average public school does. This ability lifts the school above the average for it prepares for adulthood while direction is best appreciated.
CHAPTER VIII

PROMOTION STANDARDS

Promotion standards in the Tongue River Reservation Schools have been a local affair, for the most part. In Lame Deer, where many Indian children attend school with the whites, state tests are given. Mrs. McGraw, the superintendent there in 1951, states that Indian pupils hold up well in all branches except reading and grammar. (I tried, but failed to get any test results here.) The white pupils excel in these studies probably because it is their native speech, while the Indians must hear their Cheyenne dialect at home. In arithmetic, music, history, and physical education, the Indians are not below the whites. The chief difficulty with the Indian pupil is holding his interest in school through the eighth grade.

In the Tongue River Boarding School, much the same practice is followed as in the grades at Lame Deer. In the high school, the seniors are given a standardized achievement test, while in the other high school years, the pupils take teacher-made tests. Since approximately thirty per cent of the high school is vocational, this appears to be a good practice. Superintendent Schneck of the Tongue River Boarding School bravely asserts that the Indian pupils are on an equal with the whites.
At St. Labre's Mission, Father Seraphin states that all their tests are teacher-made. The school maintains standards for promotion that would be severe in many situations. Promotions in St. Labre include much more than state tests offer. The Mission School is strong on cleanliness, orderliness, manners, politeness, and also much Bible work. These are the only schools with Indian pupils on the Reservation.
The Cheyenne Indians have had a most remarkable history. Their home-lands, beginning in the Southwest, have stretched to the Great Lakes, and again bent westward to central Montana. The fighting Cheyennes\(^1\) won their appellation by the stiff resistance they put up against their neighbors. This warlike disposition against unsurmountable odds was the cause of their wanderings, for they were forced to flee from place to place. Their nomadic life before entering Montana was preceded by a long stretch of years during which agriculture had been their chief support. Raids from warlike neighbors proved this doubtful sustenance, and the tribe moved west to follow the buffalo and live as the other plains tribes lived. When their struggle with the United States Government ended in 1884, the Cheyennes settled along the Tongue River, where today the Tongue River Indian Reservation, (also known as the Rosebud Indian Reservation) affords them a home.

This Reservation does not include all of the Cheyenne Indians, for the greater part of the tribe remained on the

\(^1\text{Grinnell, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 1.}\)
Oklahoma government lands, when this division, now known as the Northern Cheyennes, made its break for freedom. After losing hope for successful resistance against the Government, the Northern Cheyennes, numbering today about 1,800, accepted this present Reservation settlement. In this home the Cheyennes have felt secure, and abandoning their aggressive instincts, have turned to developing their own ways into a blending of the white man's civilization. Clothes, foods, communication, and many things have not been hard for the Indians to adopt, but his tribal laws, beliefs, religion and customs are still his and he holds tenaciously to them. The Mission workers find the ancient tribal religious legends firmly planted. Even the "Ghost Dance" in modified form is kept alive. (The Government interfered with the lacerations.) The tribal council still rules in Indian civil affairs, and this council is the hope of the tribe. Reverence for the council ruling has been promulgated along with all other customs, by the legends and stories of the aged men. Thus, in business life, matrimony, religion--everything in which custom and tradition can take part--is a vital part of tribal life.

In occupations the men were employed in making war materials, while the women made household pieces. The men did the hunting also, and the women cured the meats and dressed the hides.
The Cheyennes felt their grievances with the Government were just and, though losing in the long run, are proud of the punishment they helped inflict on Custer, Crook Ben-teen and others.

The religion of the Indian centers around a spirit world, in some ways similar to that of the whites. The Medicine men of the tribe were the spiritual leaders, and in practically every case, these men were the wisest and best, mentally, of the whole tribe. These men have seen to it that home teaching has kept alive reverence for the tribal customs, and although many religious faiths have sent missionaries among the Cheyennes, the ancient beliefs get first hearing. The Indian believes as firmly in the Medicine Lodge Dance and the Sun Dance as the most devout white man believes in heaven and hell. The seriousness with which the Indian took these beliefs led him to inflict punishments on his body, causing the white man's government to intervene. The Indian still wonders why the white man's religion is not to be taken seriously.

The religious teachings which the Indian receives must come from the schools, and these will have the white man's viewpoint. Some wonderful work has been done by missionaries on this Reservation but the Indian, in general, has not taken readily to the white man's religion.

Dr. Rodolphe Petter, a Mennonite Missionary, has made
a Cheyenne dictionary and also translated most of the Bible into the Cheyenne language, but many years must lapse before home teaching and tribal folklore can be overcome.

The Cheyenne Indians who made a break for freedom from the Oklahoma Reservation settled finally along the Tongue River, and have been known since as the Northern Cheyennes. They were in a land that was much coveted by the whites, who wished the territory for grazing cattle.

Very early in the Reservation life, the administration of the Reservation wanted schools for their children. About 1900, a school was opened near the present site of the village of Lame Deer. The first building was made of logs. Martin Lennon, a venerable man of Lame Deer, was on the first board of trustees. Some of the early teachers were Alice Russell, Fern Clark, Edward Jack, Anna Phiffner and Jean McRae.

