Resilience: Stories of Montana Indian Women

by Laura K. Ferguson

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Stump Horn family and travois, Fort Keogh, Montana.
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Julia Ereaux Schultz, Health Advocate and Cultural Champion

Born in 1872 on the South Fork of the Sun River, Julia Ereaux was the daughter of a French immigrant, Lazare "Curley" Ereaux, and his A'a Ni Nin (White Clay—also known as Gros Ventre) wife, Pipe Woman. Julia, whose White Clay name was Sweet Pine, grew up in a bicultural family and was fluent in French, English, and Gros Ventre. She became a rancher and a newspaper correspondent even as she served as a Fort Belknap tribal council member, promoted traditional indigenous arts, and worked to prevent the spread of tuberculosis on the reservation. A founding member of one of the first Indian women's clubs in Montana, Schultz devoted her life to the well-being of the A'a Ni Nin people.

By the time Julia was born, her parents had already lost two children to a smallpox epidemic that took the lives of hundreds of American Indians in what is now north-central Montana. Along with several other mixed-heritage families, the Ereaux family settled near Augusta and took up farming. They were so poor, Julia later recalled, that her mother had to cut and thresh the grain by hand.

Julia received her schooling at St. Peter's Mission School, an Indian boarding school in the Sun River Valley that was attended by many Blackfeet and Métis children. Run by Ursuline nuns, the school also employed two famous Montanans during Julia's years there: Mary Fields, a former slave who worked as handyman and gardener for the school and who became Montana's first female postal carrier, and Louis Riel, one of the Métis leaders of the Northwest Rebellion of 1885.

After finishing her education, Julia helped her family to build a ranch on her mother's allotment on the Fort Belknap Reservation and assisted at St. Paul's Mission School, where her sisters were educated. Then, in 1890, she married German immigrant Al Schultz, and the couple moved with her parents to a ranch near Dodson.

Julia Schultz spent her life working to improve conditions on the Fort Belknap Reservation, particularly combatting the spread of tuberculosis. From the 1880s through the 1950s, Montana's tribes experienced an extended epidemic of tuberculosis. The overcrowding in many Indian families' single-room cabins, combined with widespread malnutrition and lack of medical care on the reservation, created fertile ground for the disease.

With Montana's public health nurse, Henrietta Crockett, Schultz formed an Indian women's club at Fort Belknap, one of only two such clubs in the state in the 1920s, and through the club, she spearheaded projects to educate tribal members about the causes and spread of TB. It was a cause she also championed during her three years on the tribal council in the mid-1930s.

Schultz also served on the Indian Welfare Committee of the Montana Federation of Woman's Clubs, seeking to bring statewide attention to the dire living conditions on the reservations. With members of the Crow Indian Women's Club, Schultz gathered information about the prevalence of tuberculosis on the reservations and then presented the data to the Montana State Tuberculosis Association. Henrietta Crockett and members of other Montana women's clubs joined the Indian clubwomen in lobbying for hospitals on the reservations. The nearest hospitals were generally too far to be of use to tribal members—and some hospitals did not admit Indians.

Schultz also shared the history and culture of the Gros Ventre people with non-Indians, particularly members of non-Indian women's clubs. In 1930, she won a national essay contest sponsored by the General Federation of Women's Clubs for her essay on Gros Ventre history and culture. The essay ended with a reminder to Euro-Americans of the many kindnesses shown to their ancestors by indigenous people and an impassioned plea for reciprocal compassion.

During the Great Depression, Schultz used her creativity and resourcefulness to help American Indian families survive the hard times. She taught gardening and food-preservation techniques, possibly learned from Mary Fields at St. Peter's Mission, to women on the Fort Belknap Reservation, and she and other women collected the discarded army uniforms that were shipped in boxcars to the Indian reservations. They washed, repaired, and distributed the uniforms that were still in good condition; the remainder they recycled into wool quilts to be shared with families who needed them. Schultz said she once washed, dried, and mended an entire boxcar's worth of uniforms by herself, a task that must have taken weeks.

From 1936 until 1942, Schultz also led a Works Progress Administration program to revive traditional arts and crafts of the White Clay and Assiniboine tribes. The Indian Arts and Crafts Act, passed in 1934, inspired a renewed investment in the traditional artistic skills of indigenous people and created a market for authentic Indian-made products. At Fort Belknap, she organized elderly women, who still retained the skills and knowledge of traditional designs, to share this information with younger women. These efforts enabled the women to sell their creations—such as beadwork, quillwork, parfleche containers, and leather goods—for much-needed cash.

At age seventy, Schultz joined the reporting staff of the *Phillips County News*, where she worked for the next twenty years. During this time, she continued to advocate for tuberculosis education and improved medical services for Montana's Indian population and to promote Native arts and cultural preservation. Celebrated by Indians and non-Indians alike as a cultural and community leader, Julia Schultz lived to be 104 years old.

Nineteenth-Century Indigenous Women Warriors

Among the indigenous peoples of Montana, being a warrior was not an exclusively male occupation. Women commonly dominated the realms of housekeeping, food preparation, and child-rearing. They influenced leadership, articulated their political concerns, and exercised a great deal of control over economic, domestic, and intertribal matters. A few women, however, gave up their traditional domestic role altogether and became "career warriors."

People who knew these female warriors personally—tribal members, traders, missionaries, and military officers—provide details about their lives in oral histories, expedition journals, and drawings. The women's military skill and bravery caught non-Indians off guard since they were unaccustomed to women participating in combat. The women's male enemies were perhaps even more taken aback, sometimes fearing these women warriors possessed special, even supernatural abilities.

One especially fearless warrior was Kaúxuma Núpika, a Kootenai woman who was also a cultural intermediary and prophet. In 1808, young Kaúxuma Núpika married a Frenchman working for the explorer David Thompson. She was so rowdy that Thompson exiled her from his camp. She divorced her husband, claimed to have been changed into a man, and then took a succession of wives.

Dressing as a man, Kaúxuma Núpika traveled from tribe to tribe throughout the Northwest, predicting epidemics, the invasion by Europeans, and the destruction of tribal villages by a great force that would "bury them under the ground." In 1811, she promised to deliver a letter from Spokane House to Fort Estakatadene on the Fraser River. For reasons unknown, she and her wife went hundreds of miles out of their way, ending up at Port Astoria, Oregon, where she drew an accurate map of the inland territory between the coast range and the Rocky Mountains for David Stuart, Thompson's rival.

Upon her return, Kaúxuma Núpika took up arms for the Salish, who knew her as Ingace Onton, but also worked as an intermediary between tribes, as she spoke at least four indigenous languages. In a battle with the Blackfeet, she was stabbed several times in the chest, but, witnesses claimed, the wounds closed up almost immediately, leading her enemies to believe she had supernatural protection. In 1837, Kaúxuma Núpika saved a Salish band by tricking the Blackfeet, who greatly outnumbered their Salish enemies. The Blackfeet then ambushed Kaúxuma Núpika and, fearing she would not die otherwise, cut out her heart and chopped it into pieces. That same year, a smallpox epidemic decimated tribes across the Northwest, perhaps as she had foreseen.

Kwilqs was a Šínmsčín, a Pend d'Oreille woman who led the life of a warrior rather than marrying. Her name means "Red Shirt" in reference to a British uniform coat she wore. Among the Salish and Pend d'Oreille peoples, Kwilqs was known as a nurturing, brave, and fearless woman. She also excelled at riding and combat.

Jesuit missionaries Fathers Pierre-Jean De Smet and Nicholas Point, who came to the Northwest in 1841, described Kwilqs's military feats in their journals. Point witnessed Kwilqs in action when the Pend d'Oreilles encountered their Blackfeet enemies in 1842. By his account, "Her bravery surprised the warriors, who were humiliated and indignant because it was a woman who had led the charge. . . . The Blackfeet immediately shot four shots almost at point-blank range, yet not a single Pend d'Oreille went down."

De Smet described Kwilqs in a battle against the Crows in 1846, confidently gathering fallen arrows from the middle of a battle so as to rearm the Pend d'Oreille troops. He wrote, "The famous Kuilix . . . accompanied by a few braves and armed with an axe, gave chase to a whole squadron of Crows. When they got back to camp, she said to her companions, 'I thought those big talkers were men, but I was wrong. Truly, they are not worth pursuing.'" Kwilqs survived into old age, greatly respected for her military courage.

One of Kwilqs's contemporaries was the outstanding Crow warrior Woman Chief. Born in 1806 into the White Clay (Gros Ventre) tribe, Woman Chief's childhood name was Pine Leaf. A Crow man kidnapped young Pine Leaf to replace his recently killed son and raised her to have a warrior's skills. In time she proved her military abilities; in her first battle, she killed two Blackfeet men and captured a large herd of horses. She continued to gain honors as a warrior and military strategist, earning the Crow name Bíawacheeitchish, Woman Chief.

Upon meeting this famous warrior, an American trader wrote, "She looked neither savage nor warlike. . . . She sat with her hands in her lap, folded, as when one prays. She is about 45 years old; appears modest and good natured." Woman Chief took four wives and was considered a war chief for over twenty years. She was killed by White Clay warriors in 1854 while on a peace mission to her natal tribe.

Kaúxuma Núpika, Kwilqs, and Woman Chief are only three of the indigenous women warriors who raided and fought alongside male warriors of their tribes during an era of rapid change. In more recent times, American Indian women have readily joined the U.S. military, volunteering in every major campaign since World War II.

The Métis Girlhood of Cecilia LaRance

Cecilia LaRance was born in 1915 in a cabin on the South Fork of the Teton River. Her grandparents were among the Métis families who had settled along the Rocky Mountains between Heart Butte and Augusta in the late 1800s. Growing up in the distinct culture formed by the fusion of French, Scottish, Chippewa, and Cree heritages, Cecilia belonged to the last generation of children to experience the self-sufficiency and "old ways" of this Métis community.

The French Canadian LaRance family settled along the Rocky Mountain Front in the 1870s. Cecilia's grandmother, Marguerite LaRance, was the first person buried at the Métis cemetery nestled in the trees along the South Fork. Cecilia's father, James LaRance, was born at St. Peter's Mission west of Fort Benton. When James was left with three small children after his first wife's death, he married soft-spoken and hardworking Mabel Fellers, whose family had fled to Montana after the failed Northwest Rebellion of 1885.

The couple raised their family on a squatter's homestead on Willow Creek, furnishing their single-room cabin with a woodstove, a large table, and apple-box benches. James's rocker sat near Mabel's sewing machine by the window. The cabin lacked electricity and indoor plumbing, and the LaRances bathed in a galvanized tub behind two chairs draped with a sheet for privacy. Cecilia and her sisters shared a bed, their brothers slept on a foldout sofa, and the baby's hammock hung over the parents' bed. When guests visited, they slept in the only space left: under the table. "We didn't have room enough to keep a moth's suitcase in that house," Cecilia remembered.

Like other Métis families, the LaRances were self-sufficient. James LaRance was a trapper and woodcutter, supplying nearby communities with posts and poles that he traded for flour. Mabel sewed the family's clothes. Each child had two outfits—one for school, one for everyday wear. Mabel showed Cecilia how to make soap by mixing rendered fat with homemade lye and pouring it into a shallow wooden box to set. She also taught Cecilia how to can vegetables—grown in plots along Willow Creek—and how to store root vegetables and cabbages in a cellar for their winter supply.

The family kept a cow, a pig, and chickens. Gathering the eggs from their free-roaming chickens made Cecilia nervous because snakes also lived among the bushes where the chickens nested. Her other chores included cleaning the chimneys of the kerosene lamps, scrubbing the wood floors, and helping wash the laundry by hand. Each evening, Cecilia and her siblings stocked the wood boxes and filled the water buckets from the creek.

In summer, Cecilia picked serviceberries, strawberries, rosehips, and gooseberries, which she and her mother made into jams. She helped her grandmother pound buffalo berries and chokecherries

into flat dried fruit that would keep through the winter, sometimes mixing the mashed berries with dried meat to make pemmican.

For supper, the LaRances ate venison or "le rababou" (rabbit stew) with "lugalet" (bannock, a traditional Scottish flatbread), but Cecilia recalled that their lunches were often nothing more than lard on bread. One of her fondest childhood memories was the smell of newly made sourdough bread wrapped in a clean dishcloth and stored in the beer-crate-turned-breadbox.

Cecilia and her siblings found ways to earn money for things that had to be purchased. In the 1920s, Montana was attempting to eradicate coyotes and prairie dogs. The children drowned them in their holes and brought in the tails for bounty. The summer when she was twelve, Cecilia cooked full-time at a nearby ranch. She also herded a neighbor's sheep and gathered wool that had caught in fences. On a rare trip to town, she could sell the sacks of wool for a little spending money.

Town was too far away for the Métis families to seek medical care, so in this, too, they were self-reliant. They mixed pine pitch with cottonwood buds, which contain an aspirin-like compound, to make an analgesic salve and used skunk grease (the boiled fat from skunks) to treat chest colds. Cecilia's Chippewa-Cree grandmother gathered medicinal plants and tied each bundle of dried wild herbs with a different color of string according to its use.

Their relative isolation also kept most Métis families, who were Catholic, from attending church, although they maintained their religious traditions. Families gathered at one another's homes to celebrate holidays, particularly New Year's Day, when celebrations lasted a week or more, or "until the fiddlers got tired out."

Cecilia attended Bellview School, but, to her regret, left school at fourteen. Her mother had attended Fort Shaw Indian boarding school and then Chemawa Indian High School in Salem, Oregon, but Cecilia's father was only educated through third grade. He insisted that his daughters needed no more than an eighth-grade education, and in 1931 Cecilia was married at sixteen to a man nearly twice her age who she had met at a Bellview dance.

The Métis families left their rural cabins in the 1930s, looking for work in nearby towns. The LaRances were one of the last families to leave, moving to Augusta in 1943 after losing their homestead to the Gleason ranch because they had never filed papers on it. By then, Cecilia LaRance Wiseman had a family of her own and was working in town, but she missed her childhood in the country when "we'd spend our days just walking in the hills and sitting down and watching what was going on across the way. We were happy."

Pretty Shield's Success: Raising "Grandmother's Grandchild"

The legacy of a nineteenth-century Apsáalooke grandmother lives on in the traditions of the Crow people today. Born in 1856, Pretty Shield belonged to the last generation of children raised in an intact Apsáalooke culture. Just thirty years later, the tribe faced the loss of their indigenous identities and cultural heritage as well as their lands. Thus, by the 1920s and 1930s, as she raised her grandchildren, Pretty Shield confronted a twofold challenge: first, to bring them up in the poverty of the early reservation years; second, to instill in them a strong Apsáalooke identity during the era of assimilation. She was well aware of the difficulty—and importance—of her task.

Pretty Shield herself had enjoyed a happy childhood. Her elders taught her how to harvest plants, preserve meat, cook, and sew. They guided her spiritually, educated her, and brought her up according to the traditions of the Apsáalooke worldview. Too soon, these happy years gave way to the destructive forces of American colonization.

In 1872, smallpox killed hundreds of Crow people, including Pretty Shield's beloved father, Kills In The Night. At the same time, American military campaigns against other Plains tribes threatened all intertribal trade and safety, while the extinction of the bison destroyed tribal economies. Reduced to poverty and starvation, tribes were forced to relinquish more and more of their homelands. Between 1851 and 1904, the Crows themselves lost 35 million acres. The U.S. government outlawed indigenous ceremonies, mandated that Native children attend government or mission schools, and sent emissaries of assimilation onto the reservations to enforce American policies. Many Crows converted to Christianity, took up farming, and sent their children to be raised at boarding schools, where their Apsáalooke identity succumbed to white American values and a wholly different relationship to the natural world.

Pretty Shield refused to surrender the Apsáalooke way of life. When her daughter, Helen Goes Ahead, died in 1924 of an untreated infection, Pretty Shield accepted the responsibility of caring for her grandchildren, including one-year-old Alma. She was determined to raise Alma as she herself had been raised and surrounded her with other traditional women. She also kept Alma out of the government school as long as possible, having Alma feign illness whenever school officials visited. While teaching Alma the practical means of survival, Pretty Shield also shared a worldview that was at risk of dying with her generation.

"I became what the Crows call *káalisbaapite*—a 'grandmother's grandchild'" Alma recalled in later years. "I learned how to do things in the old ways. While the mothers of my friends changed to modern ways of preparing things, Pretty Shield stuck to her old ways. . . . While my grandmother

was teaching me her ways of the past, how they survived and their traditional and cultural values, mothers of other girls were teaching them to adapt."

Eventually, Pretty Shield was forced to send Alma to school, where the girl enjoyed literature and drama. She learned to sing arias from operas, tap dance, and play basketball. She joined the Girl Scouts. But when Alma reached seventh grade, the principal sent her to Flandreau Indian School in South Dakota. There, she spoke only English, attended Christian church services, and could not follow the customs Pretty Shield had taught her. She adopted the clothing, hairstyle, and behavior of white American teenagers. It seemed that each year Alma lost more of her Apsáalooke identity, and Pretty Shield grieved: "They want *all* our children to be educated in their way. . . . That makes me sad," she said, "because I am going to have to let the old ways go and push my children into this new way. . . . It hurts and I feel so helpless. It's just as if I am nothing. . . . I am at the brink of no more."

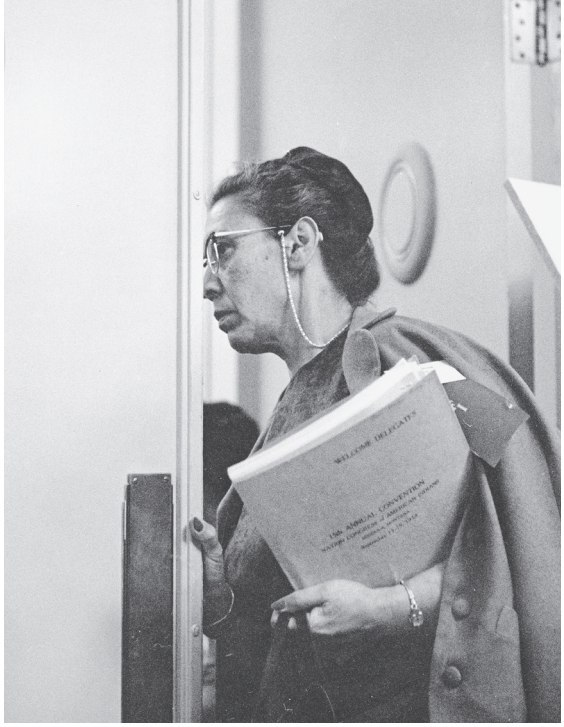
When Pretty Shield passed away in 1944, doctors told Alma that her eighty-eight-year-old grandmother had died of old age, but Alma believed her grandmother had died of a broken heart, grieving the destruction of the Apsáalooke way of life.

In 1946, Alma moved to Fort Belknap, where she married Bill Snell, an Assiniboine. Caught up in the day-to-day work of ranch life and raising children in the 1950s and 1960s, she began to lose sight of her cultural heritage. Then she had a dream that helped her recognize the value of Pretty Shield's teachings. In the dream, a young and radiant Pretty Shield appeared to her, surrounded by light. When Alma awoke, she held a freshly dug wild turnip in her hand and realized that Pretty Shield had entrusted her with knowledge that had to be shared if Apsáalooke culture was to remain alive.

Snell devoted the rest of her life to teaching others what she had learned about medicinal plants, healing, and Crow culture. "I have a push in my heart to keep up the Indian cultural values. I'm sure Pretty Shield is the source of that push," she wrote in 2006 in a book on Native herbal medicine. Among the book's botanical descriptions and recipes are vivid recollections of her grandmother—testimony to Pretty Shield's importance in her life.

Before her death in 2008, Montana State University awarded Alma Snell an honorary doctorate, testimony to the knowledge she had shared with the world.

Freda Augusta Beazley and the Rise of American Indian Political Power



In the mid-twentieth century, American Indian tribes faced crippling poverty, enormous land loss, and attacks on their status as semi-sovereign nations. One Montanan integrally involved in the efforts to fight these injustices was Freda Beazley, an Assiniboine woman from Klein and the widow of a former state legislator. Beazley served on the advisory council to Montana's Office of Indian Affairs, the first such agency in the nation. She was an officer on the Montana Intertribal Policy Board (MIPB), the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), and the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians. She was also the first coordinator of Rural and Indian Programs for Montana's Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO). Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, Beazley worked steadfastly at state and federal levels to protect tribal sovereignty, end poverty, and improve Indians' education and employment opportunities.

The post–World War II era was a precarious time for American Indian tribes. In 1953, the Eisenhower administration resurrected nineteenth-century assimilationist goals by enacting a policy to terminate tribal sovereignty. Euphemistically called "liberation," Termination severed federal-tribal relations, ended trust status for Indian lands, and withdrew all federal services previously guaranteed in treaties. The policy's blatant dismissal of tribal sovereignty and treaty rights galvanized emergent multitribal advocacy coalitions like the NCAI and the Affiliated Tribes.

The Flathead Reservation was one of the first reservations slated for Termination, but the Bureau of Indian Affairs faced strong opposition from Montanans. As secretary for both the MIPB and the NCAI, Beazley urged Montana's legislature and its congressional representatives to unite against Termination. Kept abreast of tribes' concerns by Beazley and the MIPB, Congressman Lee Metcalf exposed Termination as a "land-grab" aimed at divesting tribes of natural resources such as hydroelectric power, oil, gas, and uranium.

With high unemployment and virtually no industry, most western tribes were already extremely impoverished. Energy companies took advantage of the Indians' vulnerability. In Montana alone, Indian landowners lost over 1.5 million acres between 1953 and 1958—even without Termination. Beazley realized that accelerating land loss through Termination would only exacerbate Indians' poverty. "Nobody will believe us about the starving and the pressure to sell our lands," testified a Rocky Boy tribal member before a congressional committee in 1957. "Is it necessary that we sell out to get the services that the Federal government bargained with in the treaty days?" Those federal services, promised in exchange for the lands ceded by tribes in treaties, included food, education, and assistance with economic development. Beazley pressed the government to fulfill its treaty obligations and advocated for both long-term economic development assistance and short-term aid.

As a voice for Montana's tribes, she often interceded on their behalf. When overall unemployment in Montana reached 16 percent in 1958, it stood at 84 percent on the Blackfeet Reservation. "Their people are without food and without transportation," Beazley reported while petitioning the government to provide surplus food to Montana's Indians. Despite support from the Montana Farmers Union, the Railroad Commission, and the AFL-CIO, tribes were denied surplus commodities year after year.

In December 1963, schools on the Blackfeet Reservation withheld lunches from children of less than one-quarter Indian ancestry, even though these lunches were often the children's only sustenance. Parents turned to the tribal council, only to be denied assistance. A tribal member wrote to Beazley for help, saying, "Poor people were begging for money or purchase orders to get food for their children. The councilmen took off, leaving the poor needy people behind. . . . We have gone through all the proper channels, but we need help. The Blackfeet Indians are starving."

Beazley and Montana's coordinator for Indian Affairs, Knute Bergan, discovered that Congress had delayed sending federal impact aid that should have subsidized the lunches. Furthermore, Blackfeet tribal funds were depleted. Beazley and Bergan contacted Montana's congressmen to appropriate the overdue aid. Although their intervention was successful, ever-deepening tribal poverty remained a pressing issue.

Working with the NCAI in the early 1960s, Beazley helped draft specific measures aimed at improving conditions on the reservations and ensured their incorporation into President Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty legislation. Most notably, the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 benefited American Indian communities by enabling tribes, for the first time, to develop and operate their own independent federally funded programs.

Because of Beazley's experience with governmental programs, Gov. Tim Babcock appointed her administrative assistant to the state's War on Poverty office in 1965 and, a year later, made her the Rural and Indian Programs coordinator for Montana's Office of Economic Opportunity. Beazley helped teach tribal representatives how to apply for OEO grants and how to implement OEO programs—such as VISTA, full-day Head Start, Job Corps, Upward Bound, and Community Action Programs. In 1966, Beazley gave the commencement address to Montana's first class of Upward Bound graduates.

Beazley frequently addressed civic and religious organizations about women's rights, civil rights, and Indian affairs. A member of the League of Women Voters, a Democratic congressional committeewoman, and a feminist, she passionately believed that women had to be actively engaged in politics and economics. In 1966, she was elected the first woman vice president of the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians, an organization working to protect treaty rights. That same year, President Johnson named Freda Beazley among America's "Forty Outstanding Women" for her dedication to fighting poverty and inequality.

In 1970, Freda Beazley and the Indian affairs organizations she served celebrated a victory they helped bring about when President Richard Nixon officially ended Termination and pledged support for Indians' self-determination through tribal autonomy. Beazley continued to demonstrate her dedication to Indians' well-being, civil rights, and women's equality for the remainder of her career. She died in Helena in 1982, just shy of seventy-five years of age.