May B. Hendricks was County Superintendent in 1908, which was the oldest date to be found on the records for superintendents. The Indian children were soon admitted to the schools on the Reservation and soon flourishing sessions in comfortable buildings were operating in Lame Deer, Birney, Ashland, Muddy and Busby.

The Lame Deer School is particularly worthy of mention, for it has five teachers and ninety-seven pupils. The commodious building at Lame Deer, now, is very modern with
academic, vocational and physical education facilities. The other public schools, though smaller, have exceptional plants for grade work. All the schools have well-equipped class rooms and plenty of playground accessories.

Two powerful religious faiths work side by side in the Reservation with harmony and accord. These are Roman Catholic and the Mennonite. These faiths have great appeal to the family life of the Indians. The Catholic Mission of St. Labre at Ashland is outstanding in its accomplishments. Here are stately halls, modern equipment, sanitation, order, and art, that speak of a very high grade of attainment.

At this mission many of the practical trades and household accomplishments are taught. An elementary school and a fully accredited high school are maintained. Here, not only academic learning but social graces, also, are stressed. The school, from a very strenuous and trying beginning, has risen to a place of honor and confidence in this section of the county. The Ursaline Nuns opened this Mission in 1884, but in 1934, they were replaced by the Franciscan Sisters. The religious zeal of the Mission workers has aided in establishing chapels in each of the population centers in the Tongue River Reservation. The Mission work and the Mission School are for white children as well as Indian.

The Mennonite faith has stressed Mission work at its
churches rather than in founding schools. With them, as with the Catholics, chapels have been founded in every population center. The Mennonites have made two invaluable contributions to the Cheyennes—the Dictionary of the Cheyenne language and the translation of the Bible into the Cheyenne language. These two great works were the labor of the eminent Dr. Rodolphe Petter. Dr. Petter gave more than fifty years of his life as a missionary worker among the Cheyennes. His efforts have been praised and recognized by America's highest literary societies. Dr. Petter worked at Lame Deer, but Busby, Birney and Ashland, also, have chapels and Mission workers. Should there be any doubt in one's mind concerning the good accomplished and usefulness rendered by these Mission centers, one need only to meet the cheery workers to have such illusions dispelled.

On the plains of Busby stands the Government School for the Cheyennes. In the large, modern dormitories of this school the young men and women of the Reservation gather where practically every one of the modern vocations is taught—carpentry, woodwork, animal husbandry, electricity, laundry work, cooking, sewing, designing, etc., along with general academic classes. A golden opportunity for service is here, for the teachers and workers live on the grounds with the pupils. Cottages and apartments are kept here for the staff. The plan has an evaluation of approximately more
than one-half million dollars.

Institutionally trained workers carry on the labor in this school, which is an outstanding educational center.

The curriculum offerings of the schools in the Reservation compare favorably with the best in our land. General academic courses through the elementary school and high school are offered but these are enriched by practically every vocation a pupil may be inspired to enter. It is this opportunity to fit and prepare for something to do in after life that places the laurel crown on the Reservation schools.

For promotion standards in the Reservation School, the State Standardized Tests are used, but here some leniency in the grades must be made\(^2\) for reading and grammar work. The Indian pupil lacks the home environment of English speaking parents to aid him in interpretation.

The Otis Quick Scoring test is given at the Tongue River schools and in these tests the Indian pupils show that they have accomplished a normal standard of education.

Throughout the Reservation, one will find the highest standards of teaching, in each course of study and accomplishment. Not all the pupils will be highly enlightened, but the greater per cent of them will live happier lives for having been influenced by the teachers and Mission workers in the Reservation.

\(^2\)Mrs. C. K. McGraw, statement.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES


Billings Gazette, March 28, 1929.


Luce, Edward S., Keogh, Commanche, and Custer. Edward S. Luce, 1931.


INTERVIEWS

Carolan, Delia, Superintendent of Rosebud County Schools, Forsythe, Montana.

Habegger, David, Mennonite Missionary, Lamedeer, Montana.

Sister Limana, High School Principal at St. Labre’s Mission, Ashland, Montana.

Lennon, Martin, Trustee of First School in Tongue River Reservation, Lamedeer, Montana.

McGraw, Mrs. C. K., Principal, Lamedeer School, Lamedeer, Montana.

Father Marian, Missionary to Cheyennes, Lamedeer, Montana.

Superintendent Pearson, Reservation Superintendent, Lamedeer, Montana.

Fetter, Mrs. Rodolphe, Missionary to the Cheyennes, Lamedeer, Montana.

Schneck, Albert, Superintendent, Busby Government School, Busby, Montana.

Father Seraphin, Superintendent, St. Labre’s Mission, Ashland, Montana.
Interviews. (Continued)

Lennon, Martin, Trustee of First School in Tongue River Reservation, Lamedeer, Montana.

McGraw, Mrs. C. K., Principal, Lamedeer School, Lamedeer, Montana.

Father Marian, Missionary to Cheyennes, Lamedeer, Montana.

Supt. Pearson, Reservation Superintendent, Lamedeer, Montana.

Fetter, Mrs. Rodolphe, Missionary to the Cheyennes, Lamedeer, Montana.


Father Seraph‘in, Supt., St. Labres Mission, Ashland, Montana.