Champions: The Girls of Fort Shaw Basketball

Amid the ruins of the Fort Shaw Government Industrial Indian Boarding School, a metal arch and granite monument honor ten Native American girls who overcame separation from their families and forced estrangement from their Native cultures to become some of the finest female basketball players in the country. Declared the "World Basket Ball Champions" in 1904, the girls from Fort Shaw also deserve praise for having triumphed over extraordinary life challenges.

In 1892, the federal government opened the Fort Shaw Indian boarding school. Such off-reservation schools were designed to break the chain of cultural continuity by removing children from their tribal communities. The schools' paramount educational objectives were cultural assimilation and English language fluency. Students were trained for employment in domestic services, industrial labor, and farming. Classes in music, theater, and physical education rounded out their instruction.

The girls who formed Fort Shaw's famous team had much in common. Although they came from several different tribes, nearly all of them were daughters of indigenous women and white men. Many of the girls were multilingual, several spoke English conversantly, and several had siblings at Fort Shaw.

Many of the girls had also known tragedy in their lives. Four of the girls had lost their mothers, and two had lost their fathers. While attending Fort Shaw, two were orphaned and yet another girl lost her father. Two had sisters who died from infectious diseases at school, and several had brothers or male cousins who ran away from Fort Shaw, one who froze to death in the attempt.

Boarding school demanded that the girls relinquish their indigenous cultural identities, at least outwardly, and adopt white cultural behaviors. While discovering friendship and support from one another, each of these girls also drew on her own inner strength, courage, and intelligence to surpass expectations and to excel as a student and as an athlete.

When Josephine Langley, their physical culture instructor, introduced basketball at Fort Shaw in 1896, the sport was in its infancy. The strenuous game instantly delighted the female students, whose physical activities were generally more restricted at school than they had been at home. When the Fort Shaw girls gave their initial intramural basketball demonstration in 1897 at the year-end closing ceremonies, the three hundred spectators responded with enthusiasm to the first high school basketball program in Montana.

However, lack of funding and lack of opposing teams kept the Fort Shaw girls from playing

competitive basketball until the fall of 1902, when intramural coach Josie Langley (Blackfeet) joined Emma Sansaver (Chippewa-Cree), Belle Johnson (Blackfeet), Nettie Wirth (Assiniboine), and Minnie Burton (Lemhi Shoshone) to form that first team. Fort Shaw won its first competitive game, against Butte, but lost against Helena High a few days later. Despite the loss, the *Montana Daily Record* ran a front-page article complimenting the Indian team's talent. In January 1903, Butte Parochial High School handed Fort Shaw its second—and last—defeat.

Montanans' enthusiastic support for the Fort Shaw team grew with each competition. Unable to host a game at their own school, the Fort Shaw team played "home" games at Luther Hall in Great Falls, the only place big enough to accommodate several hundred fans. By the end of 1903, the team, now expanded in numbers as well as fame, had even defeated Missoula and Bozeman's college teams as well as the reigning state champions, Helena High.

Fort Shaw superintendent Fred Campbell quickly grasped the benefits of a competitive basketball team. The girls were mastering teamwork, building physical agility, and gaining self-confidence. Anti-Indian prejudices seemed to be fading as white Montanans' exposure to team members and their accomplishments increased. Fort Shaw's band and its mandolin orchestra entertained spectators before games, and newspapers gushed about the girls' talent in ballroom dancing at after-game assemblies. The team's fame soon opened up even greater opportunities to showcase the school's successful, and transformative, education of indigenous children.

In 1903, Campbell received an invitation to send students to participate in the Model Indian School at the 1904 World's Fair in St. Louis. The model school contrasted with exhibitions of indigenous peoples' traditional lifeways and was intended to validate America's policy of forced assimilation. Campbell didn't hesitate to choose the ten girls on the basketball team as his delegates. Four of the members of the 1902 team—Belle Johnson, Emma Sansaver, Minnie Burton, and Nettie Wirth—joined the girls who had since rounded out the team: Gen Healy (Gros Ventre), Katie Snell (Assiniboine), Gennie Butch (Assiniboine), Rose LaRose (Shoshone-Bannock), Flora Lucero (Chippewa), and Sarah Mitchell (Assiniboine). Nettie's older sister, Lizzie Wirth, accompanied them as chaperone and substitute player.

The girls played fund-raising games en route to St. Louis, often encountering anti-Indian attitudes among the spectators. At the fair, they divided up for five-on-five exhibition games before captivated audiences, while across the street male athletes competed for medals at the Third Olympiad. Late in the summer, when they received an invitation to stage an exhibition game at the Olympics, the girls played before thousands of cheering spectators. By the close of the fair, the girls were being celebrated as the basketball champions of the world. They sealed that title with back-to-back victories against a Missouri all-star team, the only team to brave a competition.

With all they had to overcome, and all they had to leave behind, the girls' glory was well-earned. Their achievements demonstrated their ability to excel despite personal tragedies, destructive federal Indian policies, and limitations imposed on them as Indian women in turn-of-the-century America. Even today, their victories in life and in basketball continue to inspire us and make us cheer.

Mary Ann Pierre Topsseh Coombs and the Bitterroot Salish

Mary Ann Pierre was about ten years old in October 1891 when American soldiers arrived to "escort" the Salish people out of the Bitterroot region and to the Jocko (now Flathead) Reservation. With her family and three hundred members of her tribe, Mary Ann tearfully bid goodbye to the homeland where her people had lived for millennia. The Salish left behind farms, log homes, and the St. Mary's Mission church—evidence of all they had done to adjust to an Anglo-American lifestyle. Nearly eighty-five years later, Mary Ann Pierre Coombs returned to the Bitterroot to rekindle her people's historical and cultural connections to their homeland.

The Bitterroot region and the Salish people share a long mutual history. Salish travel routes to and from the Bitterroot testify to centuries of use as they moved seasonally to hunt bison and trade with regional tribes in well-established trading centers. Linguistic studies of the inland Salish language reveal ten-thousand-year-old words that described specific sites in the Bitterroot region and testify to the tribe's knowledge of the region's geography and resources.

When Lewis and Clark entered the Bitterroot in 1805 in destitute condition, the hospitable Salish presented the bedraggled strangers with food, shelter, blankets, good horses, and travel advice. In 1841, Jesuit missionaries established St. Mary's Mission at present-day Stevensville, and many Salish adopted Catholicism alongside their Native beliefs.

In 1855, Washington territorial governor Isaac Stevens negotiated the Hell Gate Treaty with the Salish, Pend d'Oreille, and Kootenai tribes. The necessity of translating everything into multiple languages made the negotiations problematic. One Jesuit observer said the translations were so poor that "not a tenth . . . was actually understood by either party." While the Kootenai and Pend d'Oreille tribes retained tribal lands at the southern end of Flathead Lake, the fate of the Bitterroot was not clear. Chief Victor believed the treaty protected his Salish tribe from dispossession, as it indicated a future survey for a reservation and precluded American trespass. However, the Americans claimed the treaty permitted the eventual eviction of the Salish at the president's discretion.

Following Chief Victor's death in 1870, President U. S. Grant issued an executive order demanding the Salish remove to the Flathead and sent General James Garfield in 1872 to force their consent. When Victor's son, Chief Charlo, refused to sign the "agreement," Garfield forged Charlo's "X" on the document and the United States seized most of the tribe's land. Three hundred Salish people refused to leave and instead worked hard to maintain peace with the increasing number of intruding whites. Many Salish families, including Mary Ann's, built log homes, took up farming, planted orchards and vegetable gardens, and minimized their traditional seasonal travels. Her family got along well with their white neighbors. The Salish even refused aid to their allies, the Nez Perce, during that tribe's

conflicts with the United States in 1877. The Salish hoped that such efforts to maintain good relations would appease the Americans' determination to drive them from their homeland.

Over the next twenty years, however, Americans continued to trespass into the disputed territory, establishing new towns and building a railroad for the timber industry. Just after Montana became a state, Congress ordered General Henry Carrington and his soldiers to remove Chief Charlo's tribe to the Flathead. On October 14, 1891, armed soldiers evicted three hundred Salish, some of whom left on foot. Later, Mary Ann recalled that "everyone was in tears, even the men," and said the procession was like "a funeral march." Other elders who had been children at the time of the removal remembered women weeping as troops marched them through Stevensville in front of white onlookers.

The federal government promised to compensate the Bitterroot Salish for the homes, crops, and livestock they left behind, but it was an empty promise. So, too, was the government's promise to provide for their survival on the Flathead Reservation. Mary Ann's family lived in poverty on the new reservation, where the rocky soil made farming difficult.

Mary Ann attended two years at the Jocko agency school but never learned to speak English fluently. As a teenager she worked as a laundry maid for Indian agent Peter Ronan's family. While working for the Ronans, she met Louis Topsseh Coombs, whom she later married. They raised a family on the Flathead Reservation, and many years passed before Mary Ann Coombs returned to the Bitterroot.

By the 1970s, only three of the hundreds of Salish people who had made the trek from the Bitterroot to the Flathead were still alive, among them Mary Ann Coombs. In 1975, those three joined several descendants on a trip back to the Bitterroot. During the journey, the elders recounted childhood memories and tribal histories associated with particular places. They visited the graves of ancestors and showed younger relatives places where generations of Salish people had gone to receive medicine through visions.

Recently, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks and the Metcalf Wildlife Refuge relied on oral histories passed down by Coombs and her peers to create interpretive signs describing Salish history throughout the Bitterroot. The tribe has created an extensive project to map and record historical Salish sites using ancient place-names. Although Mary Ann Pierre Topsseh Coombs—who once woke up to see the rosy tops of the mountains of her homeland—is gone, Salish peoples' connections to the Bitterroot remain.

Oshanee Cullooyah Kenmille: A Joyful Spirit

Oshanee Kenmille dedicated eight decades of her life to making beaded gloves, moccasins, cradleboards, and other leatherwork for family, friends, tribal members, celebrities, and dignitaries. She had very little formal education but learned from the Salish and Kootenai women in her life how to tan hides, sew buckskin clothing, and do beadwork. Kenmille then applied her expertise toward teaching others both these skills and the Salish and Kootenai languages, ensuring this cultural knowledge will continue with future generations. In spite of the many challenges and tragedies in her life, Oshanee Kenmille inspired others with her strength, her joyful spirit, and her commitment to preserving traditional tribal culture.

Oshanee's parents, Annie and Paul Cullooyah, maintained their traditional Salish way of life on the Flathead Reservation. Oshanee, who was born in 1916, began beading at age eleven while watching her mother, whose praise for Oshanee's first efforts inspired the child to develop her beading skills. Annie, who died in 1928 when Oshanee was only twelve years old, did not live long enough to see how well Oshanee succeeded.

Like many other American Indian children of her generation, Oshanee was sent away from her home in Arlee to a boarding school. At the Villa Ursuline School in St. Ignatius, the nuns cut Oshanee's long hair, dressed her in a school uniform, and called her Agnes. Soon Oshanee and a handful of other homesick students ran away, walking home over the mountain pass to Arlee. Forced to return to the boarding school, Oshanee continued to run away. Finally, the agent on the Flathead Reservation had her sent to a boarding school in DeSmet, Idaho, hoping the distance from home would keep her in school. Within a year, Oshanee returned home, and her brother recruited her to help pick sugar beets that summer. That fall, instead of returning to school, Oshanee got married. She was fourteen years old.

Oshanee's husband, Edward Stasso, was Kootenai and did not speak Salish. Oshanee did not yet speak Kootenai. Her husband communicated largely in sign language because he was hard of hearing, so she learned to sign. She also learned the laborious traditional methods of hide tanning from Edward's mother and beading from his sisters. A year and a half into their marriage, Edward died from tuberculosis. Within a couple of years, Oshanee married again, this time to Joe Mathias, another Kootenai, who encouraged her interest in tanning and leatherwork. Again, however, tragedy broke apart her family when Joe was killed in a construction accident at the Kerr Dam, leaving Oshanee to raise their young daughters.

To support her children, Oshanee relied on her developing talents as a hide tanner and beadwork artisan to create moccasins, gloves, and beaded clothing she could sell to earn a living on the reservation, where jobs were scarce. Over time she became an expert at brain-tanning hides

and produced soft, supple hides of superior quality, which she then made into regalia, clothing, cradleboards, and handbags decorated with beadwork. Her excellent workmanship made her products very popular among local residents, tourists, and collectors. She raised her family, which had grown to four more children after her marriage to Camille Kenmille, on the proceeds from her work, which she supplemented with seasonal income from picking apples in Washington.

Tanning and beadwork offered Oshanee Kenmille a means for becoming self-reliant, and she worked hard to perfect these skills. As her products became increasingly popular, Kenmille recognized that she had valuable cultural knowledge to share with the world. For over twenty years, she taught hide tanning and beadwork at the tribal college in Pablo, an endeavor that brought her great happiness. Her students learned that it took hard work to perfect these skills and came to appreciate their cultural heritage. They also learned that a person could suffer great personal tragedies and still radiate a joyful outlook on life.

Through her example, Kenmille demonstrated that challenges—in her case the lack of formal education, the loss of her parents and husbands, and single motherhood—did not have to become barriers that prevented a person from achieving happiness or meeting their responsibilities. When she could no longer tan hides, her granddaughter, Gigi Caye, stepped in to teach at the college.

Oshanee Kenmille earned much-deserved recognition for her work and her cultural leadership, including a Montana Indian Educator of the Year award, a Governor's Award for Lifetime Achievement, and a National Heritage Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts. Celebrities, governors, foreign dignitaries, and presidents are among the recipients of her artistic work. For years, she was the head woman dancer at the annual Arlee powwow, where other dancers and tribal members proudly continue to wear items she made. Her gifts to the world are not just physical and aesthetic; she also shared her joyful spirit. "Few people have eyes that literally sparkled like Oshanee's did," her friend Germaine White recalls, "and that sparkle went all the way to her heart and came from her heart."

Susie Walking Bear Yellowtail: "Our Bright Morning Star"

Susie Walking Bear Yellowtail was among the first Apsáalooke (Crow) people to achieve a higher education. Like many Native children of her generation, she attended mission boarding schools where students were expected to give up their indigenous languages, beliefs, and cultural ways. Instead, Yellowtail maintained her Apsáalooke identity and, guided by her cultural heritage, used her education to improve the lives of American Indian people.

Born in 1903 and orphaned as a child, Susie grew up in Pryor and attended a boarding school on the Crow Reservation. As the only child who spoke English, Susie translated for the other students. With her missionary foster parents, Susie soon left the reservation for Oklahoma, where she briefly attended a Baptist school. Her guardian, Mrs. C. A. Field, then sent Susie to Northfield Seminary in Massachusetts. Mrs. Field paid Susie's tuition, but Susie earned her room and board by working as a housemaid and babysitter.

After graduation, Susie continued her education by enrolling at Boston City Hospital's School of Nursing. She graduated with honors in 1923 and finished her training at Franklin County Public Hospital in Greenfield, Massachusetts. In 1927, Susie Walking Bear became the first registered nurse of Crow descent and one of the first degreed registered nurses of American Indian ancestry in the United States.

After working with other tribes for a few years, Susie returned to the Crow Reservation and married Thomas Yellowtail, a fellow Crow who also continued to practice Apsáalooke spiritual and cultural traditions. Susie Yellowtail worked first at the government-run hospital at Crow Agency and then traveled to other reservations as a consultant for the Public Health Service. Wherever she went, she observed similar problems: appalling living conditions and unmet health-care needs on the reservations, the need for cultural competency among medical professionals working with indigenous people, and the need for immediate reforms in the Indian Health Service.

Yellowtail documented instances of Indian children dying from lack of access to medical care, Indian women being sterilized without consent, and tribal elders unable to communicate their health concerns to doctors. She also pushed for effective improvements to the Indian Health Service, such as allowing traditional tribal healers to attend Indian patients and creating the Community Health Representatives outreach program on reservations. In the words of her daughter, Connie, "She became a watchdog on health care for Indians."

Throughout her career, Yellowtail served on Indian health and education councils at the tribal, state, and federal levels, including as an appointee to the President's Council on Indian Education and Nutrition and the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare's Council on Indian Health under three different administrations. In each of these positions she advocated for improved health care, better access to care, and better living conditions for American Indians. "When she talked, people—both Indian and non-Indian—listened. Why? Because this woman spoke with experience, knowledge and conviction about the poor health conditions of the Indians and how to make the Indian healthy and strong once again. She also had great concern for the education of her people," said her friend, tribal historian Joe Medicine Crow.

Yellowtail knew that education could help Indians improve their situation, not by taking something essential from them, but by giving them a chance to apply their cultural values in ways that built up their communities. While she advocated for formal education, she also promoted Crow culture through involvement in events such as the annual All-American Indian Days and by serving as chaperone for the Miss Indian America contestants. Susie and Thomas Yellowtail were among the federal government's American Indian goodwill ambassadors to several foreign nations in the 1950s, cheerfully sharing their cultural heritage and Susie's fine beadwork with people around the world.

At home, Yellowtail exemplified Apsáalooke maternal commitment to the well-being of children. She raised three of her own as well as several other youngsters and took in other people in need. Joe Medicine Crow observed that Yellowtail became increasingly concerned with child welfare: "She realized that the modern Crow family is no longer strong and stable and that young parents often neglected, abused and even abandoned their children. She wanted to establish a children's home and orphanage on the Crow Reservation." Although she did not live to accomplish this goal, Yellowtail's adherence to Crow values, her pride in her Crow identity, and her devotion to her community serve as models for present and future generations.

Deservedly, Susie Walking Bear Yellowtail received the President's Award for Outstanding Nursing Health Care and is included among the honorees in the Gallery of Outstanding Montanans in the Capitol Rotunda in Helena. Among the Crow, she will forever remain "our bright morning star."

Minnie Two Shoes: American Indian Journalist

In 2009, the Native American Journalists Association (NAJA) honored Minnie Eder Two Shoes of Fort Peck with an award for journalistic excellence. A cofounder of the association, Two Shoes was known for her journalistic integrity and her hallmark sense of humor. Two Shoes worked as writer, assistant editor, and columnist for the *Wotanin Wowapi* of Poplar. She served as an editor for *Native Peoples*; as an editor, writer, and producer for *Aboriginal Voices*, a Canadian magazine and radio show; and as a contributor to *News from Indian Country*. As a journalist, she helped reinvestigate the 1975 murder of AIM member Anna Mae Aquash. Throughout her career, Two Shoes blended humor with serious inquiry into matters affecting Indian Country.

Born Minnie Eder in Poplar in 1950, Two Shoes began her career in 1970 as a publicist for the American Indian Movement (AIM). Founded in 1968 as an advocacy organization for American Indian prisoners, AIM coordinated several highly publicized protests in the early 1970s, including the nineteen-month occupation of Alcatraz Island in 1969–1971, the occupation of the Bureau of Indian Affairs building in Washington, D.C., in 1972, and the occupation of Wounded Knee, South Dakota, in 1973.

AIM's goal was to bring national attention to the political, economic, and social injustices facing American Indians, but the FBI considered AIM an "agitator" organization. In an attempt to sabotage AIM, the FBI planted informants in the organization, fracturing the trust between its members. In early 1975, AIM leaders questioned Two Shoes about providing information to the FBI and exiled her, despite her claims of innocence. That summer, two male AIM leaders interrogated Two Shoes's friend, Anna Mae Aquash, at gunpoint. A Mi'kmaq from Canada and one of AIM's most dedicated participants, Aquash was murdered six months later.

In 1980, Two Shoes started a women's traditional society at Wolf Point and in 1983 earned a BA in community development. She began contributing articles to the *Wotanin Wowapi*, then an all-women-run newspaper. From 1987 to 1990, she studied at the School of Journalism at the University of Missouri and continued writing for the *Wotanin Wowapi* through the 1990s.

Two Shoes's column, "Red Road Home," reflected her ability to inject humor into almost any topic. A classic example is Two Shoes's story about getting pulled over by a gloved cop and asked to perform a sobriety test. "As I got out of the car, my mind was racing. WHAT IS a drunk test? . . . I thought it had something to do with blowing up a balloon, but was I ever wrong! It was like a college exam, with more than one section." So startled was Two Shoes that she "forgot to tell Black Leather Glove Man about the bad tires" that made it difficult to steer her dilapidated

car, Rez Bomb. She passed the test and ended her article with a jab at the economic disparities between reservation Indians and non-Indians living elsewhere, stating that she drove Rez Bomb "for the sake of recycling." "That's what I tell my kids when they ask why the cars on the reservation are older models. . . . We're using up our cars all the way, like the old Indians did with the buffalo."

A fellow journalist observed that Two Shoes "could stir emotion by pointing out society's cruel injustices, but lampoon them in the next breath with her hilarious quips. It was her way of pushing people out of their comfort zones. . . . In the process, she provoked them to think about issues that mainstream America would rather ignore." In addition to reporting on reservation poverty, Two Shoes wrote about safe houses for domestic violence victims, environmental contamination on reservations, and the high rates of cancer-related deaths among American Indian women.

Two Shoes was not afraid to speak against injustice wherever she found it. She criticized male AIM members who got drunk, slept around, and fathered children they did not raise. At a NAJA convention in the 1970s, she responded to a non-Indian feminist's criticism that women in AIM let the men take all the credit for AIM's accomplishments by asserting that anonymity enabled AIM women to carry out their work with less scrutiny from the FBI.

In fact, the FBI's attempt to co-opt highly visible AIM women like Anna Mae Aquash made them objects of suspicion. When Aquash, who led extensive community-building and educational efforts, was killed in late 1975, the FBI claimed she died of exposure. A second autopsy revealed that she had been shot in the head.

In the 1990s, Two Shoes played a crucial role in the NAJA's reinvestigation of Aquash's murder. Two Shoes contacted AIM participants she knew from the 1970s, reviewed FBI files, and helped piece together what happened in 1975. In 2004, two AIM members were tried and convicted of Aquash's murder. Many former AIM activists, including Two Shoes, attributed Aquash's death, ultimately, to the paranoia created by the FBI's infiltration of AIM.

After the Aquash investigation, Two Shoes moved to Minneapolis, where she continued her journalism career and mentored younger Native journalists. At the 2009 NAJA conference, she noted that when the association was first founded, it boasted only a handful of members; by its twenty-fifth year, there were nearly five hundred. "Part of what we said years ago was that we wanted to create journalists to take our places," Two Shoes said. "And I've got some really tiny shoes to fill!"

Using humor and her "rapier-like wit" to expose the often serious matters facing Indian Country was Two Shoes's journalistic specialty. A year before she died of cancer in 2010, Two Shoes reflected on her twenty-five-year career: "[As] journalists we [are] very special people, and we have a very serious responsibility, but that doesn't mean we can't have fun along the way!" And she did.

Helen Piotopowaka Clarke and the Persistence of Prejudice

In 1909, the *Anaconda Standard* ran an article called "The Uplift of the Indians." It argued that Indians could be brought from their "untutored, childlike state" and transformed—through education, private property ownership, and conversion to Christianity—into productive American citizens. Perhaps no Montanan of her generation better exemplified this assimilationist ideal than Blackfeet descendent Helen Piotopowaka Clarke. While Clarke's remarkable personal and professional accomplishments earned her great respect and admiration, they also revealed the persistence of anti-Indian prejudices at the turn of the twentieth century.

Helen was born in 1846 to a prominent Scottish American, Malcolm Clarke, and his Blackfeet wife, Cothcocoma. She spent most of her childhood at a convent school in Cincinnati and returned to Montana just a few years before a group of Blackfeet men murdered her father in 1869. Later that year, Helen's brothers participated in the Baker Massacre, during which troops, ostensibly on a mission to capture Malcolm Clarke's killers, slaughtered a peaceful and unassociated Blackfeet camp.

Following these tragic events, Helen Clarke moved back east and had a brief but successful acting career in New York. In 1875, she returned to Montana, where attorney and family friend Wilbur Sanders found her a teaching position in Helena. Not everyone in Helena was happy with her hire. Elizabeth Chester Fisk, whose husband edited the *Helena Herald*, withdrew her children from school because she objected so strenuously to Helen's mixed ancestry. However, enough Helenans were accepting of the refined, devoutly Catholic, and talented woman that they elected Clarke county superintendent of schools in 1882. She held the position for three terms—one of the first two women (and only person of Indian descent) to hold elective office in Montana Territory.

In 1889, Clarke left Montana to work for the Office of Indian Affairs. Two years earlier, Congress had passed the General Allotment Act mandating the allotment of tribal lands to individual Indians and allowing the government to sell "surplus" reservation land to whites. Allotment began in Oklahoma, where Otoes and Poncas—who had purchased their tribal lands outright—stood in strong opposition to allotment. Hoping her Indian ancestry might help her persuade the Otoes and Poncas to cooperate, the bureau hired Clarke as an allotment agent. "Being identified with the Indian race, it is probable that she would be able to exert a greater influence with them than one who is not so identified," the commissioner of Indian Affairs suggested.

Clarke was one of the first two women to serve as an allotment agent. She attempted to carry out her duties, against the tribes' firm opposition, but found her work thwarted by men from the

Department of the Interior. She reported, "After two or three weeks . . . it looked as if the work would succeed, when along came officials pretty high in the [Interior] Department to tell the Indians that a woman has no business at this work, which the Indians construe to mean that she has no legal right to do the work."

After four years among the Otoes and Poncas, Clarke moved to San Francisco, where she established herself as a tutor of "artes, elocution and dramatic art." Unfortunately, anti-Indian prejudices followed her to California. In 1901, a "special correspondent" from the *Helena Herald* to the *San Francisco Chronicle* submitted an article that took aim at Clarke's mixed-blood status, declaring, "Miss Clarke was proud, and when it was demonstrated to her humiliation that her birth prevented her from taking the place in society her education and refinement warranted, she decided to leave Helena." The article asserted that, although she was beautiful, "Miss Clarke was known to be the daughter of a Piegan Indian woman, and this fact caused for her to be looked down upon socially." The article alienated Clarke from some of San Francisco's high society, and she left the city in 1903.

Clarke returned to Helena just long enough to grant the *Helena Daily Record* an interview in which she asserted there was no shame in having mixed ancestry. She then moved to the Blackfeet Reservation, where her arrival came at a fortuitous time for the tribe. In an effort to strong-arm the Blackfeet into accepting allotments, the agent there had struck over 90 percent of tribal members from the ration rolls. The Blackfeet hoped Clarke, as an educated woman with some standing with the federal government, could help. She pursued charges of maladministration against the agent, eventually succeeding in getting him removed from his position. In 1909, Helen and her brother Horace were granted tribal membership and allotments, but, ironically, the Interior Department still required her to prove her ancestry as well as her "competency" so that she could own her allotment outright.

Dwelling on the pervasiveness of anti-Indian racism, Clarke wrote in 1911, "This very nation looks with eyes askance upon the cultured, the intelligent, intellectual half-breeds of mixed-bloods who reside either off or on the reservations. Such inconsistencies in character or principles belong not to a great people." An idealistic advocate of assimilation in her youth, by the end of her remarkable life, Clarke had proved through experience a bitter truth: no matter how accomplished a woman was, no matter how assimilated a person of indigenous ancestry, early twentieth-century America was largely unwilling to let go of its prejudices against both women and Indians.

"I Am a Very Necessary Evil": The Political Career of Dolly Smith Cusker Akers

Montana's first Native American legislator and the first woman chair of the tribal executive board of the Assiniboine and Sioux tribes was *not* a women's liberation advocate because she refused to acknowledge women's limits. The fight Dolly Smith Cusker Akers did champion, however, was that of American Indians to determine their own destinies free from federal oversight and interference. Assertive and self-reliant—as she believed tribes should be—Akers achieved many notable accomplishments in her lifetime, but not without conflict and criticism.

Born in 1901 in Wolf Point, Dolly Smith was the daughter of Nellie Trexler, an Assiniboine, and William Smith, an Irish American. She attended school on the Fort Peck Reservation and at the all-Indian Sherman Institute in California. Graduating at age sixteen, she returned to Montana and married George Cusker in 1917.

In the early 1920s, the Fort Peck tribes sent two elders to Washington, D.C., to lobby for school funding. Neither elder spoke English, so Dolly accompanied them as interpreter. The articulate young woman impressed the congressmen, whom she then lobbied in favor of universal citizenship for American Indians—an issue that had been debated for many years. In 1924, the Indian Citizenship Act became law, establishing the basis for American Indian suffrage and furthering the government's long-term goal of gradual absorption of American Indians into American society.

At Fort Peck, Cusker frequently attended tribal executive board meetings on behalf of her husband, who was often debilitated by alcoholism. In time, the board appointed her the first woman on the tribal executive board, a position she held on and off for many years.

Concerned with the economic difficulties affecting Montana's tribes during the Great Depression, Dolly Cusker ran as a Democrat for the state legislature in 1932 and received almost 100 percent of the vote in Roosevelt County, where whites outnumbered Indians by nearly ten to one. The first Native American person to be elected to the Montana legislature and just thirty-one, she was the only female legislator during the 1933–1934 sessions.

In 1934, Governor Frank Cooney named Cusker the state's first coordinator for Indian welfare and asked her to represent Montana's Indians to the secretary of the Interior. American Indians were treated differently from non-Indians with regard to relief during the Great Depression because states and counties did not want to assume responsibility for these new American citizens. While in Washington, Cusker succeeded in securing federal relief for tribal members.

Dolly remarried to John Akers in 1944 and invested in their ranch while maintaining her

involvement in tribal matters. Now a Republican, she opposed the management of tribal affairs by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), especially policies that prevented tribes from independently negotiating the development of their own natural resources and the sale or lease of Indian lands. "Why should Indian people," she asked in 1952, "be forced to live under a law made some eighty years ago? That is the year in which the Indian Commissioner referred to Indians as 'wild beasts!'"

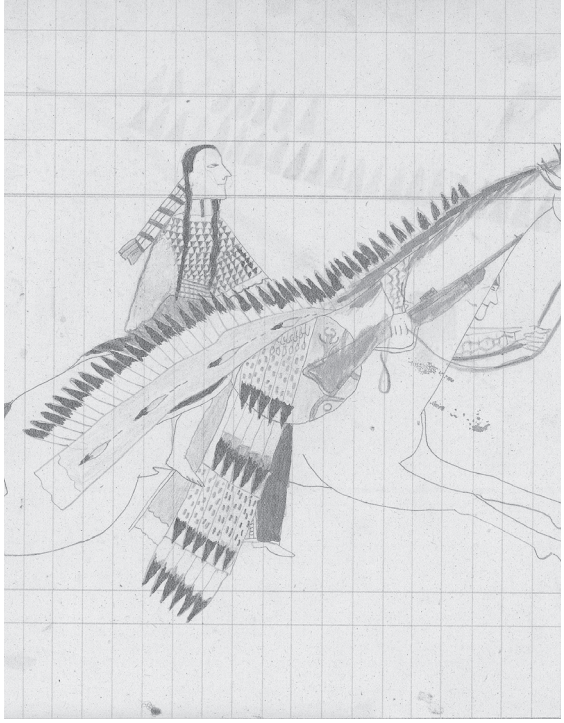
Akers charged that the BIA sold land and mineral rights out from under tribes, robbing Indians of royalties that could have provided essential income. "There can be no real solution of the so-called 'Indian problem' unless the Interior Department embraces the principle of self-determination of Indian people by actual practice," argued Akers. "The archaic protective rules and laws merely tend to hamper the Indian people from attaining their final goal of self-sufficiency, which is the goal of Congress for the Interior Department to foster."

In 1953, the Republican-led Congress and Interior Department enacted their version of tribal "self-sufficiency" through Public Law 108, or Termination, which ended the federal government's treaty obligations to tribes and left "terminated" tribes to sink or swim on their own. Akers, a supporter of the principles behind Termination, was elected the first female chair of the Fort Peck executive board in 1956. Her critics accused Chairwoman Akers of only serving her own interests and doing so in an underhanded manner. Alleging misuse of tribal funds, her adversaries voted to impeach her in 1958.

Nonetheless, Akers continued to exert her influence in Indian issues, briefly becoming vice president of the National Congress of American Indians in the 1960s and later serving on the Montana Intertribal Policy Board. As chair of the Fort Peck Tribal Housing Authority in the 1970s, Akers succeeded in acquiring federal funds for much-needed housing on the Fort Peck Reservation. However, the tribal council voted to remove her from the housing authority, complaining that she unfairly used her authority to secure houses for her supporters rather than treating all applicants equitably. In Aker's defense, one woman reminded the council that Akers was the only person who "had the guts" to confront the BIA when it owed tribal members money from land sales.

Over the course of six decades, Akers made numerous trips to D.C. to voice her views on Indian matters and to influence politicians. Among the improvements she was most proud of having supported were a regulation permitting tribes to hire their own legal counsel and the 1968 Indian Civil Rights Act—both of which removed inequities that had hampered the autonomy of American Indian people. Reflecting on her career, this remarkable woman said, "I am a very necessary evil. I try to stay in the background, but every now and then I have to come out and kick somebody in the shins." Kick she did, and Dolly Akers will be remembered differently by those who benefited from her actions and those whose shins got bruised.

A Young Mother at the Rosebud and Little Bighorn Battles



In 1876, the Lakota, Cheyenne, and Arapaho people defended their sovereignty, their land, and their lives against the United States. The Rosebud and Little Bighorn battles proved the tribes' military strength but ultimately contributed to tragic consequences for the victors. A young Cheyenne mother, Buffalo Calf Road Woman, fought alongside her brother and husband at both battles in defense of Cheyenne freedom.

Buffalo Calf Road Woman lived during the Indian wars, an era of extreme violence against the Native inhabitants of the West. American settlers frequently trespassed onto tribal lands, and tribes retaliated by raiding settler camps. Several brutal massacres of peaceful tribal groups by whites led to widespread fear among the tribes and shocked the American public. Such violence increased tensions in the region.

After Lakota chief Red Cloud decisively defeated the U.S. military in 1864 to close the Bozeman Trail, the United States negotiated a peace treaty with the Lakotas. The 1868 Fort Laramie Treaty established the Great Sioux Nation, a huge reservation encompassing present-day western South Dakota, and designated the unceded lands between the Black Hills and the Bighorn Mountains, including the Powder River country, for the Indians' "absolute and undisturbed use." Northern Cheyenne and Arapaho bands also occupied this region.

In 1874 the U.S. government sent Lt. Col. George Custer, who had led a massacre against the Southern Cheyennes four years earlier, to explore the Black Hills. When the expedition found gold, the government sought to buy the Black Hills, but the Lakotas refused. Fearing conflict, the government ordered all Indians who remained on this unceded tract to go to the Sioux reservation by January 1876, declaring that troops would deal forcibly with any who refused. However, the region was critical to their existence since it remained prime hunting ground for what was left of the once vast buffalo herds.

The tribes were caught in a double bind: retreat to the reservation and possibly starve or continue to occupy their full territory and risk attack. In the summer of 1876, several hundred Cheyennes and Lakotas camped in the Powder River and Little Bighorn valleys. Buffalo Calf Road Woman, her husband Black Coyote, their daughter, and Buffalo Calf Road Woman's brother, Comes In Sight, were among the Cheyennes in these unceded lands west of the reservation when Brig. Gen. George Crook's troops arrived in the area.

Earlier that year, Crook's men had burned a Cheyenne village. Not wanting to face the same fate, Cheyenne and Lakota warriors attacked Crook's troops at the Rosebud on June 17. When soldiers shot Comes In Sight's horse and he fell, Buffalo Calf Road Woman rode into the heart of the battle.

Amid a shower of arrows and bullets, she helped her brother cling to her horse and carried him to safety. At the end of the day, Crook's command withdrew, unable to defeat the tribes. The Lakotas and Cheyennes fled, some joining those camped on the Little Bighorn.

Eight days later, Custer's regiment attacked the Cheyenne and Lakota families at the Little Bighorn. Most of the women took their children and retreated to safety, but some rode onto the battlefield, singing "strong heart" songs of encouragement as they watched for fallen or injured men. One of these women was Antelope (Kate Bighead), who later recalled seeing the lone woman warrior:

> Calf Trail Woman had a six-shooter, with bullets and powder, and she fired many shots at the soldiers. She was the only woman there who had a gun. She stayed on her pony all the time, but she kept not far from her husband, Black Coyote. . . . At one time she was about to give her pony to a young Cheyenne who had lost his own, but I called out to them, "Our women have plenty of good horses for you down at the river." . . . She took the young Cheyenne up behind her on her own pony and they rode away toward the river. This same woman was also with the warriors when they went from the Reno creek camp to fight the soldiers far up Rosebud creek about a week before. . . . She was the only woman I know of who went with the warriors to that fight.

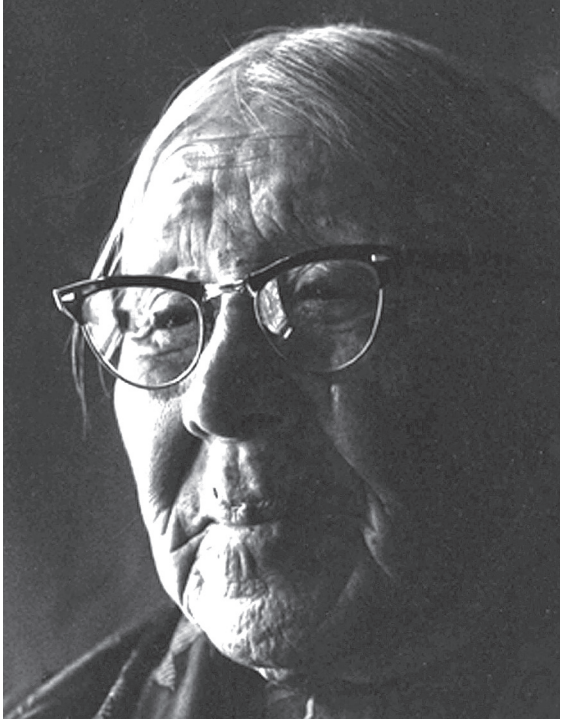
Following the tribes' victory at Little Bighorn, the United States redoubled its efforts to hunt down off-reservation Indians. Over twelve hundred Cheyennes took to the hills, pursued by U.S. troops. For many months, several Cheyenne bands eluded capture, fleeing their camps as the soldiers attacked. It was during this period and under these conditions that Buffalo Calf Road Woman had a second child.

By the summer of 1877, the Cheyennes, facing starvation, surrendered. Instead of returning them to the Sioux reservation, however, troops forced-marched them fifteen hundred miles to Indian Territory (present-day Oklahoma) and imprisoned them at Fort Reno. Nearly fifty Cheyennes died en route, and many more succumbed to malaria and exhaustion in the extreme Oklahoma heat. In September 1878, some three hundred Cheyennes led by chiefs Dull Knife and Little Wolf escaped and headed north toward home.

The leaders separated near Fort Robinson, Nebraska, and Buffalo Calf Road Woman's family continued north with Little Wolf. In a rash act, Black Coyote killed a soldier. He and his family were captured and taken to Fort Keogh in Montana, where nearly three hundred Cheyennes were already imprisoned. There, Buffalo Calf Road Woman died from diphtheria in the winter of 1879. In his grief, Black Coyote committed suicide.

Cheyenne warriors recorded Buffalo Calf Road Woman's courageous ride into the Rosebud battle in a ledger drawing. Today, the Cheyenne people still call the battle site "Where the Girl Saved Her Brother." Each January since 1999, Cheyenne runners participate in a four-hundred-mile memorial run from Fort Robinson to the Northern Cheyenne Reservation in honor of their ancestors who fought for their freedom and sovereignty, including Buffalo Calf Road Woman

Gifts of Love and Gratitude: Belle Highwalking



A custom among many tribes, the giveaway—and the love and gratitude it represents—strengthens social bonds through reciprocal acts of generosity. Similarly, the tribal tradition of adoption to replace lost family members helps heal broken hearts and builds family ties. These culturally prescribed acts of generosity and love were central to the life of Belle Highwalking, a Northern Cheyenne woman.

Belle's mother died giving birth to her in 1892. The Cheyennes pitied the motherless child and considered Belle poor, for a mother provided material and emotional sustenance. Belle's grandmother took the infant to nursing mothers to be fed until Belle was able to drink milk from a can.

As a young girl, Belle traveled on horseback with her grandmother to visit relatives on the Crow Reservation, where she recalled first experiencing a giveaway: "They gave us many fine gifts. . . . They sang songs for the different Cheyennes and gave out the gifts—shawls, quilts and dress goods. Some received horses. . . . When I arrived home, an old man, Braided Locks, gave me a beautiful shawl. He said, 'My granddaughter helped me drive the horses very well and I will give her a shawl that I received as a gift.'"

By the time Belle was a young woman, her grandmother was very frail. Belle wanted to marry so that she could provide for the old woman, but Belle's father, a tribal policeman, advised his daughter to stay single as long as she could. Even so, on a snowy night in 1912, the twenty-year-old girl eloped with her sweetheart from a New Year's dance. A few days later, tribal police took the couple to court to be punished for living together in the recently outlawed Cheyenne way of marriage. Promising to become married legally, Belle and Floyd Highwalking were released.

"I remember what a hard life I had when I was young. But when I chose my husband, I must have used my head," Belle told a friend. On the couple's wedding day, Floyd's grandmother announced, "We brought my daughter-in-law home. Do not speak harsh to her or ever scold her. Treat her well and take care of her," while Floyd's father reminded his family to treat Belle kindly because she "didn't have any mother." Floyd's mother brought her daughter-in-law her meals and cut up Belle's meat for her in an expression of motherly tenderness. Floyd's family later held a feast and a giveaway on Belle's behalf, giving clothing, household goods, and horses to her family and to friends who had given the couple wedding presents.

Belle and her husband worked as hired hands—haying, picking beets, hauling freight by wagon between the Northern Cheyenne and Crow Indian agencies—and raised their own produce and horses. Over the years, they sponsored numerous giveaways on behalf of their children, Floyd's

sisters, and their grandchildren. Such giveaways were a customary part of important family events such as weddings, births, funerals, and adoptions. Giveaways did not depend on how well-off a person or a family was; rather, Cheyennes gave to express love and gratitude for others.

Belle had inherited horses—considered an especially fine gift—from her mother. She gave away colts when her brother got married. When her first child, George, was born, Belle and George's grandmothers gave horses to those people who had blessed them with gifts. Belle and Floyd also gave away a horse to have baby George's ear pierced, a custom that showed their love for the child. "This is how my son first gave away. . . . This is when I learned to love the giveaways, and I still like to give," Belle said.

In the 1920s, Belle and Floyd traveled to Oklahoma, where the Southern Cheyennes treated them to a Christmas feast. "After everyone finished," Belle said, "the other people left, but we were asked to stay. This woman who asked us also invited all her relatives to come meet us. When they came, they hugged me and cried. I guess that this woman's daughter had just died and I looked like her. . . . Then they gave-away to me and this is how I was adopted by these Oklahoma people."

Years later, Belle met a North Dakota man who reminded her of a grown son she had lost. She gave him and his wife many fine gifts. The younger couple reciprocated with money, blankets, quilts, and a war bonnet. In this way, Belle and Floyd Highwalking adopted the man and his wife as their own son and daughter.

A year after Floyd died, Belle and her sons held a feast and giveaway for his friends and the people who had come to his funeral. Belle gave away seven tables of gifts, saying, "This is the way you show your respect for the person who has died. . . . It comforts you to give away."

By 1970, when Belle began recording her life's story, the Northern Cheyenne tribe had become one of the most impoverished populations in the United States. The government had slaughtered their once-great horse herds to force the Indians to lease their lands for cash. Cultural fragmentation, unemployment, and a high rate of alcoholism had taken heavy tolls on Cheyenne society. Yet Belle continued to give away in honor of her relatives and to show her love for them. "In the past, I owned horses, but now I don't. . . . All I have to give my relatives anymore are prayers for good health. That's the thing I like [to give] now."

The Education of Josephine Pease Russell

In 1937, Josephine Pease became one of the first Crow (Apsáalooke) people to graduate from college. Cultural and linguistic differences made obtaining an education challenging, but even greater were the difficulties that came with being a Crow woman who wanted a career in the mid-twentieth century. Crows discouraged women from being more successful than men, while some whites refused to hire Indians. Nevertheless, Pease persisted in her dreams to become a teacher, blazing a trail for future generations of Crow women.

The oldest of five children, Josephine was born in 1914 and grew up near Lodge Grass. Her parents wanted her to go to school because neither of them had had a chance at an education. There was a missionary school in Lodge Grass, but Josephine's parents wanted her at the public school. For two years, Josephine was the only Crow child at the school. The rest were "English" (white) children who wouldn't play with her. She remembered feeling as if she were "in a foreign country."

Many local white residents did not want Crow children attending the public schools on the reservation because tribal members did not pay property taxes. Then, in 1920, Congress passed the Crow Act, which specified the tribe's land grants for schools and opened Montana's public schools to Crow students.

For Apsáalooke children, going to school presented many challenges. While the girls kept to themselves, the Crow and "English" boys fought with each other. In Apsáalooke culture, girls and boys played separately from one another, but at school their teachers taught them games that included all of the children. In the classroom, the Crow students, who had been raised to be very modest, found it hard to "put themselves forward" as their teachers expected them to.

The Crow students' greatest difficulty, however, was language. Josephine's friend Joe Medicine Crow started school in 1924 and was still in first grade five years later because he found it so hard to learn English. "We were there to get an education, to learn to speak English, so we were discouraged from speaking Crow," Pease recalled. It would have made their education easier, she thought, if the teachers had been bilingual, as was her high school English teacher, Genevieve Fitzgerald.

The daughter of Baptist missionary Dr. W. A. Pedzoldt, Genevieve Pedzoldt Fitzgerald had grown up in Lodge Grass, where she learned Crow. Her willingness to explain ideas in their language enabled Crow students to gain fluency in English and thus improve in all subjects.

Pease credited her teachers for giving her "a push forward to become educated." Both Mrs. Fitzgerald and Mrs. Stevens, her science teacher, encouraged her to attend college.

Her mother also advised her to get a college degree and a good-paying job. "I want you to go into this world and have a place somewhere that you can call your own where you will be making money," she told Josephine. With help from Dr. Pedzoldt, Josephine applied to Linfield College in McMinnville, Oregon. Pedzoldt and the Baptists paid her tuition.

For the first two weeks at Linfield, Josephine was so homesick that her father sent her a return ticket, but the college president and his wife convinced her to stay another week. Then she met two girls from China. Realizing how far they had come for a college education, Josephine decided to stay.

Josephine Pease graduated in 1937 with a major in business and a minor in English. One of the first three Crow college graduates (all of whom were women), she returned to the reservation, hoping to find a job as a high school business teacher. She soon became frustrated with the lack of employment opportunities for educated Crows, who were overlooked in favor of whites for jobs on the reservation. The fact that she was a woman also seemed to count against her. During the next three years, she worked at menial office jobs, married briefly, and had a daughter.

Eventually, Pease secured a teaching post at a small country school at Soap Creek. Her mother came to live with her and cooked for her eight students. Pease said her two years at Soap Creek were a "hard life" of poverty.

In 1942, opportunities opened up at Crow Agency School as teachers left for the war. For the next seventeen years, Pease taught young students who did not speak English. She then spent two years in the Teacher Corps, training teachers to work with Native students.

After two decades of teaching, Pease became director of the Head Start program on the reservation. As a Crow woman in a leadership position, Pease faced discrimination and prejudice from both the white and Crow communities. Non-Indians resented having an Indian person in charge, while many Crows, particularly men, did not want a Crow woman to achieve something beyond what they themselves had achieved. Reluctantly, Pease retired after two years. "Our own people can get really tough. . . . It was really difficult," she recalled. Even in the late 1980s, Pease observed that Crow women were still expected to do less than they were capable of so as not to surpass the men.

Josephine Pease Russell showed that Crow women could achieve an education, support themselves, and rise to leadership positions. She set the stage for the next generation, when her niece, Janine Pease—the first Crow to earn a doctoral degree—became the founding president of Little Big Horn College.

Lucille Otter: Doing Good for Tribe and Country

"Politics, one way or another, controls your destiny. Choose yours today," read a 1974 announcement written by Lucille Otter on the front page of the Confederated Salish, Kootenai and Pend d'Oreille Tribes' newspaper. Empowering tribal members to exercise their right to vote was one of the many ways Lucille Trosper Roullier Otter helped Indian people better their condition.

Lucille Trosper was born in 1916 on the Flathead Reservation to Angeline McCloud, a member of the Salish tribe, and Belford Trosper. She grew up hunting and fishing with her brothers—activities that inspired her dedication to conservation efforts in the Flathead region. She graduated from Ronan High School in 1933. Although Lucille did exceptionally well in school, she did not attend college because her father objected.

Jobs were scarce in Montana during the Great Depression and nearly nonexistent on the reservation. "Life was terrible!" Lucille recalled. She worked briefly for the Works Progress Administration before being hired in 1934 to work at the Dixon headquarters of the Indian Division of the Civilian Conservation Corps (ICCC). The first woman to work in an administrative capacity in the Indian CCC, she was in charge of budgeting ICCC projects, keeping accounts, and overseeing payroll and purchase orders for the ICCC camps. The ICCC enrollees called her "buddy."

"The CCC was a godsend for the reservation," Lucille observed. Enrollees received training as communication radio operators, mechanics, and heavy equipment operators—skills they later used to find employment with telephone companies, on construction crews, on highway projects, and in industrial manufacturing.

Lucille donated much of her monthly salary to support her brothers' college education in Missoula. That left next to nothing for her to live on, yet she remained self-supporting throughout the Depression, taking additional work as a records clerk and voter registrar at the Bureau of Indian Affairs office on the reservation.

Lucille's first husband, Phillip Roullier, died in 1955, leaving her to raise their daughter, Renee, alone in an era of high unemployment on the reservation. Recalling how beneficial the Indian CCC had been for Indian people, Lucille, as a member of the Democratic Central Committee of Lake County, suggested to Montana senator Lee Metcalf the creation of a reservation-based vocational training program similar to the Indian CCC. Metcalf responded with legislation that created the Kicking Horse Jobs Corps in Ronan in 1966.

Lucille's greatest achievement, however, was empowering tribal members to vote. She was only eight years old when the Indian Citizenship Act of 1924 made all members of federally recognized tribes American citizens, ostensibly enfranchising them. Her mother set a precedent by being the first Indian woman on the reservation to register to vote. Angeline Trosper then became the first female juror in Lake County. It wasn't until her mother's death in 1960 that the importance of these "firsts" fully dawned on Lucille.

"I got to thinking how pitiful the Indians were in not voting," she said. Heavily outnumbered by non-Indians, even on the reservation, the few Indians who did vote couldn't influence elections, and elected officials seldom concerned themselves with Indian issues or the impact of legislation on Indian people. Part of the problem stemmed from efforts by the state to curtail the Indian vote. Montana's 1932 constitution permitted only tax-paying individuals to vote, thereby disenfranchising Indians who lived on, or derived income from, trust lands. Five years later, Montana prohibited individuals who did not pay local taxes from becoming local registrars, effectively suppressing Indian voter registration in reservation counties. By the time the Voting Rights Act passed in 1965 to remove these barriers, many tribal members had given up on trying to vote. Lucille Roullier set out to change this situation.

Her strategy at first was to register Indian women. "I really concentrated on the women, the mothers, because I thought they would encourage their children to vote. I went all over the reservation, to every residence." She took time to teach each new voter how to fill out a ballot correctly so that their votes would count.

Many tribal elders, whose rights had been ignored so long by the government, wouldn't vote even after she had registered them. Lucille persisted. "The Indians are going to be left in the dust if you don't get a hold of what's going on in our government," she told those who wavered. When women complained that their husbands didn't want them at the polls, she showed them how to apply for absentee ballots.

Occasionally, Lucille, who remarried in 1969 to Laurence Otter, faced significant opposition to her efforts from some of the white residents on the Flathead Reservation, but that only motivated her to work harder. She set up registration tables at the commodity distribution warehouse, at local events, and in grocery stores. She carried extra registration cards in her car, and once, while out fishing, even registered a young woman on horseback.

Over time, Lucille Roullier Otter registered well over a thousand voters on the reservation. "I felt as though a tribal member should do something for the tribe, not to be a taker, but to be a giver. I spent a lot of money on gas, and time, but it was worth it. And I renewed my friendships."

In 1988, Salish Kootenai College awarded Lucille Roullier Otter an honorary degree, and in 1992 her daughter set up a scholarship at the college in her name. Many tribal members, including tribal council members and legislative representatives, attribute their political involvement to Lucille Otter, who admonished them, "For heaven's sake, pay attention to what's going on in this country! If you don't get involved, we're going down the river!"

Bonnie HeavyRunner: A Warrior for Diversity

"We in the Native American community know that the warrior of old no longer exists. So we ask ourselves, 'What do we have left?' We have individuals who are culturally aware, who realize the value of getting a 'white man's education' and utilizing that to the benefit . . . of the community. They have the ability to turn this whole negative picture of cultural genocide around." Bonnie HeavyRunner spoke these words in praise of her sister, Iris HeavyRunner, but she could have been describing herself.

One of thirteen children, Bonnie HeavyRunner grew up in Browning on the Blackfeet Reservation, where she experienced the daily reality of poverty, relatives struggling with alcohol addiction, and the sudden loss of family members. At a young age, she vowed to stay sober and remain true to her cultural values. Her personal integrity became the foundation of her determination to improve the lives of American Indian people by being an advocate for Native and women's issues while building cross-cultural bridges. As the director of the University of Montana's Native American Studies program, she worked tirelessly to bring about greater cultural awareness of American Indians while making the academic world more hospitable to Indian students.

HeavyRunner earned a bachelor's degree in social work from the University of Montana in 1983 and then a law degree in 1988. One of only a few women in the School of Law in the 1980s, HeavyRunner was also the only American Indian law student in her class. She went on to become a clerk, and then a judge, on the Blackfeet Tribal Court, but she did not forget the cultural isolation she had felt at the university. Many Native students dropped out of school because they experienced such a wide gap between themselves and the non-Indian culture of the university community at large. HeavyRunner wanted to change that.

In 1991, Bonnie HeavyRunner Craig, now married and raising a daughter and son, became the director of the fledgling Native American Studies program at the University of Montana (UM). At the time, the program offered courses to supplement other degrees, but HeavyRunner dreamed of a Native American studies department that offered its own major. She also aspired to create a more welcoming and culturally understanding academic climate for Native students. Despite being diagnosed with ovarian cancer just one year into her new job, HeavyRunner put her full effort into making her goals a reality.

HeavyRunner mentored over three hundred American Indian students in her six years at UM, helping them navigate the world of academia, get scholarships, pay for child-care, and stick to their educational goals. She reached out to the university community to make the campus a more inclusive place, one that recognized and promoted cultural diversity. For her work, she earned numerous community service awards, including the Robert T. Pantzer Award for making UM a

more humane, compassionate learning environment and the Joann Youngbear Community Service Award for improving the well-being of the Indian community.

In 1996, HeavyRunner triumphed when the university offered an undergraduate major in Native American studies for the first time. HeavyRunner strongly believed that education could build bridges between people and could strengthen communities. Having spent many years advocating for American Indian issues and cultural diversity, HeavyRunner knew that making Native American studies its own discipline would generate greater awareness of American Indian cultures, histories, and current events among students and faculty. She hoped this better understanding would also reduce anti-Indian prejudices.

In addition to being the founding director of, and driving force behind, UM's Native American Studies Department, HeavyRunner served on the university's Diversity Council, the board of the National Indian Justice Center, and Montana's advisory committee to the U.S. Civil Rights Commission. She founded the Kyi-yo Native Academic Conference that brought together indigenous scholars during UM's annual Kyi-yo powwow and continued to advocate for Indian people's health and well-being even as her own health was failing.

HeavyRunner never let her struggle with ovarian cancer deter her from her path. While undergoing chemotherapy, she sought help from Native healers to maintain her spiritual health. She openly discussed her condition, allowing her illness and the treatments she chose to become another avenue of advocacy for improved care for American Indians and, indeed, for all cancer victims.

HeavyRunner's dual approach to her health crisis inspired her to speak to humanities classes, in public forums, and to the cancer treatment community about the necessity of holistic care and the value of the indigenous medicine that sustained her spiritually even as her body weakened. She calmly addressed the fear of dying and of death itself, emphasizing the importance of providing culturally appropriate spiritual treatment to terminally ill people.

HeavyRunner died in 1997 at the age of forty-six; however, her dreams continue to become realities. In 2010, the University of Montana opened its new Native American Center on campus, fulfilling HeavyRunner's goal to make the university a "home" to American Indian students and a place where cross-cultural understanding can flourish. Immediately inside the architecturally beautiful building is the "Bonnie Heavy Runner Gathering Place"—a large, open, sunny space where people can celebrate the continuity of American Indian cultures and begin making their own dreams of cross-cultural acceptance, justice, and well-being into realities.

"I Was a Strong Woman": Adeline Abraham Mathias

When the confederated Salish, Pend d'Oreille, and Kootenai tribes needed more information on historical events, cultural customs, or the Kootenai language, they did not look in a library or on the web; they asked Adeline Abraham Mathias. A member of the Ksanka band of Kootenai—or Ktunaxa—people, Mathias lived her entire life on the Flathead Reservation. Over the span of her lifetime (1910–2007), she witnessed how the influx of non-Indians profoundly altered her people's homeland. The great-granddaughter of a Kootenai chief, Adeline Mathias was the recipient of cultural, spiritual, and historical knowledge, which she, in turn, passed along to the next generation of Kootenai people.

Atliyi "Adeline" Paul Abraham was born near Dayton in 1910, the same year the fertile valleys of the Flathead Reservation were opened to homesteading. The arriving farmers transformed the diverse riparian habitat into a patchwork of fields and altered the course of rivers to meet their irrigation needs.

More profoundly, the newcomers brought different social and cultural ways that, over time, threatened the continuity of the Kootenai, Salish, and Kalispel (Pend d'Oreille) languages and way of life. In just three generations, the number of fluent Kootenai speakers fell to only a handful of individuals, one of whom was Adeline Mathias.

Adeline's first language was Kootenai. Her mother, Lizette Pierre, died in 1915, and Adeline's maternal grandparents, Louie and Mary Ann Pierre, raised her according to Kootenai customs. Her grandmother's father was Eneas Paul Bigknife, one of the last of the Kootenai traditional chiefs. As he had taught Mary Ann, she in, turn, taught Adeline: be kind, generous, and helpful to others.

The Pierres also shared with young Adeline the tribe's history—a history that dates back to over ten thousand years in the region that is now northwestern Montana, northern Idaho, and lower British Columbia. At one time, the Kootenais numbered several thousand, but epidemics of European infectious diseases severely reduced their population. By the early twentieth century, the Ksanka band had only a few hundred members.

Adeline's grandparents were among those Kootenai who strove to retain their cultural identity in changing times. Thus, Adeline learned how to hunt, how to tan hides and sew clothing, and how to find, preserve, and cook the many foods that made up the Kootenai diet. Her grandparents followed the seasonal round that had guided their people's subsistence for generations, and they passed this knowledge—and the history and values it contained—on to Adeline.

The nuns of the Catholic mission in St. Ignatius also inspired Adeline. Despite her grandmother's objections, Adeline attended six years at the Ursuline boarding school, where she learned Latin and English and developed her beautiful singing voice. Adeline found certain parallels between some of the Christian teachings and what her Kootenai grandparents had taught her, including the importance of kindness, hard work, and honesty.

As she grew, Adeline demonstrated the self-reliance and morality her elders had instilled in her. She worked as a jockey in her teens despite her height of nearly six feet, and, for many years, as a waitress, seasonal agricultural worker, and even a policewoman at regional powwows. Known for her integrity, she expected high standards of behavior. Throughout her lifetime, she remained proud that she never relied on men for sustenance. Adeline hunted deer and skinned, butchered, and preserved the meat by herself, even after she married Mitchell Mathias, the son of Chief Baptiste Mathias, in 1926. "I was a strong woman," Adeline recalled.

As one of the last fluent Kootenai speakers, Adeline Mathias was the repository of much of her tribe's cultural knowledge and history. She understood that the survival of Kootenai culture depends on the preservation of the Kootenai language since the language contains much of the tribe's culture, history, and value system. However, Kootenai is a language isolate; no other related languages exist, so its preservation poses particular challenges. Determined to do her part, Mathias recorded many hours of Kootenai language for educational use, compiled oral histories into books for children, and helped create a Kootenai dictionary.

In the late twentieth century, the Cultural Committee of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes began an intensive effort to restore and record their tribal histories. One significant component of their work was the research into the tribal names for places throughout western Montana—the tribes' traditional homelands. They prioritized this work because place-names often encapsulate tribal history, describing specific events or identifying resources the tribes gathered at those places. Mathias's knowledge was instrumental to the project's success, as she recounted numerous place-names and associated histories dating from her lifetime and back into the ancient history of the tribe—information that the committee was able to record. In recognition of her contributions, Salish Kootenai College named its Technology and Computer Sciences building for her, while Adeline Mathias's family created an endowed scholarship at the college in her name.

In addition to her wealth of cultural, linguistic, and historical knowledge, Mathias carried the ceremonial traditions of the Kootenai people. As the keeper of the tribe's spiritual and cultural practices, the elder upheld her obligation to keep the fabric of Kootenai culture intact by mentoring others. "White man's culture was not meant for Indian people," Adeline Mathias often said, fearing that the Kootenais of today would not know their own language, history, or customs. Today, a new generation carries the charge of keeping alive the Kootenai culture, the longest-practiced living culture in Montana.

Theresa Walker Lamebull Kept Her Language Alive

Theresa Chandler Walker Lamebull was still teaching when she died in 2007 at 111 years of age. Her subject was *A'aniiih*, or White Clay, the language of the *A'aninin* (Gros Ventre) people and one of the world's most endangered languages. By the 1990s, Theresa Lamebull was one of only a dozen people to speak the language fluently. Her willingness to share her knowledge of the White Clay language became the foundation for its recovery.

Theresa Elizabeth Chandler, or Kills At Night, was born to Kills In The Brush and Al Chandler in 1896 in a tepee near Hays on the Fort Belknap Reservation. Raised by her grandmother, Sharp Nose, for the first few years of her life, young Kills At Night was fully immersed in White Clay culture. She then lived with her mother and stepfather, White Weasel, until she was twelve and the federal government mandated she go to school. Without the option of a day school, Theresa attended St. Paul's Catholic boarding school in Harlem, Montana. She long remembered the fences that surrounded the mission school to keep children from running away and returning to their families.

As institutions of assimilation, Indian boarding schools forbade indigenous children from speaking their mother tongue. Thousands of Native people who attended such schools between the 1880s and early 1930s came to associate their first languages with shame and punishment. As adults, many of them refused to teach their languages to their own children, hoping to protect them from incurring shame at being "Indian." This situation created a language gap of two or even three generations in many families.

Perhaps because she attended English-speaking schools for only about four years, then married a fellow tribal member, John Walker, and settled near her childhood home, Theresa Walker retained her fluency in the White Clay language. Her second husband, Andrew Lamebull, also spoke it fluently. For smaller tribes like the A'aninin, who numbered around six hundred people at the beginning of the twentieth century, only a few lifelong speakers remained at the century's end.

After her ten children grew up, Theresa Walker Lamebull often longed to talk with someone who spoke the White Clay language. She visited the senior center to speak with other elders and shared her knowledge with the reservation schools' bilingual programs in the 1970s. Inconsistent funding and the scarcity of fluent speakers, however, made it difficult to establish lasting language programs.

Then, in the late 1990s, Fort Belknap College received a grant to develop a mentorship program, Speaking White Clay, which paired elders like Theresa Walker Lamebull with new learners. Lamebull traveled seventy miles twice a week to the tribal college to teach. One of her students was educator

Terry Brockie, who had begun studying A'aniiih with his traditional grandmother, Madeline Colliflower.

Brockie understood that the endeavor was about more than learning words and phrases. It was about regaining what had been nearly lost for all time: their identity as White Clay people. Theresa Lamebull was essential to that process. "She is one of the few keepers of our way of life, our traditional way of life," he told the *Great Falls Tribune* in 2005.

Reflecting on his studies with Lamebull, Brockie said, "She taught me traditional values that I use today to teach my own children. She was humble, spiritual, and never had a bad word to say about anyone. Over time I learned that those qualities are vested in our language, so it was natural to model that way of life."

Realizing that their elderly mentors would not always be around, younger adult students in the Speaking White Clay program committed themselves to preserving the language. The tribal education department had previously collected stories from elders, but those memories were written in English. A few older audiotapes existed but without translations into English. Then Brockie discovered a new technology—the "Phraselator," a device originally developed for military use. With Brockie's help, Lamebull recorded hundreds of A'aniiih words and phrases and their English definitions into the Phraselator, teaching Brockie the more complex aspects of the White Clay language while sharing tales of the old way of life and the tribe's history. The more he learned, the more Brockie realized the responsibility members of his own generation had to teach their culture to future generations.

Although reservation-based Head Start preschools had tried to incorporate Native languages, funding for bilingual programs waxed and waned over the years, making it impossible to teach children the language. In 2003, Brockie's classmate from the Speaking White Clay program, Lynette Chandler, developed a K–8 White Clay immersion school. Funded by private grants, the immersion school's first class of graduates not only speak their ancestral language, but have excelled in other academic subjects as well, including English. With over one hundred digital audio recordings of elders like Lamebull, Chandler and her husband, Sean, are now creating a new digital curriculum for young speakers, including White Clay language apps for iPhones and iPods. Brockie is helping to develop a user-friendly A'aniiih dictionary.

As the number of White Clay speakers grows, so has the appreciation for all Lamebull and her peers did to enable younger A'aninin to regain their language and heritage. In 2005, members of the tribe renamed the Hays Education Resource Center the Kills At Night Center in her honor. At the dedication, Terry Brockie sang an honor song for Theresa Walker Lamebull, and he sang it in A'aniiih.

Elouise Pepion Cobell: Banker-Warrior

Telling a young Blackfeet woman that she was "not capable" of understanding basic accounting may have been the most ridiculous thing the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) ever did. The woman was Elouise Pepion Cobell, treasurer for the Blackfeet tribe and founder of the first American Indian–owned national bank. She became the lead plaintiff in Cobell v. Salazar, successfully suing the Department of the Interior (DOI) and the BIA on behalf of nearly half a million American Indians for mismanagement of trust funds.

Elouise Pepion Cobell grew up in the 1950s in a home without electricity or indoor plumbing. Across the Blackfeet Reservation, many families lived in similar circumstances, despite the existence of income-producing enterprises such as oil and gas extraction and ranching on land belonging to tribal members. Cobell wondered how such profitable development on the Indians' lands could fail to provide them with a significant income.

The problem had a long history. In 1887, Congress passed the General Allotment Act, which mandated that Indian reservations be divided into parcels (allotments) for individual, rather than collective, ownership. Government representatives then deemed that many allottees were "incompetent" to manage their own lands and financial affairs. The DOI held these Indians' lands in trust, often leasing the allotments for grazing or mineral extraction. Revenues from the leases and royalties were supposed to be put into Individual Indian Money accounts (IIMs) managed by the BIA and paid in regular installments to the individual landowners, thus providing them with a steady income.

As Cobell began to investigate the concerns of tribal members who received only paltry incomes—sometimes pennies a month—from the lease of their allotments, it became apparent that the system was broken. Although it leased millions of acres of productive, Indian-owned land, the DOI failed to keep adequate records of how much money was generated through those leases, to document where that money actually went, or to ensure that the landowners were paid. When tribal members made inquiries about their IIM accounts, the BIA and DOI flatly refused to provide documentation. "We were treated like nobodies, even though it was our own money," Cobell told the Great Falls Tribune.

After several attempts to meet with the federal government, Cobell finally decided to take the matter to court. Washington, D.C, banking attorney Dennis Gingold agreed to take the difficult case, and in 1996, Cobell and four other plaintiffs filed a class action suit, originally Cobell v. Babbitt, on behalf of half a million Indians against the BIA and DOI. The suit demanded a full accounting of all IIM accounts, the creation of a new accounting system for individual and tribal money held by

the DOI, and the payment to individual Indians of the money—perhaps as much as $127 billion dollars—that was rightfully theirs.

The Justice Department, representing the BIA and Interior Department, fought back. They hired teams of lawyers from thirty-five of the most prestigious American law firms and spent over $30 million trying to hide their misdeeds. It quickly became apparent that the DOI had not kept accurate or sufficient records. In 1999, U.S. District Court judge Royce Lamberth ruled in Cobell's favor and ordered a full accounting dating back to 1887. The Interior and Treasury departments failed to provide it, instead destroying hundreds of boxes containing tens of thousands of IIM account documents. Lamberth held Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt—and then his successors, Gale Norton and Dirk Kempthorne—in contempt of court. In retaliation, the DOI had Lamberth removed from the case and froze all IIM accounts, blaming the Cobell lawsuit.

Cobell persisted, knowing she wasn't fighting just for the return of the Indians' money, but also to reform the system and to prevent such abuses from happening again. In all, the case went through nine appeals; in each instance, Cobell's side won. During the process, her team discovered that Interior had funneled IIM funds into other government activities, such as bailouts during the savings and loan scandal and payments on the national debt. When the MacArthur Foundation granted Cobell a $310,000 "genius award" for exposing government corruption, she donated the money toward lawsuit expenses.

In 2009, thirteen years after Cobell had first filed suit, Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar agreed to settle the case. A year later, President Barack Obama signed the Claims Resolution Act. The $3.4 billion settlement is the largest in U.S. history but far less than the hundreds of billions of dollars actually owed to Indian landowners. Yet Cobell and her team accepted the settlement, knowing that a full reckoning would only extend the case for years.

Cobell's courage and tenacity galvanized American Indians who suffered without recourse against governmental corruption. To them, "Elouise will always be remembered . . . as a woman who fought the battle many of us didn't know how to fight." Cobell v. Salazar set the precedent for tribal trust cases that are still ongoing.

Closer to home, the Blackfeet tribe formally honored Cobell with warrior status in 2002. Cobell passed away in 2011, but her legacy to her people is evidenced in a statement made by a Blackfeet student, who wrote in a letter to Cobell, "I think you did a miraculous thing. Who would've known it would be a Native American woman from the Blackfeet Reservation to do something most people wouldn't dare to do. . . . One day I desire to be like you. . . . I want to become a Native American Rights Activist to stand up for my people."

Afterword

Laura Ferguson wrote these profiles of Montana Indian women for Women's History Matters, a web-based project originally designed to celebrate the 100th anniversary of women's suffrage in the state.

That project looked back to 1914, a banner year for Montana women. On November 3, 1914 Montana men went to the polls and voted 53 to 47 percent to remove the word "male" from the Montana constitution's suffrage amendment. For this reason, 1914 is commonly referred to as the year Montana women won the right to vote, and in 2014, Montanans joined together to celebrate the centennial of this milestone.

That vote represented a move toward equality, and was certainly worth celebrating. However, not all Montana women gained the right to vote in 1914. No tribal members—either men or women—were allowed to vote in 1914. Montana Indians, both women and men, would have to wait until passage of the 1924 Indian Citizenship Act to gain access to the ballot. Even then, Montana Indians found their voting rights restricted through laws designed to disenfranchise them. It wasn't until after passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act that American Indian women gained equal access to the ballot.

The fact that not all women could vote after 1914 was just one reason the Montana Historical Society chose to use the centennial as a springboard to tell a broader, more inclusive story. The result was the creation of over 100 essays that reflected the diversity of Montana women's experiences: eastern and western; urban, rural, and small town; Indian, white, African American, Asian, and Hispanic; married, widowed, and single; young and old; immigrant and native-born; religious and nonreligious; rich and poor.

While this booklet collects only the stories of Montana's Indian and Metis women, you can read all of the essays written for Women's History Matters on the website *(http://montanawomenshistory.org*) or in the book *Beyond Schoolmarms and Madams: Montana Women's Stories,* published by the Montana Historical Press in 2016.

The Montana Historical Society also published two lesson plans as part of Women's History Matters that can be used with these profiles.

- Written for use in grades 8-12, "Ordinary People Do Extraordinary Things: Connecting Biography to Larger Social Themes" is designed specifically for use with these profiles. It can be downloaded here: *http://mhs.mt.gov/Portals/11/education/Women/WHMBiographyLessonPlan.pdf* Although the lesson plan directs you to send students to the Women's History Matters website, you can as easily have students use this booklet.
- "Biographical Poems Celebrating Amazing Montana Women" is a lesson designed for younger students (grades 4-6) but can easily be modified for upper grades. That lesson suggests many online sources for biographies—but instead can be completed using this resource. It can be downloaded here: *http://mhs.mt.gov/Portals/11/education/Women/BioPoemsLessonPlanFinal.pdf*.

Martha Kohl, Historical Specialist, Montana Historical Society, 2016

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Page 3 Sketch of Pine Leaf/Woman Chief, from *The Life and Adventures of James P. Beckwourth* (New York, 1892)

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Page 11 Fort Shaw girls' basketball team. Standing, from left: Rose LaRose, Flora Lucero, Katie Snell, Minnie Burton, Genevieve Healy, Sarah Mitchell. Seated, from left:Emma Sansaver, Genie Butch, Belle Johnson, Nettie Wirth. Missouri History Museum, St. Louis

Page 13 Ellen Bigsam, Mary Ann Coombs, Victor Vanderburg, and Sophie Moise, photo SPCC c-0582, courtesy Salish-Pend d'Oreille Culture Committee, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes

Page 15 Oshanee Kenmille, courtesy Gigi Caye

Page 17, Susie Walking Bear (back row, center), with other nurses graduating from the Boston City Hospital's School of Nursing. MHS Photo Archives PAc 87-70

Page 19 Founding members of the Native American Press Association (changed to NAJA in 1990) at Penn State in 1984, Minnie Two Shoes (third from right, standing), photo courtesy Sequoyah National Research Center, Little Rock, Arkansas

Page 21, Helen Clarke, Napoleon Sarony, photographer, MHS Photo Archives 941-745

Page 23, Dolly Cusker Akers, Legislative Collection, MHS Photo Archives

Page 25, Drawing from the Spotted Wolf-Yellow Nose Ledger of Buffalo Calf Road Woman rescuing her brother through a hail of bullets, Smithsonian Institution, National Anthropological Archives, Bureau of American Ethnology, ms. 166.032.

Page 27, Belle Highwalking, courtesy Jerry Mader, photographer

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